



# West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 79 | MAY, JUNE, JULY 2021

## safe house



**P**roject Coordinator, Marie Mulholland announced early in March the great news that a property has been purchased to be used as a Safe House by West Cork Women Against Violence Project (WCWAVP) for women and children in the West

Cork community. This comes after years of hard work and campaigning by the Project and the local community. The Safe House was purchased using funds from a very generous private donation and facilitated by the Community Foundation Ireland.



# safe house



The work now begins in earnest to get the house ready for its first occupants and those who come after. Due to Covid the need is now even greater to have a safe place for those women and children, who due to domestic abuse, have to leave their homes.

## a safe house in West Cork will allow women and children to remain within the more familiar West Cork environs

We are actively working with other services, who have been very generous with their time and expertise, who have experience in setting up and running safe houses to ensure we do this quickly but also with best practice always in mind to ensure the best outcome for the women and children who will stay in the house. Women and children coming into the house can have been through a very traumatic time. All the staff in WCWAVP have received Trauma Informed Practice training and the Safe House will be set up and run using a trauma informed lens. It is important to remember that attempting to leave an abusive situation can escalate the intensity of control and or violence and so the privacy and confidentiality of the safe house is of utmost importance in ensuring that the women and children are safe.

Up till now the nearest specialised domestic abuse accommodations have been the Adapt Refuge in Tralee or Cuanlee Refuge in Cork City. While women and children from West Cork will continue to access these when needed a safe house in West Cork will allow women and children to remain within the more familiar West Cork environs and access local support and services. There are a few differences between a Safe House and a refuge. The Safe House will only accommodate one family (a woman and her children) at a time or a single woman. A refuge can accommodate multiple families and women at the same time. A refuge can be accessed 24/7 and is fully staffed. A safe house is not staffed and access is done on a planned basis and through referral from a specialised domestic abuse service, WCWAVP in this case.

### Principles of Trauma Informed Practice



safety



choice



collaboration



trustworthiness



empowerment

We have been overwhelmed by but not surprised by the generosity of the local community's outpouring of support and practical help. We now have a donation button on our website if you want to donate Donate with PayPal Giving Fund or if you want to provide any other support please contact our office on 027-53847





# Coco's

# Law

## THE HARASSMENT, HARMFUL COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED OFFENCES ACT 2020

The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (also referred to as Coco's Law) commenced on 9th February 2021. The term Image Based Sexual Abuse (sometimes inappropriately referred to as 'revenge porn') covers the online posting of sexually explicit visual material, without the consent of the person portrayed. This includes photographs and video clips which have been consensually generated-either jointly or by self ("sexting"), as well as content covertly recorded by a partner or an unknown third party. Image based sexual abuse is now a crime in Ireland and you can report it to An Garda Síochána.

### Things you should know:

- If private, sexually explicit material is posted online without your consent, notify the platform or website immediately.
- There may be an online complaint button: if so, use it and make clear in your online complaint that the material is an invasion of your privacy, and data protection rights, and has been uploaded without your consent.
- If you know the person who uploaded the material, notify them also to take it down immediately for the same reasons.
- Often however, the person may not be identified. Also, even if he or she takes it down, the material may have been posted to other sites. For that reason, you need to contact the platform such as Facebook or Twitter, or whatever website is hosting the material.
- Take and keep screenshots of any offensive material securely so that you have a copy of it if it's later taken down.
- Notice time, date, platform and origin (to the extent that you can) of any abusive or offensive material securely.
- Keep any emails containing or attaching offensive or abusive material directed at yourself securely in case they are needed in evidence.
- Consider contacting the Garda to have an informal chat about making statement i.e. bringing criminal proceedings. Remember if you feel the behaviour does not fall under Coco's Law it could fall under other criminal legislation such as harassment or coercive control (seek advice and support from domestic abuse service).

Source: Womens Aid Briefing Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020

Femicide as described by Women's Aid is broadly understood as the killing of women and girls by men. Women's Aid have recorded these killings in Ireland since 1996 to illustrate the danger posed to women and to better understand how to increase protection of women and children. One in two women murdered in Ireland are killed by their partner or ex.

**the law currently allows the killer to claim all of the joint assets with no regards to surviving children**

increase in calls to domestic abuse support services after an initial drop during the first lockdown. The calls began again after a coordinated approach from domestic abuse services to remind women that they were still operating and that there are as well as the regular supports there are covid specific measures in place. Including:

- The lifting of the 5km limit for people fleeing domestic abuse.
- Access to rent allowance for victims of domestic abuse on referral from Tusla or a Tusla funded service.

Under Operation Faoiseamh (the Irish word for relief or respite), a dedicated operation targeting domestic violence during the pandemic, Gardaí received 22,540 reports of domestic violence and related crimes, from March 12th to November 3rd 2020, up almost 17 per cent on the same period in 2019. It has been largely reported in the media that there has been a significant

In spite of these measures much more needs to be done. Up to November 2020 the number of women who have died violently in this state was 296, that includes 3 women in 2020 alone. Unfortunately, we know that more women have been killed violently since then. We requested and are waiting on the total number of women killed violently between March 2020 to March 2021 from Women's Aid records. Already in the first two months of this year two women had their lives violently taken by males. Their names were Sharon Bennett and Urantsetseg Tserendorj and they were two women who were much loved members of their families and communities.

Among the recommendations from Women's Aid to prevent femicide and protect women and their children is the establishment of a Domestic Homicide Review. These are tribunals set up in order to better understand and learn from domestic homicides to improve systematic and service responses.

Women's Aid are calling for the passing of the Civil Liability (Amendment) Bill 2017 without further delay. This is specifically the Prevention of Benefits from Homicide amendment. According to Women's Aid Submission to the Study on Familicide and Domestic Homicide July 2019 the law currently allows the killer to claim all of the joint assets with no regards to surviving children or other family and despite the principle that a convicted criminal should not profit from the crime committed.

#### **Funding for Specialist Support for Families including Support for Surviving Children**

Some of these children may have been present when their mother was murdered or have been aware of previous domestic abuse against their mother. Other family members can be extremely traumatised too and may find themselves responsible for the care of traumatised children. This can mean additional financial costs, specialist supports such as counselling.

Another recommendation is the Press Council in partnership with domestic violence experts to agree on guidelines on the reporting of domestic violence and femicide. Women's Aid have an extensive list of specific Guidelines on reporting on femicide and domestic violence that should be developed and adopted to ensure bereaved families are not further traumatised by insensitive media reports. These can be found in their Submission to the Study on Familicide and Domestic Homicide.

You can read the full factsheet by going to [https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens\\_aid\\_femicide\\_factsheet\\_2020.pdf](https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens_aid_femicide_factsheet_2020.pdf) and the Women's Aid Submission to the Study on Familicide and Domestic Homicide July 2019 can be read by going to [https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens\\_aid\\_submission\\_to\\_the\\_study\\_on\\_familicide\\_and\\_domestic\\_homicide.pdf](https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens_aid_submission_to_the_study_on_familicide_and_domestic_homicide.pdf)

**among the recommendations from Women's Aid is the establishment of tribunals to better understand and learn from domestic homicides**

*If any of the details in this article have affected you can ring our phone line from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and a support worker will be available for advice and support during these times on 027 53847 or 1800203136.*

*Outside of these hours you can contact Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 341900 and WomensAid.ie*

# Femicide during Covid

**3**  
Women have died violently in 2020

**236**  
Women have died violently between 1996-2020





# mind your own beeswax

an art installation on the thematic of domestic abuse

by Dianne Curtin

I'm a third year art student on the B.A. in Visual Arts on Sherkin Island, run via TU Dublin. This last year has no doubt been tough on everyone, with lockdowns, isolation, loss of jobs, business closures, restrictions in movement and the sudden switch to online learning and home schooling all taking their toll on mental health. Alongside this, the Covid-19 era of the last year has seen a disturbing global rise in domestic abuse. Radio, television and newspapers have covered stories from all over the world, with figures rising and more and more calls to crime prevention forces, helplines and refuges. Domestic Abuse is heavily gender based, with many more women affected than men.

For my thematic in this third year of college, I've been creating conceptual artworks around the topic of domestic abuse. Last semester, my work concentrated on the topic of home, with focus on the light and dark of the domestic space. Home should be a place of refuge and peace. But for women and children in a situation of domestic abuse, it's a place of anxiety, dread and fear, with the abuse perpetrated by the very people who are supposed to love and care for them. Abuse takes many forms, from the physical to sexual, coercive control and financial control. In many cases, more than one element of abuse is present.

My materials for the work were based around the domestic environment. For my final winter assessment, I created 'Mind Your Own Beeswax' an installation of all my work in my own home. The title comes from the slang way of telling someone to mind their own business, which is very much part of the secrecy of domestic abuse, with some

victims being so afraid they even lie to protect their abuser. I used net curtains, flowers and natural Irish beeswax from the Dingle Peninsula to make conceptual sculptures. Fresh local flowers were dipped in beeswax and hung on a closed door, representing strength which can grow from fragility and that which is unseen. Net curtains were immersed in melted beeswax and allowed to set, then hung at the windows. Nets traditionally have a reputation for keeping prying eyes out, hung in the liminal space between outdoors and indoors, allowing the occupants to see out but keeping outsiders from seeing in. Beeswax has connections with healing and spirituality, and characteristics of melting and reforming which can equate to break down and healing. As melted beeswax sets, it becomes stronger but retains its natural beauty. In this installation, I also used black and white photography to capture the ordinary, everyday scenes of the domestic environment. As the saying goes, no one knows what goes on behind closed

doors, but objects bear witness to the happenings in every home. Wax was also used to make free-form wax sculptures, often embedded with a padlock which can be seen as a token of love, but also of ownership, possession and lockdown.

This semester I am working in socially engaged practice with a theme of 'Walk a Mile In Her Shoes.' This work includes a mile walk in my village of Union Hall, along which four shoe and beeswax sculptures will be placed every quarter of a mile. The shoes have been kindly given to me by women who have gone through abuse from a family member. They are precious objects, which will be set in beeswax as a conceptualisation of healing and spirituality. I am delighted to be able to welcome staff of the West Cork Women Against Violence Project to the route to view the sculptures. This socially engaged project takes place with the kind support of the Tidy Towns Committee of Union Hall, to whom I am hugely grateful, I'd also like to thank my lecturers, Irish artist Jesse Jones and course co-ordinator and artist Dr. Glenn Loughran, for sharing their extensive expertise and experience. Thank you also to artist and course facilitator Majella O'Neill Collins for valuable support and advice.

**Sculptures will be on view from 11am Saturday 1st May and remain in situ over the long bank holiday weekend.** I hope the project will provide an opportunity for reflection and to start a conversation, as well as raising awareness of the global rise in domestic abuse cases during the Covid-19 pandemic.



# We say it's not their fault we do nothing to make it easy for them

A few weeks ago, a Kerry rapist, convicted of raping his young neighbour while she slept at home in her own bed, received glowing references to take to court from a range of men in professional positions of authority, 'good-standing' and presumably pillars of the Dingle community.

It is not the first time this has happened, back in 2009 extraordinary courtroom scenes in Listowel, saw a queue of almost 50 men shake the hand of a convicted rapist who was given a character reference from the local parish priest among others. In both cases there was no doubt as to

the guilt of the offender. Twelve years separate both cases. Twelve years in which we have seen the rise and prominence of the #MeToo movement, a Mother & Baby Homes scandal where women, some pregnant because of rape and sexual abuse were incarcerated, punished and forgotten by society. All of which has led to an increasing culture of no longer being willing to tolerate or collude with sexual abuse and violence against women and girls. However, there is also increased access to pornography online, widespread social media harassment of women and girls and a generation of boys who still think that women's bodies are theirs for the taking, for demeaning, for shaming. Right here in schools in West Cork, there have been numerous incidents of young women threatened, frightened and coerced by boys sharing offensive, insulting and misogynist material about them. Some of the material is also homophobic, with other boys becoming the target too.

But social media is just the latest and fastest way to condone and collude with the sexual abuse of women. Those men who wrote glowing references for the rapist in Dingle, have done exactly that but with the added authority of their age and societal position. They are a different generation, nonetheless, they are just as effective at condemning and frightening women by their actions in support of a rapist over a rape victim.

## Sexual Violence in West Cork

As a domestic violence support service, we are all too aware of the prevalence of rape in violent relations. However, we are being contacted by an increasing number of women and girls (or their worried family members) who have experienced rape and sexual assault outside of any relationship. Both experiences, within and outside of

intimate relationships are devastating for the victims, and even more so when there are no specialist services available in West Cork to support them through the psychological, physical and legal impacts of what has been done to them. This prompted WCWAV to undertake, with funding and direction provided by Tusla DSGBV Unit, and with guidance and advice from our colleagues in Kerry Rape and Abuse Centre (KRAC) an extensive research project to determine the extent of the problem and how best survivors of sexual violence can be supported.

The research was conducted by Dr Caroline Crowley from Durrus who interviewed 47 agencies, community organisations, health and social care services, including Gardai as to the prevalence of survivors disclosing their experiences and asking for help. It became clear that in the absence of a specialist service, GPs particularly, Family Resource Centres, addiction counsellors, mental health professionals are all trying to support individuals as best they can with differing levels of success. All are agreed that survivors in West Cork need much more than what is currently on offer.

The research also interviewed survivors and these interviews were conducted by Miriam Ryan a WCWAV staff member experienced in working with people who have been sexually traumatised. Survivors, female and male, told of their difficulties in getting help, the obstacles and challenges they faced living in West Cork with no access to specialist support or the lack of understanding from some of the professionals they reached out to.

## Building a Community of Supporters

Based on what survivors, their loved ones and the wide range of community,

health, social care and legal services have told our researchers, the final report puts forward a unique model of support based on wraparound community services, specialist training, education and awareness raising throughout West Cork, increased access to sexual forensic services, specific therapeutic supports to victims, accompaniment, aftercare and ongoing support for as long as the survivors require.

This is not an initiative which any one organisation can take on alone. WCWAV are not specialists in sexual violence supports. We can do our best like many of the other professional and community services interviewed. But it is not enough.

Rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault can happen to anyone in our community of any age, of any sex or gender. Its scars can and do last a lifetime. As a community, we can do something about that. We can work together to prevent it happening, we can ensure that victims get the immediate, effective response they need and the healing they long for.

We can no longer stand by and be appalled at the actions of rapists and their apologists. We can do something concrete and innovative to support their victims here in West Cork. The report's title says it all: *We say it's not their fault - we do nothing to make it easy for them.* Lets do something as a community to make it easier for survivors in West Cork to get the services they need and deserve. Help to build a community of supports.

Anyone wishing to read the full research report can download it from our website: <https://www.westcorkwomensproject.ie>

A second phase of the research is currently being devised. **We are particularly interested in hearing from survivors in West Cork to help us look at what your needs are in more detail. This will be an anonymous survey and your participation will be completely confidential. If you would like to take part in the survey, please contact: [WestCorkResearch@gmail.com](mailto:WestCorkResearch@gmail.com)**

wonder

women of west cork



Fiona Lucey,

Solicitor,  
Wolfe & Co LLP

**Where are you from?** I was born and raised in Bantry, Co. Cork.

**Job Title:** Solicitor, Wolfe & Co LLP, Solicitors, Market Street, Skibbereen, Co. Cork.

**What does your work entail?** I work predominantly in the area of Conveyancing. I advise clients on residential and commercial property transactions, leases, mortgages, agricultural and family transfers and any issues with property title which can include easements and boundary issues. I also work in the area of Estate Planning and Administration which includes giving advice to clients in preparing Wills, Enduring Powers of Attorney and the process involved in administering a deceased person's estate after their death. The work is varied, interesting and I have a lot of client interaction.

**Why and how did you get involved in West Cork Women Against Violence?** I was the Solicitor engaged on behalf of the Project to advise on the purchase of the Safe House and it was a pleasure to be involved in such a worthwhile project.

**Since your first involvement with WCWAV do you feel things have improved for women experiencing DV?** I am very hopeful that the Safe House will offer those who are vulnerable, the comfort and protection that they need. This is a fantastic boost for any person experiencing domestic violence who may have previously had nowhere to turn to or were afraid to raise the issue. Since my involvement with WCWAV, I have seen at first hand, the plans that the organisation have for the future protection of vulnerable persons and it is very much welcomed. The pandemic has seen a greater emphasis placed on the need for people to speak out about mental health and domestic violence and bring those issues to the forefront of any debate into the future.

**How do you relax?** I like nothing more than a long walk after a long week. I like reading, watching TV and generally socialising (when it was possible to do so!).

**What changes would you most like to see for women?** I would like to see more of an emphasis being placed on remote working. I feel the flexibility that it brings could greatly improve the family unit and in fact would possibly reduce long-term stress upon women in particular who are often trying to juggle childcare with maintaining their employment. We have come along way in trying to maintain a healthy balance but I am hopeful that more can be done in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the firm to wish WCWAV the very best of luck with the Safe House. It was a pleasure to be involved in such a worthy cause.

“  
The magic in new  
beginnings is truly the  
most powerful  
of them all.

✂  
JOSIYAH MARTIN





**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

Tralee Women's Resource Centre  
066 712 0622

**national**

Women's Aid Freephone  
1800 341 900

**Citizens Information**

**WE ARE OPEN FOR PHONE & E-MAIL QUERIES**

**PHONE (West Cork)**  
**0761 07 8390**  
Email: [bantry@citinfo.ie](mailto:bantry@citinfo.ie)  
**10am – 5pm. Mon - Fri**  
**National Phone Service:**  
**0761 07 4000**  
**9am – 5pm, Mon - Fri**

**We are open for a limited number of appointments**  
**BY PRIOR ARRANGEMENT.**  
**Please call 0761 07 8390**

for the most up-to-date information log on to:  
[www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)  
[www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) | [www.hse](http://www.hse)

**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.

We're here to support you

**FREEPHONE**  
**1800 203 136**

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

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

**Helpline:** 1800 203 136 during office hours

[www.facebook.com/westcorkwomenagainstviolence](https://www.facebook.com/westcorkwomenagainstviolence)

Outreach and Drop In services have been temporarily suspended.

Appointments only

Court Accompaniment by prior arrangement

Published by West Cork Women Against Violence Project  
Harbour View, Bantry, Co. Cork  
[www.westcorkwomensproject.ie](http://www.westcorkwomensproject.ie)  
email: [admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie](mailto:admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie)