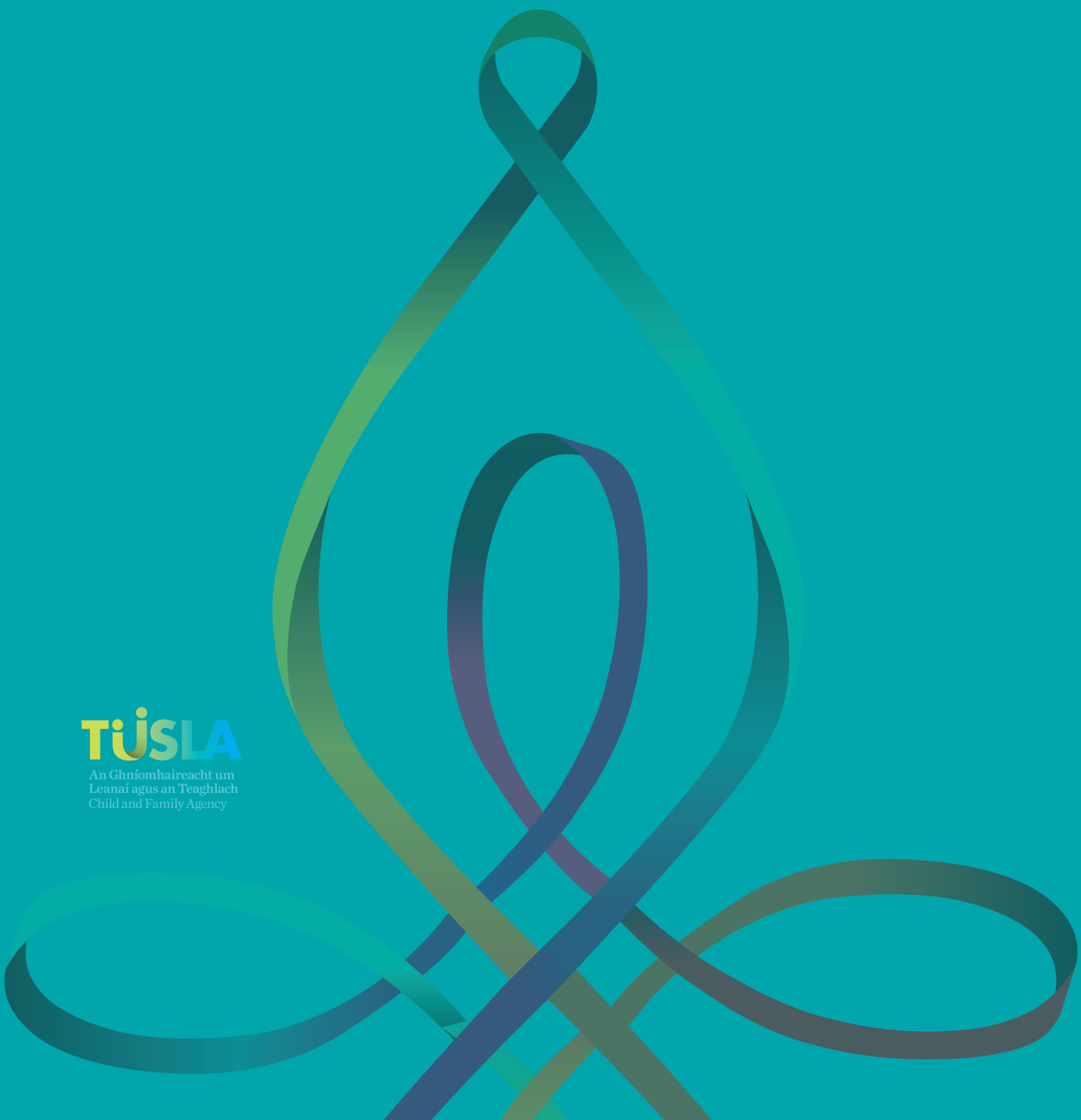




West Cork Women Against Violence Annual Report 2020

TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency





Chairperson's Foreword	1
Board of Management	2
Philosophy, Mission	2
Services	3
Key Events.....	3
Working from Home.....	4
Finding solutions and developing new protocols	5
The National Picture on Domestic Violence	6
Safe House	7
Children & Young People's Therapy Programme:	8
Local Support got us through.....	9
Whisper Covers & Synopsis.....	10
Statistics.....	12
Finances	20
Thanks	back cover



Chairperson's Foreword

'A year like no other'. This description was applied by many commentators to the year 2020, which started as any ordinary new year, and quickly became memorable for the Covid 19 virus that triggered a national public health crisis in Ireland and a global pandemic with worldwide public health implications. In mid-March 2020, the Irish government announced a shut down, and asked its citizens to stay safe from potential infection by staying at home, maintaining a distance of 2 metres from other people and wearing face coverings in public places. Washing our hands frequently was also advised in order to avoid becoming ill.

The result of the changes we all had to make in the way we lived our lives meant that staying at home became the new norm. Working from home, schooling from home, and shopping from home dictated the rhythm as the lockdown stretched from days to weeks and then, months.

The isolation that was a key factor in containing the spread of the Covid 19 virus introduced a deadly danger to women and their children who were at risk of, or experiencing domestic violence during the pandemic months of 2020. The United Nations referred to a growing 'shadow pandemic' of violence against women, in situations where women were completely separated from the support systems that could help them, and more isolated than usual.

Our staff team in WCWAV did everything they could to continue to support the women that reached out to the service. It required an approach that adapted to the public health measures and resulted in staff arranging to work from their own homes starting mid-March. Phone lines were linked into the WCWAV helpline so that they could take support calls remotely and that WiFi connections were tweaked to support their encrypted laptops. Worryingly, the helpline and office line were eerily quiet to begin with, but numbers began to pick up and women contacted the service in increasing numbers over the course of 2020 (there has once again been an increase in client numbers and demand for the service, in comparison to 2019).

Various national campaigns such as the 'Still Here' advertising campaign by the Department of Justice, and the An Garda Síochána initiative 'Operation Faoiseamh', which was a proactive Garda operation to reach out to individuals who had previously reported

domestic violence raised the visibility of Domestic Violence. It also helped to shine a light on the valuable work of local domestic violence support services, such as WCWAV, which were designated as front-line services, an acknowledgment that we were providing vital local supports to vulnerable and at-risk women.

In order to address the chronic lack of safe, emergency accommodation for women experiencing violence in West Cork, the WCWAV Safe House initiative is coming to fruition. A suitable property has been identified and we hope it will be operational by the middle of 2021. This purchase has been made possible by an anonymous donor working with the Community Foundation of Ireland. Tusla have provided funding for a dedicated Safe House Support Worker who will be in post by the end of the year. We all look forward to developing this innovative local response to women in West Cork who are out of home or homeless as a result of Domestic Violence- the first of its kind in West Cork.

The generous donations that continue to come in from West Cork people and the wider community is appreciated. We continue to appreciate the financial support of our core funder, Tusla (the Child and Family Agency), and are particularly appreciative of the additional resources that they made available in order to adapt the service and make it a safe space for staff and clients during the Covid 19 health emergency. Going forward, we remain hopeful of a positive change in the funding climate as the issue of Domestic Violence remains highly visible, as the demand for our service continues to increase and as our clients and other agencies with which we interact, continue to value our work.

It is clear that we could not do what we do, and do it so well, without the enormous capacity and commitment of our staff, and my fellow Board members. My sincere gratitude to all who are part of the West Cork Women Against Violence Project.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the resilience of our clients who understand better than any of us the courage that is needed to stand up against Domestic Violence, especially during a pandemic lockdown.

Kathleen Harnedy, Chairperson

Board of Management & Staff

Our project is run by a Voluntary Board of Management (VBOM) comprised of community representatives and activists, partnership organisations, legal, financial and mental health professionals, who give of their time and commitment freely.

WCWAV has a staff of five - one full-time and four part-time - who between them have over 60 years of experience in delivering support to women in crisis and in promoting the issues of violence against women and gender equality.

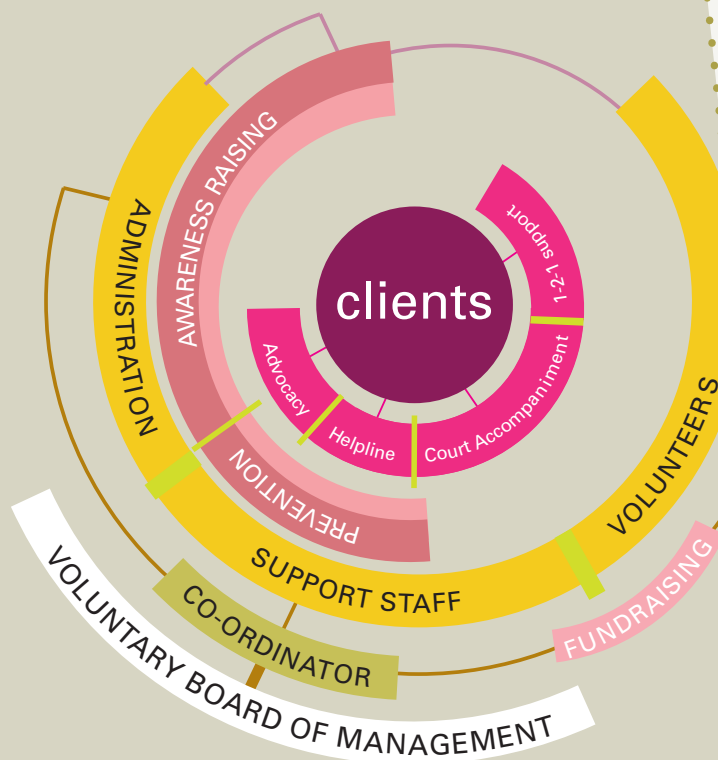
The Board of Management are all volunteers who give of their time, expertise and insights to ensure the development and good governance of the Project without remuneration. In addition, volunteers help in producing, designing and distributing West Cork Whisper as well as helping out with fundraising and generally making themselves available whenever additional help is needed. Without their dedication and generosity WCWAV would be unable to provide the wide array of activities and services which it currently delivers.

Philosophy

West Cork Women Against Violence believes that Domestic Violence is both a serious crime against women and a dangerous expression of gender inequality. We believe all forms of Domestic Violence, from the everyday to the most extreme expressions, are unacceptable.

Mission Statement

West Cork Women Against Violence provide a safe and confidential listening, information and support service to women and their children in West Cork experiencing domestic violence, while also challenging social, political and judicial tolerance of violence against women.



Board Members

Kathleen Harnedy - Chairperson
Kathryn Kingston - Secretary
Sheila Anne O'Leary - Treasurer
Allison Aldred
Anne O' Donovan
Ann Sullivan
Brigid Hartnett
Beth Cocker
Mary Louise Lynch
Kate Whitford

Services

WCWAV provide the following services:

- A crisis helpline
- 1-2-1 support and appointments
- Drop-in service
- Outreach service
- Court and other appointment accompaniment
- Counselling programme
- Free national newsletter, *The West Cork Whisper*
- Awareness-raising and training to community groups, young people and professionals on domestic violence
- Parenting Programme for women who have experienced DV
- Children and Young People's Therapy Programme

In an extraordinary year, extraordinary effort was required. The challenges of operating a crisis domestic violence service amid a health pandemic came thick and fast. However, the staff of WCWAV not only rose to those challenges but gave even more of their time and abilities to ensuring that no woman was without support or options. And they had to find ways to do so working remotely.

key events of 2020



Working from Home

Our administration which involves a wide range of practical operational functions; telephone systems, IT, budgets, financial payments, procurement, communications & publications, reception duties, diary scheduling is what underpins the entire service and makes the project tick from day to day and month to month. This was completely revised by and then transported to the home of our administrator, Julia. It is no exaggeration to say that she kept the entire show on the road.

WCWAV support team; Susan, Colette and Lisa maintained phone support five days a week to women calling the service. Working from their homes they took calls from women in lockdown, calls that increased by 30% over the course of the year; made calls to court services, legal aid offices, gardai and health professionals on behalf of clients. This was difficult, working alone with no colleague to call on to discuss the best way forward for a woman in need, or just to be able to take a breather and a cup of coffee with a co-worker before the next crisis called in. And the phones kept ringing. The team also kept in contact with clients who while no longer living with perpetrators were alone with children, juggling access issues in a pandemic and children cooped up and frustrated. For those women, a call from someone who knew what they had been through and to whom they could be honest and open about their fears was so emotionally important in helping them get through the rest of that day or week.



Finding solutions and developing new protocols

Lisa from our support team built up a list of potential accommodations which could be used in an emergency for women and children needing to escape their own homes. The generosity of the West Cork community has never been more obvious, holiday home owners, Air B&B proprietors and one particular local hotel manager made a real difference to the safety and security of a number of our clients and their children.

Within the first two weeks of the Lockdown, the team and the co-ordinator worked to develop a set of protocols with the West Cork Special Protective Services Unit to ensure a smooth and safe transition for women and children who needed to exit their homes and be taken to alternative locations. Physical transfers had to be done while maintaining all health protocols to safeguard everyone involved. This collaboration was possible between An Garda Síochána and our service because of strong relationships built over recent years and a mutual understanding of each of our respective areas of expertise.



The National Picture on Domestic Violence

As a manager and the public face of the project, Marie was engaged with her counterparts throughout the country sharing information, ideas and trying to establish new solutions to the problems which the pandemic posed to women and children living with abuse and to our services' capacity to respond effectively. Each week, managers and coordinators from all of the country's DV services met via Zoom under the banner of Safe Ireland which represents the views of the sector nationally.

This was an extremely important platform which gave our work and the needs of our clients a national and a political profile. Through these collaborations and discussions, DV services were able to lobby government via Safe Ireland for a special payment, the DV Rent Supplement, for women who needed to access rent payments quickly because of changes in their housing circumstances due to domestic violence. Throughout 2020, Safe Ireland collated the weekly records of DV services. These showed the numbers of women contacting our services across the country and were therefore able to track the rise in violence against women and children throughout the pandemic.

Tusla who fund the independent DV sector's staffing and office needs quickly responded to the needs of services by providing additional funding each month to cover new costs incurred with the purchase of more laptops and mobile phones and/or access to internet services such as Zoom. Tusla also provided funds for any additional costs incurred in trying to provide emergency accommodation for women and children fleeing violence.



Safe House

Although the search for an appropriate property began in 2019 and continued into the start of 2020, this had to be put on hold because of the pandemic and the restrictions which followed. However, when these eased somewhat towards the end of the year, we took up the search again and a property was identified at the tail end of 2020. Tusla had also agreed to match the philanthropic funding received to buy the safe house with resources to recruit and employ a specialist member of staff who would be responsible for setting up the safe house and making it operational. We were able to implement the recruitment procedure under health protocols in the summer of 2020 and appoint a new member of staff. However, barring any other major difficulties 2021 will be the year that the Safe House becomes fully operational.



Children & Young People's Therapy Programme:

Despite lengthy periods of lockdown and maintaining health protocols five children were referred to the programme and were able to avail of specialised counselling in 2020.



Local Support got us through

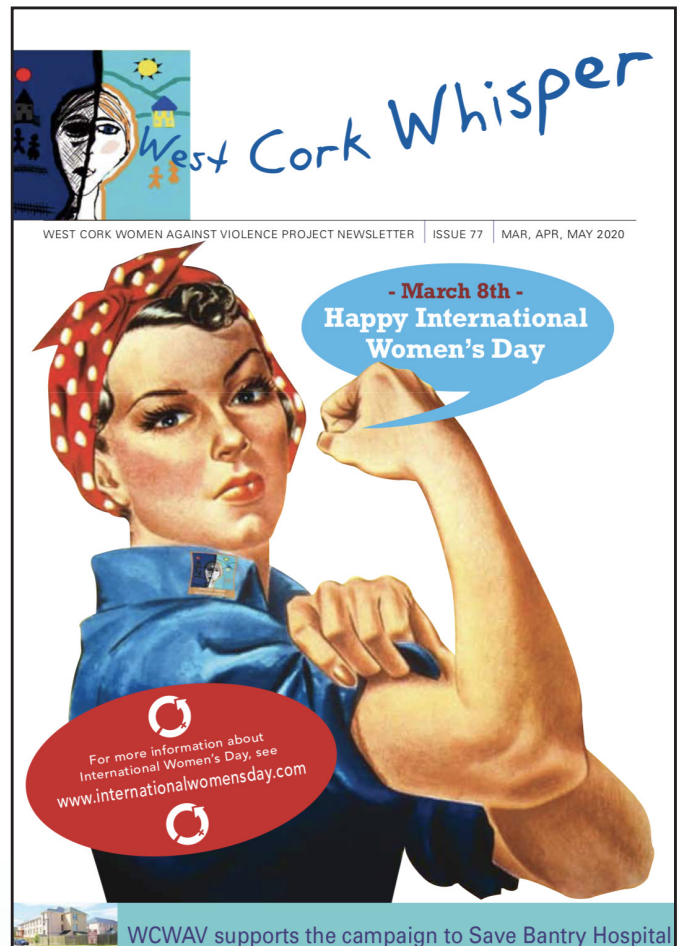
There is no doubt that 2020 has been the most extraordinary year. It was often exhausting, frustrating and at times felt never-ending. But whatever difficulties it presented we were able to overcome not only as individuals and organisations pulling together but because as a community, West Cork was not found wanting. From the individual members of the WCWAV Board who gave leadership throughout those months, the support and coverage by local media of the issue of DV, the donations received from groups like Criticall, local people and business owners; the camaraderie of other community groups and community activists pulling together to share information and resources all made it possible to keep providing the WCWAV service.

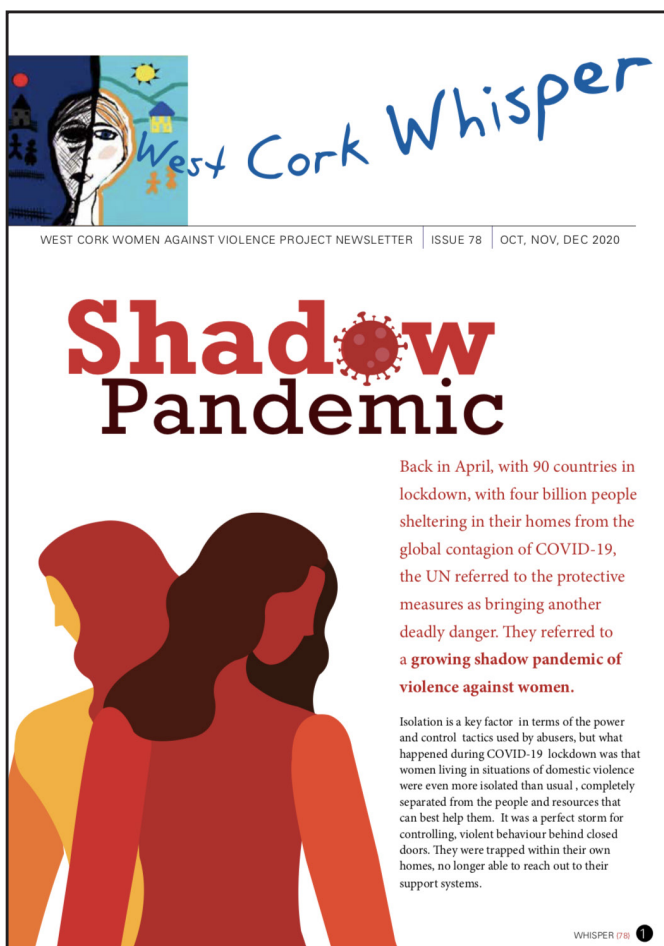
Thank you to all of you.



Whispers in 2020

2020 saw only two editions of the West Cork Whisper; the spring edition - before lockdown - and one in the Autumn





Whisper #77

Whisper #77 included an article called Gaslighting by the Courts, which referenced an article of the same name by US lawyer Barry Goldstein. This article decloaked many of the myths surrounding DV in particular, in relation to court actions. It also featured our support group, the new DPSU for West Cork and NVR training for parents.

Whisper #78

Whisper #78 led with an article entitled, The Shadow Pandemic, a phrase coined by the UN when observing an increase in the number of women seeking help during the lockdown. We also included some of our own stories of our lockdowns, a review of Louise O'Neill's book, After the Silence, and an update on the sexual violence research that WCWAV have been instrumental in developing,

statistics 2020

265 individual clients were supported
(including two male callers re family member)

226 of these were **new clients**

39 were **repeat clients**

27 clients phoned about friends and family
(will be classified as N/A)

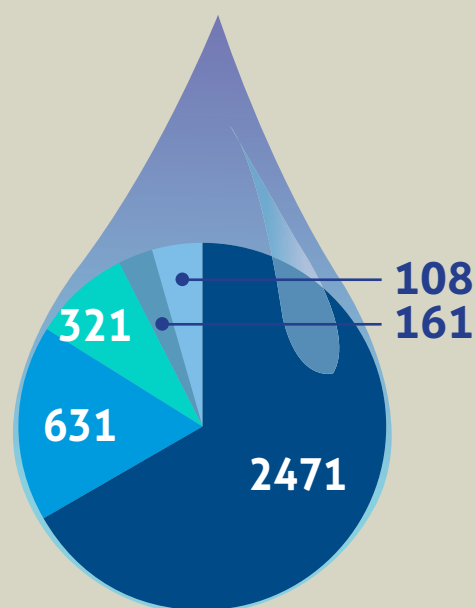
10 professionals phoned for support re case

There were 2607
instances of contact

Types of abuse (per contact)

Many women experience more
than one type of abuse

Emotional.....	2471
Physical.....	631
Financial.....	321
Sexual.....	108
Gaslighting.....	161





Number of one to ones - 213

Drop into office.....	14
Appointment at base.....	41
Skibbereen outreach.....	5
Café / hotel.....	2
Client House.....	5

Location and number of contacts

The majority of contacts came from West Cork.

One was from England, one from France and one from Russia.

The location of fifty contacts were unknown

We also received a number of contacts from the following regions:

North Cork.....	5	Carlow.....	1	Clare	1	Dublin.....	1
Kerry	4	Midlands.....	1	Tipperary.....	1		



How contact is made - 2485 instances

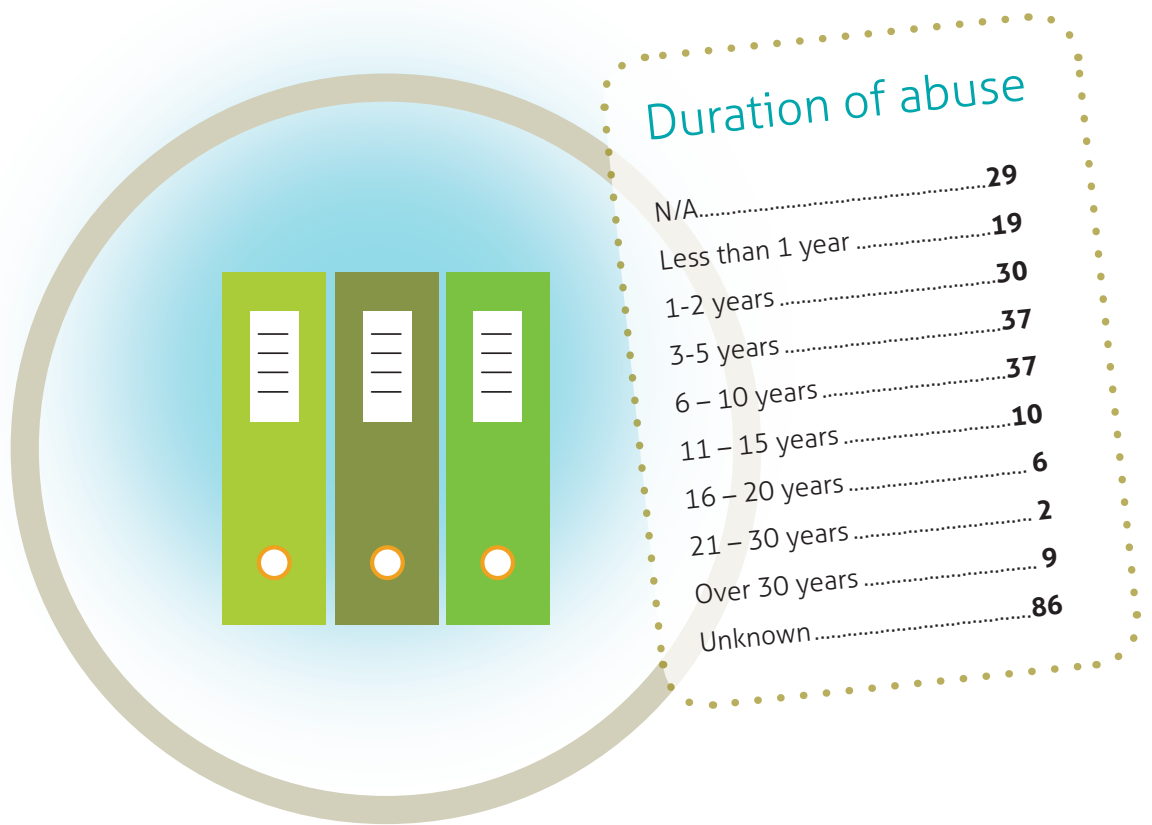
Bantry office line.....	1091	Zoom Strategy meeting.....	2	Letter.....	44
Helpline.....	82	Zoom case conferences.....	3	Email.....	573
Mobile.....	657			Facebook.....	25
Skibb outreach calls.....	8				



Sources of referral

Some clients have several sources of referrals

Self	108	Mental Health Department	4	Court Clerk	2
Family / Friends	15	Community Welfare Officer	3	Womens Aid	1
Gardai	15	Social Worker CUMH	3	Citizens Information Service	1
Our website	8	CAMHS	2	West Cork Travellers	1
Counsellor	8	Air B&B	2	ex-client	1
Child Protection Social Worker	8	National Learning Network	2	Open Dialogue	1
Child & Family Support Network Co-ordinator	7	Drug & Alcohol counsellor	2	Home Focus	1
Solicitor	6	Edel House	2	Community worker	1
our media	6	Direct Provision Centre	2	EPIC	1
TD	6	Domestic Violence Social Worker	2	Adult ED	1
Resource centres	6	One Stop Shop, Cork	2	Adult Safeguard Social Worker	1
Cuanlee	5	Board of Management	2	Unknown	22
GP	5	Housing	2		



Age Range of Clients

18 to 20.....	2
20 to 24.....	15
25 to 29.....	5
30 to 34.....	9
35 to 39.....	14
40 to 44.....	14
45 to 49.....	14
50 to 54.....	11
55 to 59.....	16
60 to 64.....	9
65 to 70.....	7
70 +.....	5
Unknown.....	115
N/A.....	29
Relatives and family	

Race/ethnicity

White.....	203
Asian.....	3
Black.....	2
Mixed race.....	5
Traveller.....	5
Unknown.....	20
N/A.....	29
Relatives and professional	

Legal status

Irish Citizen.....	146
Other EU citizen	25
Non-EU Migrant	27
Unknown.....	38
N/A.....	29
Relatives and professional	

Relation to abuser

Spouse.....	89
Ex Spouse	8
Partner.....	27
Ex-partner.....	61
Boyfriend	3
Ex- boyfriend	7
Family.....	18
Father	3
Mother	2
Son.....	9
Daughter.....	1
Brother.....	2
Sister.....	1
Stranger	1
Unknown.....	22
N/A.....	29
Relatives and professional	

Children



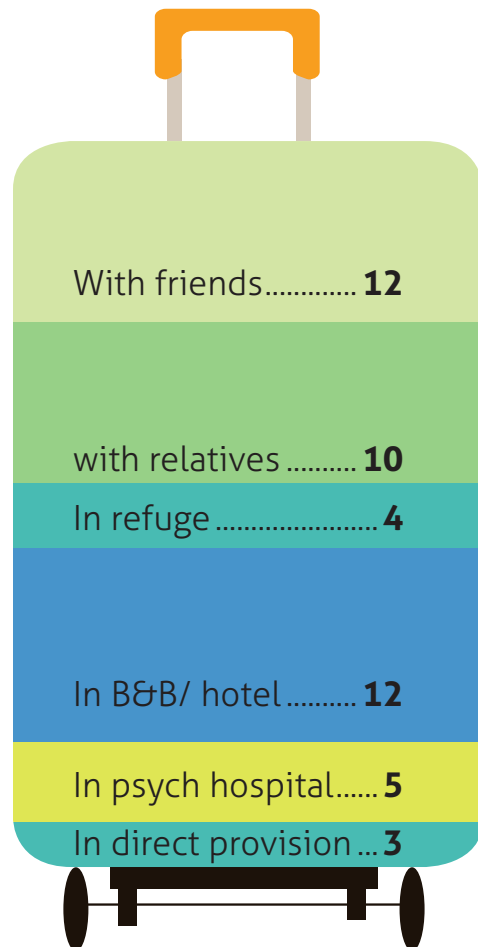
Unknown.....	24
Pregnant.....	5
N/A.....	29

Child protection

Child Protection Discussions.....	15
Child Protection Referrals (11 children)	4
Referral to Meitheal (2 children).....	1
Signposted to Meitheal.....	5

Homelessness

40 clients with 48 children
(some interchange)



Accommodation paid by project: 5 clients

Other issues presenting

Clients with medical needs.....	3
Clients with mental health issues.....	32
Clients with suicidal ideation.....	3
Clients with substance abuse issues.....	8
Clients with disabilities.....	2
Childhood abuse.....	5
Early childhood sexual abuse	14
Interparental violence.....	8
DV in prior relationship.....	9
Child to parent violence	3

General accompaniment

15 requests from 8 women

All were fulfilled



Reasons for accompaniment

Give legal orders post court to Gardai.....	3
Accompany for housing application.....	1
Accompany to solicitor appointment.....	2
Accompany client to SATU	1
Accompany client to hospital for strategy meeting re husband	1
Accompany client to garda station to make statements: Log incident.....	1
Breaches of orders.....	3
Response to allegations from husband	1
Re assault	1
To PSU re: coercive control statement	1

Court accompaniment

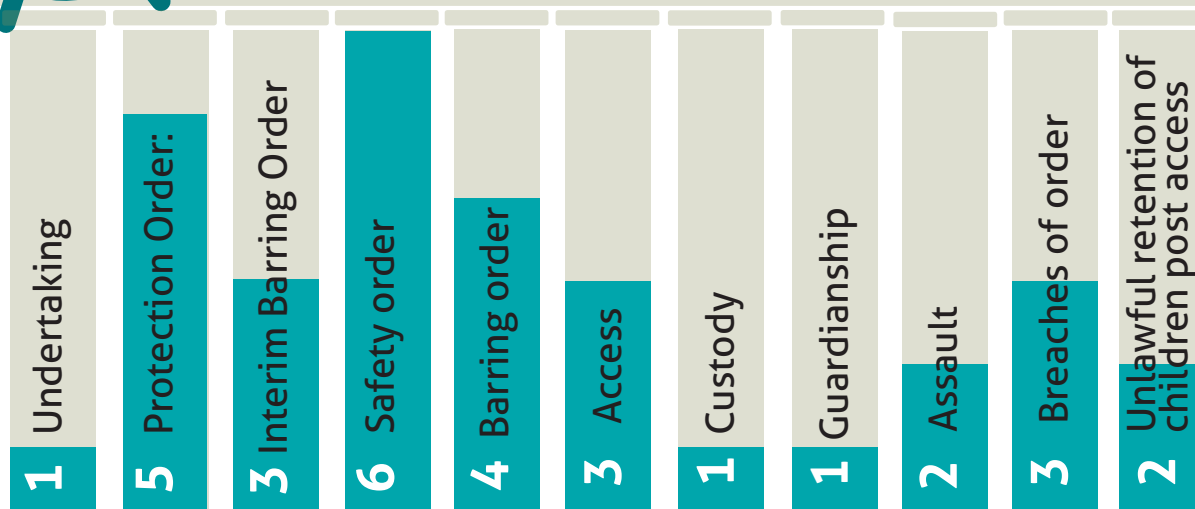
51 court accompaniments requests received

45 accompaniments for 23 individual clients

3 cases were postponed, 3 cases we were unable to fulfil due to Covid



19 cases were adjourned





436 referrals to professionals

Gardai	58	Community Welfare Officer..	11	Treoir	3
Solicitor.....	46	GP	11	Society of St Vincent de Paul	3
Legal Aid.....	38	Children & Young People's Therapy Programme	6	B&B.....	3
Counsellor	32	Protective Services Unit.....	7	Mental Health Social Worker.....	3
Housing.....	29	Housing AP.....	7	Child Psychology	3
Court clerk.....	29	Mediation.....	6	Non Violence Resistance Programme.....	1
Free Legal Advice Centre.....	26	Mental Health and Support Unit.....	6	NASC.....	1
Other Domestic Violence Organisations.....	26	West Cork Counselling and Support Services.....	5	Harbour.....	1
Citizens Information Service.....	17	Victims after Crime.....	5	Public Health Nurse.....	1
Child Protection Social Worker.....	15	Meitheal.....	5	Hospital	1
Refuge	14	Family support	4	DV Social Worker	1
Novas.....	12	Rape Crisis Centre	3	MOVE.....	1
				Elder Abuse Social Worker.....	1

finance 2020

The following has been taken from:
West Cork Women Against Violence Ltd
(a company limited by guarantee without a share capital)
supplementary information relating to the financial
statementsdetailed income and expenditure account
for the year ended 31st December 2019.

The supplementary information does not form
part of the audited financial statements

income

	2020 €	2019 €
Tusla core funding	240,523	240,523
Tusla once off funding	26,718	11,646
Other income	19,690	39,730
Amortisation of government grants	221	-
	287,152	291,899

expenses

	2020 €	2019 €
Wages & salaries	181,813	163,232
Social welfare costs	19,695	17,472
Staff defined contribution pension costs	11,209	11,299
Staff training and support	1,193	2,628
Board expenses and training	25	897
Rent & rates	18,550	19,880
Insurance	1,633	1,478
Light and heat	1,616	1,483
Repairs & maintenance	1,584	2,386
Covid related expenses	4,179	-
Office expenses	4,509	6,620
Client database	3,400	-
Advertising	1,301	2,555
Telephone	4,955	4,198
Computer costs	797	1,279
Staff travel expenses	2,978	9,648
Professional fees	1,223	2,230
Bank charges	268	282
General expenses	538	204
Volunteer expenses	-	440
Client support expenses	390	231
Client support	7,595	17,431
Other programme costs	13,014	12,993
Subscriptions	723	327
Auditor's remuneration	1,784	1,599
Depreciation	647	296
	285,619	281,088
Net surplus	1,533	10,811

Our thanks

West Cork Women Against Violence wish to thank the following people and organisations:

An Garda Síochána, West Cork Division

The Community Foundation for Ireland, for making the possibility of a Safe house in West Cork a reality.

And to our good friend and colleague Dr Caroline Crowley for her support, insight and continued expertise.

All who have donated, organised a fundraiser and generally helped to keep us afloat,

To Dairine Cross , Tusla regional coordinator for DV for her support and assistance

And to all of our partner organisations in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors,

THANK YOU

And as ever to our volunteers and supporters, we couldn't do it without you

Marie Mulholland, Co-ordinator

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