

**Survive and thrive**

Sonas Housing Annual Report 2010



**"I feel safe;  
someone has  
got my back."**

Sonas service user 2010

**Fact**

In 2010 Sonas supported  
184 women and 234 children  
across all of its services.

## Contents

Chairperson's foreword	– page 3
CEO's foreword	– page 4
Anne's story*	– page 5
1.0 Sonas highlights in 2010	– page 6
2.0 Sonas services	– page 8
2.1 Demand for Sonas services	– page 8
2.2 Admissions into Sonas supported housing	– page 9
2.3 Admissions into Viva House	– page 10
Julie's story*	– page 11
2.4 Support work with women and children	– page 14
2.5 Moving on from Sonas Housing services	– page 16
2.6 Innovation in service delivery	– page 17
Marie's story*	– page 18
2.7 Housing management statistics	– page 19
3.0 Sonas work in 2010	– page 20
3.1 Influencing housing and social policy	– page 20
Louisa's story*	– page 21
3.2 Collaborative policy approaches	– page 22
3.3 Communications and awareness-raising	– page 22
3.4 Focus on fundraising	– page 23
3.5 Good organisational development	– page 25
Children's summer project	– page 26
Financial statements	– pages 29 & 30

\* All names have been changed to protect identities.

## Our identity

### Who we are

Sonas Housing Association is a charity that provides housing, support and refuge to women and children affected by domestic violence.

## Our mission

### What we do

Our mission is to provide high-quality housing support and refuge services to women and children affected by domestic violence, empowering them to regain control over all aspects of their lives.

### Our key practice principles are:

- Maximise women and children's safety
- Empower women to move from crisis to safety and independence through the provision of quality services
- Advocate for the rights of women and children at an individual, institutional and policy level
- Provide a woman- and child-centred approach that recognises the diverse needs and experiences of service users
- Apply an evidence-based and outcome-focused approach to all elements of our work.

## Chairperson's foreword

**2010 was a year marked with a number of significant positive developments for Sonas. A key development was the opening of Viva House women's refuge in Blanchardstown, the doors of which finally opened in June 2010. I would like to pay particular tribute to the persistent work of the refuge working group who made this possible. In the last seven months of 2010 Viva House supported 70 women and 124 children. We look forward to many more years of providing safe emergency accommodation and support for women and children escaping domestic violence in the area.**

Other important developments in 2010 were the opening of new housing in Belmayne and the development of a comprehensive data system to allow us to gather information on the situation, needs and experiences of the women and children accessing all of our services. In addition to this data system, Sonas gathers anonymous qualitative information from our service users each year. This evaluative data provides us with important information to allow us to design, deliver and review our services to ensure maximum impact for our service users. All of this information allows for a more evidence-based, outcome-focused delivery of services which we are constantly striving to improve on.

It gives me particular pleasure to note the overwhelmingly positive feedback from our service user feedback survey in 2010. Women were hugely positive about the quality of the emotional and practical support received from the staff of Sonas. Women noted the tangible outcomes of that support such as increased self-confidence regarding decision-making, feeling safer and feeling more hope for the future for themselves and their children.

I would like to refer to the experience of one woman and her two children who accessed Sonas for support to illustrate the positive outcomes being achieved by Sonas. To protect the identity of this woman and her children we have referred to her as 'Marie' and her story is outlined in more detail on page 14. Marie has a profound hearing impairment and she has experienced many years of abuse both as a child and as an adult. Before being referred to Sonas, Marie had been in and out of refuge provision on many occasions and her previous attempts to live independently in rented accommodation had broken down due to the lack of targeted sustained support for her and her children to overcome the trauma of abuse. Marie and her children have been receiving specialist support from Sonas for over 18 months and Sonas has recently offered them a three-bedroom apartment with specialist ongoing visiting support. This is their first permanent home together.

On behalf of the board, I would like to pay tribute to and sincerely thank all of our staff for their expertise and dedication to ensuring women like Marie are empowered to live lives free of abuse. I would also like to pay a special tribute to our CEO Sharon Cosgrove for her expertise in steering the organisation, in particular for her excellent management of the significant changes in the organisation over this period. Finally, I would like to thank the Sonas board for their work in 2010 and to welcome our new board members who bring a range of skills and expertise to Sonas to support the work into the future.



**Rachel Mullen**  
Chairperson

## CEO's foreword

**2010 was a busy and exciting year for Sonas. The focus in 2010 has been on quality, efficiency and delivering a professional service that responds to the varied and changing needs of service users. Both the new support service database and the annual service user evaluation provide a clear picture of what is working for service users and help us respond in a timely way.**

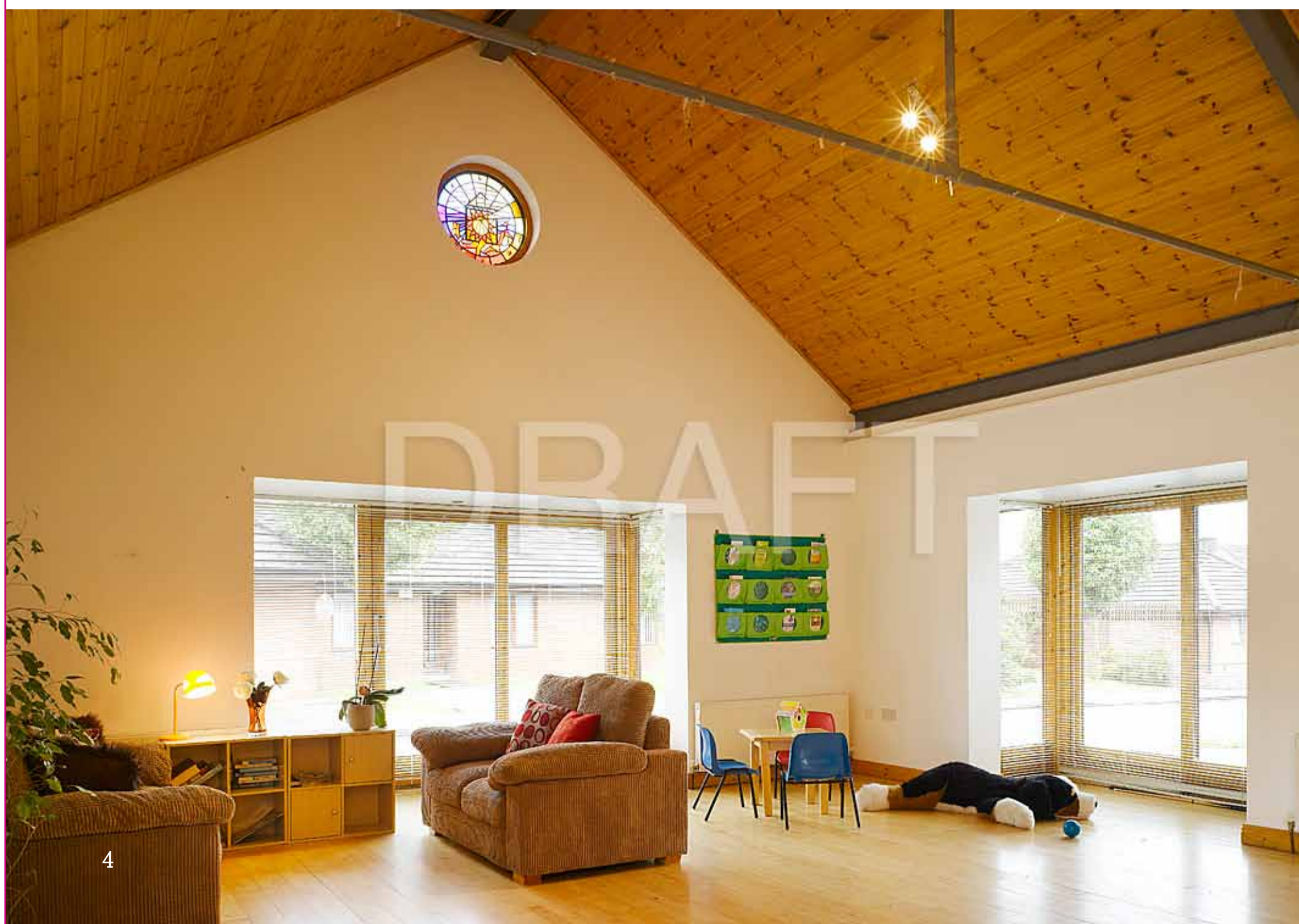
After many years of setbacks, the building crisis and the tightening of funding from the state, we finally opened Viva House in Blanchardstown in June 2010, thanks to the support of Fingal County Council and the HSE. This new refuge provides eight self-contained units of accommodation, with a children's service and an outreach service into the community. Between June and December it accommodated and supported 70 women and 124 children and provided outreach services to 24 women.

The demand for our housing support services continued at a steady rate, with levels in line with 2009. We had 83 applications for housing with support in 2010. In total Sonas supported 90 women and 110 children in 2010 in our housing support services. The housing support service was extended to include 15 new apartments in Belmayne. This was all done within existing resources and the absorption of a funding cut from the HSE.

The Sonas staff almost doubled in 2010 which has brought new experience and expertise into Sonas at all levels (complimenting the existing staff), in areas including refuge, low threshold homeless services, floating support, mental health, children's work and back office management. We are well placed for change and for implementing the new housing support services under the pathway model in Dublin.



**Sharon Cosgrove**  
CEO

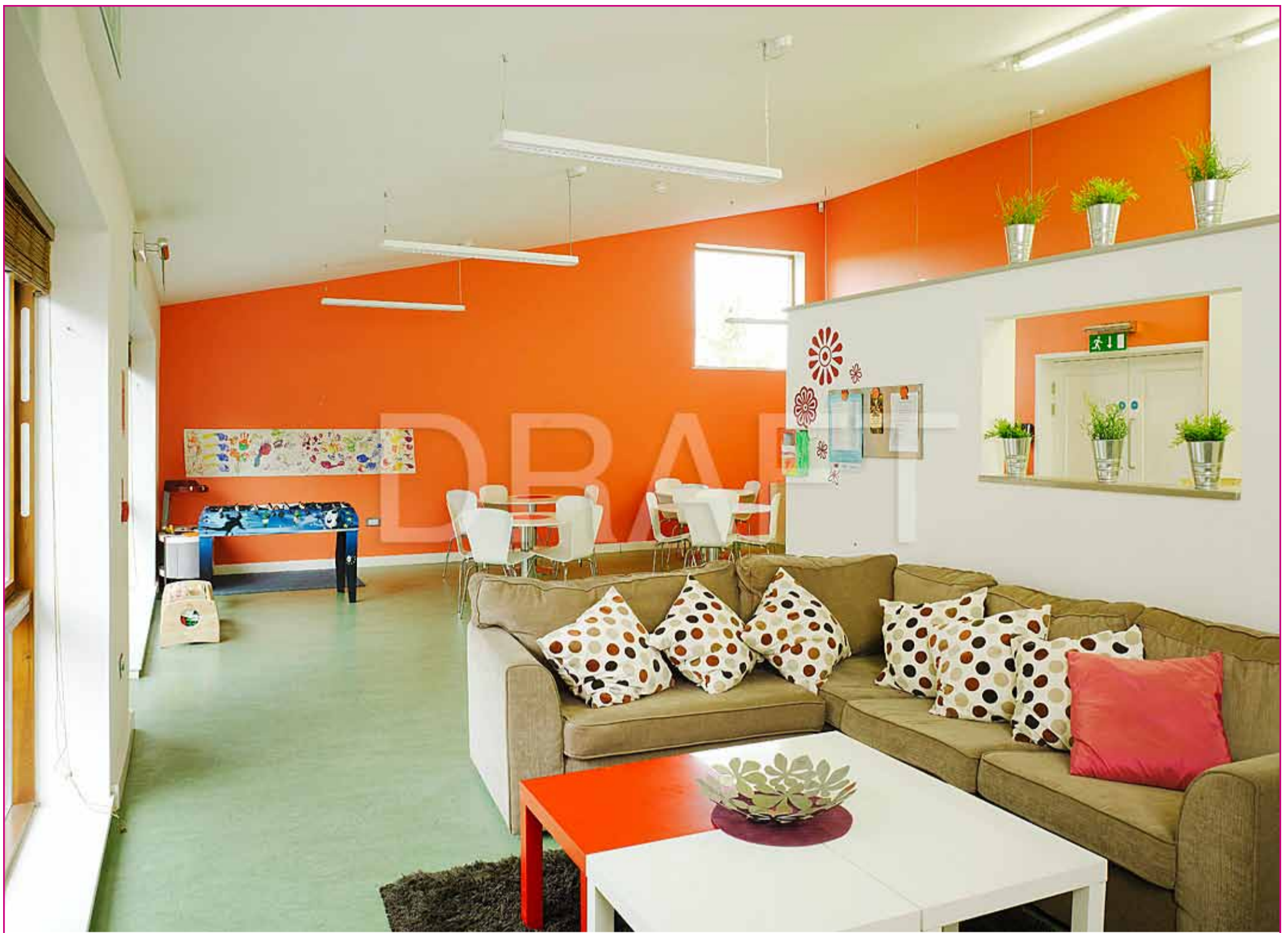




### Anne's story

When I arrived to Viva House with two children I was very upset, distressed, terrified, lost. I thought 'What am I doing here?' But as soon as I slept in my apartment I realised that my life and my children's lives were going to change forever. The apartment was so nice and clean and you could cook there for yourself. I felt like I came into a different world where everyone cares about you. You can find somebody to talk to anytime. That was important for me because I didn't speak to anybody for a very long time. It was a huge relief for me to let all of this stuff come out.

It was great to know that somebody is fighting for you and your kids and you are not alone. I've received and learned so much information. I can't believe how lucky I am to be here; thanks to this place I've got my independence and my kids back. The staff here have helped me get my confidence back and to realise that there is no excuse for abuse, control, humiliation and violence.



## 1.0 Sonas highlights in 2010

2010 was a year of immense development for Sonas. In this year:

- New services for women and children opened
  - Sonas opened its first women’s refuge Viva House in the Dublin 15 area in June 2010. The facility comprises eight self-contained family units, a large communal space, children’s room, teenager’s rooms, one-to-one rooms and offices. As well as providing a 24-hour refuge service we also offer Viva Reach-out, which is an outreach information and support service.
  - Sonas acquired a new supported housing development in Belmayne in September 2010 to add to its existing stock. The Belmayne development comprises 15 different apartments, consisting of three one-bedroom, ten two-bedroom and two three-bedroom high-quality and well-finished apartments. A support service is delivered to the apartments on a visiting basis.
- Our evaluation showed positive outcomes for women in our service.
- Sonas doubled in size in terms of staffing levels and numbers of service users.
- The profile of Sonas increased through policy, interagency and media work.
- A support service database was put in place allowing for better internal working practices, case management and easier reporting of the work of Sonas. The database helps us embed an evidence-based approach in our service delivery.

"I found the staff of Sonas were extremely helpful in everything I put to them."

Sonas service user 2010

**Fact**

100% of Sonas service users are more comfortable in their decision-making and can do more things on their own because of Sonas.



## 2.0 Sonas services in 2010

### 2.1 Demand for Sonas services

In total there were 433 enquiries about Sonas services throughout the year, with 184 women and 234 children supported either through our supported housing, refuge or outreach service.

- 90 women and 110 children supported in Sonas supported housing complexes in 2010.
- 70 women and 124 children supported in Viva House refuge services.
- 24 women supported through Viva Reach-out.



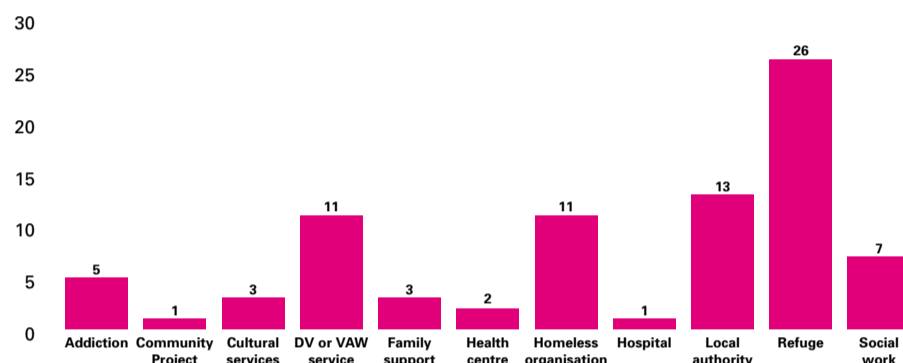
## 2.2 Applications for Sonas supported housing

In the preceding three years up until 2010, the demand for Sonas Housing increased year on year. The high demand for housing for victims of domestic violence continued into 2010 and 83 applications were received throughout the year.

### 2.2.1 Referral sources

Chart 1 shows the referral sources of the 83 applications. Women's refuges were the biggest referral agent, followed by local authorities, domestic violence services and homeless services.

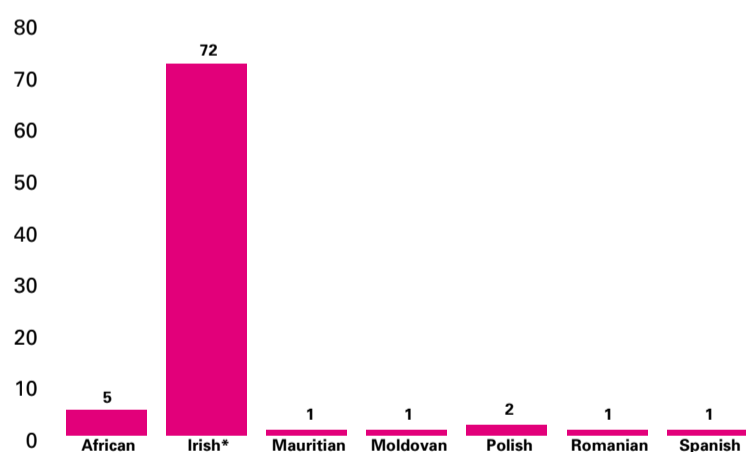
**Chart 1 – Referral sources into Sonas supported housing**



### 2.2.2 Ethnic origin of Sonas applicants

The majority of applications into Sonas supported housing were Irish (72 - five of whom were members of the Travelling Community). The next highest ethnic group was women from African countries. Chart 2 shows the ethnic origin of Sonas applicants.

**Chart 2 – Ethnic origin of Sonas applicants**

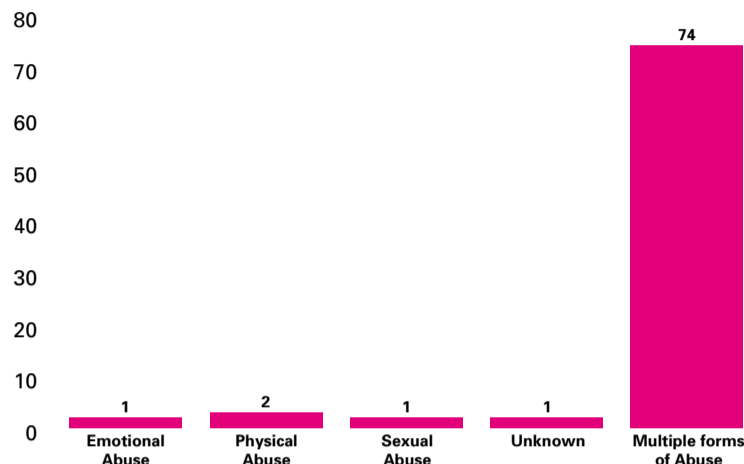


\* 5 of whom were from the Traveller community

### 2.2.3 Types of abuse experienced

The majority of the applicants suffered multiple forms of abuse – showing the varying nature of domestic violence. Chart 3 shows the type of abuse recorded for Sonas housing applicants.

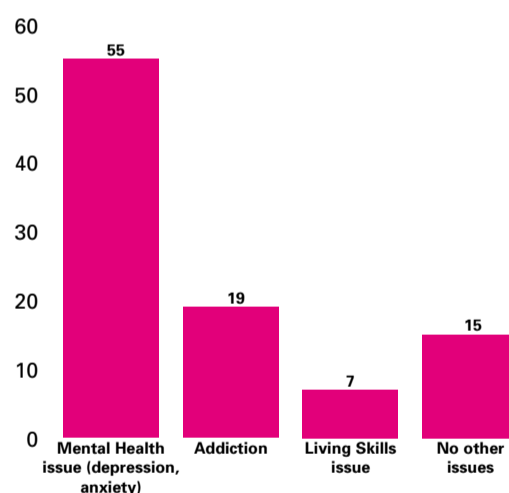
**Chart 3 – Types of abuse experienced**



### 2.2.4 Additional presenting needs

Living with domestic violence has many effects and can result in anxiety, depression as well as negative coping behaviours such as addictions. Chart 4 shows information gathered in relation to other presenting needs in supported housing applicants. Some 66% of applicants had mental health problems, 23% had addiction issues and 16% had both mental health and addiction issues. Chart 4 shows the break-down of other presenting needs. (This information is recorded at application stage.)

**Chart 4 – Additional presenting needs**

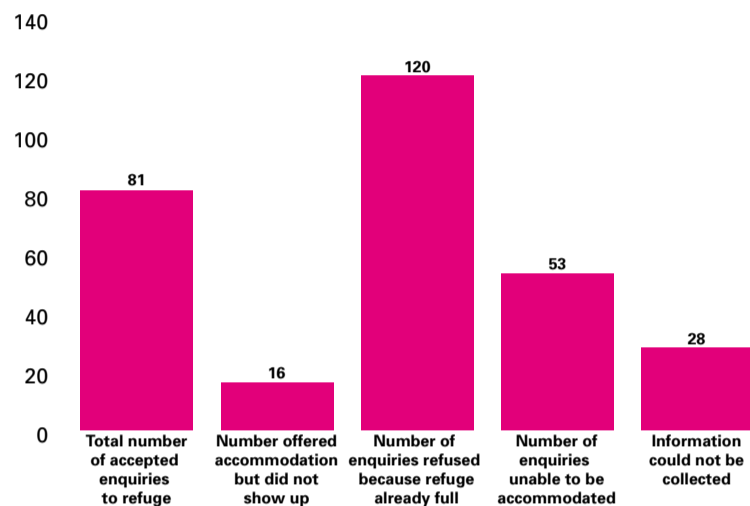


\* 13 presented with both mental health and addiction issues

## 2.3 Admissions into Viva House

The Viva House service was operational from June 2010. In total 70 women and 124 children accessed Viva House refuge service on 81 occasions in these seven months. The demand for the refuge service however was far greater than this with almost 300 enquiries recorded. Two out of every five enquiries were turned away because the refuge was already full. This is sadly a major issue for the refuge and other refuges across the country and demonstrates the need for greater level of refuge provision. Chart 5 breaks down the outcome of enquiries into refuge.

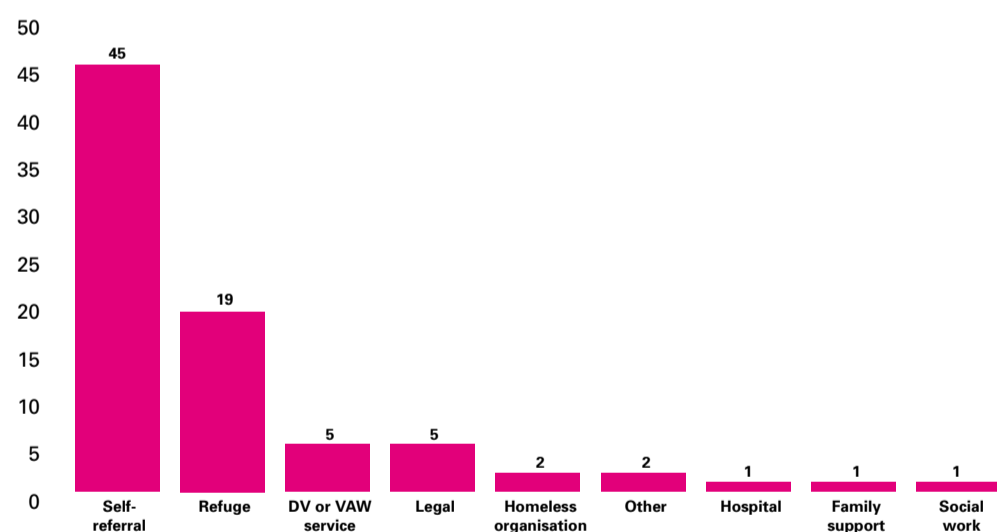
**Chart 5 – Outcome of enquiries into Viva House**



### 2.3.1 Referral sources into Viva House

The majority of referrals into refuge were self-referrals reflecting the crisis nature of the work. The next biggest referral category was other refuges – reflective of the multi-agency work that goes on among refuges in the region as well as the demand for services. Chart 6 breaks down the pathways into refuge.

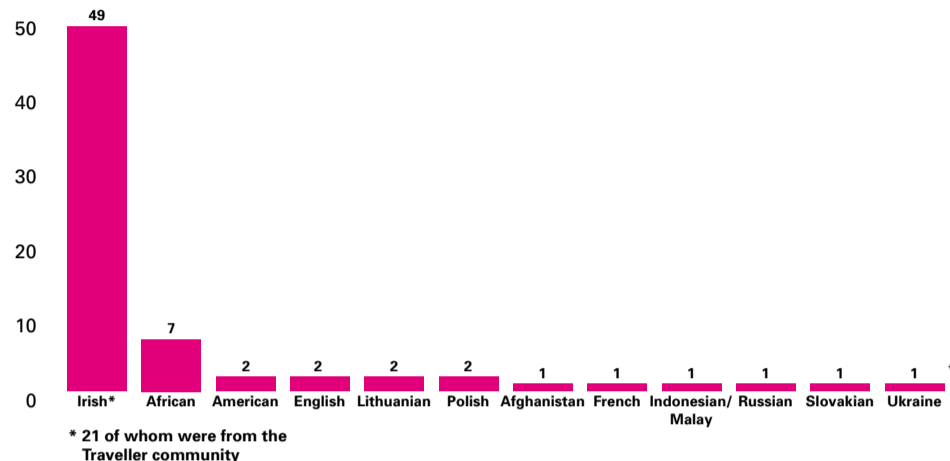
**Chart 6 – Referral sources into Viva House**



### 2.3.2 Ethnic origin of Viva House admissions

The majority of Viva House admissions were Irish (49) including 21 women from the travelling community. The next highest ethnic group is African women. Chart 7 breaks down the ethnic origin of Viva House admissions.

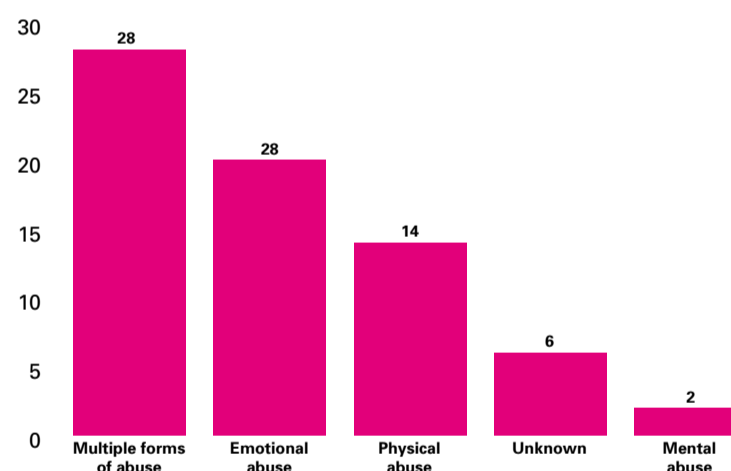
**Chart 7 – Ethnic origin into Viva House**



### 2.3.3 Types of abuse

Where possible the type of abuse a woman has experienced is recorded when she presents to Viva House. This may not be possible, however, depending on the individual situation. As with supported housing applications, the majority of women suffer multiple forms of abuse. A great many present suffering from emotional abuse, showing the severity of mental abuse which can be often understated. Chart 8 breaks down the experience of abuse recorded at presentation to Viva House.

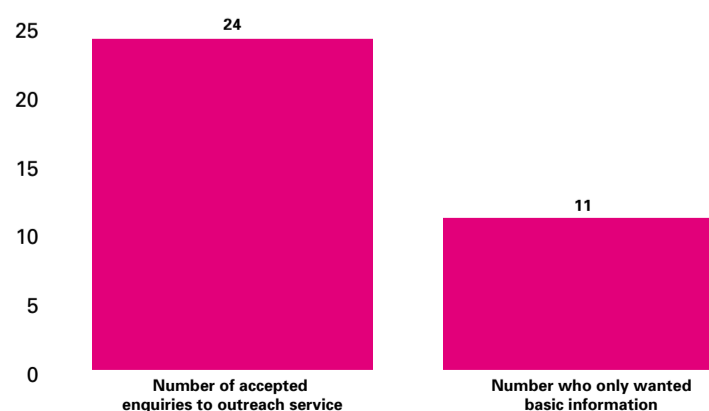
**Chart 8 – Type of abuse experienced by Viva House applicant**

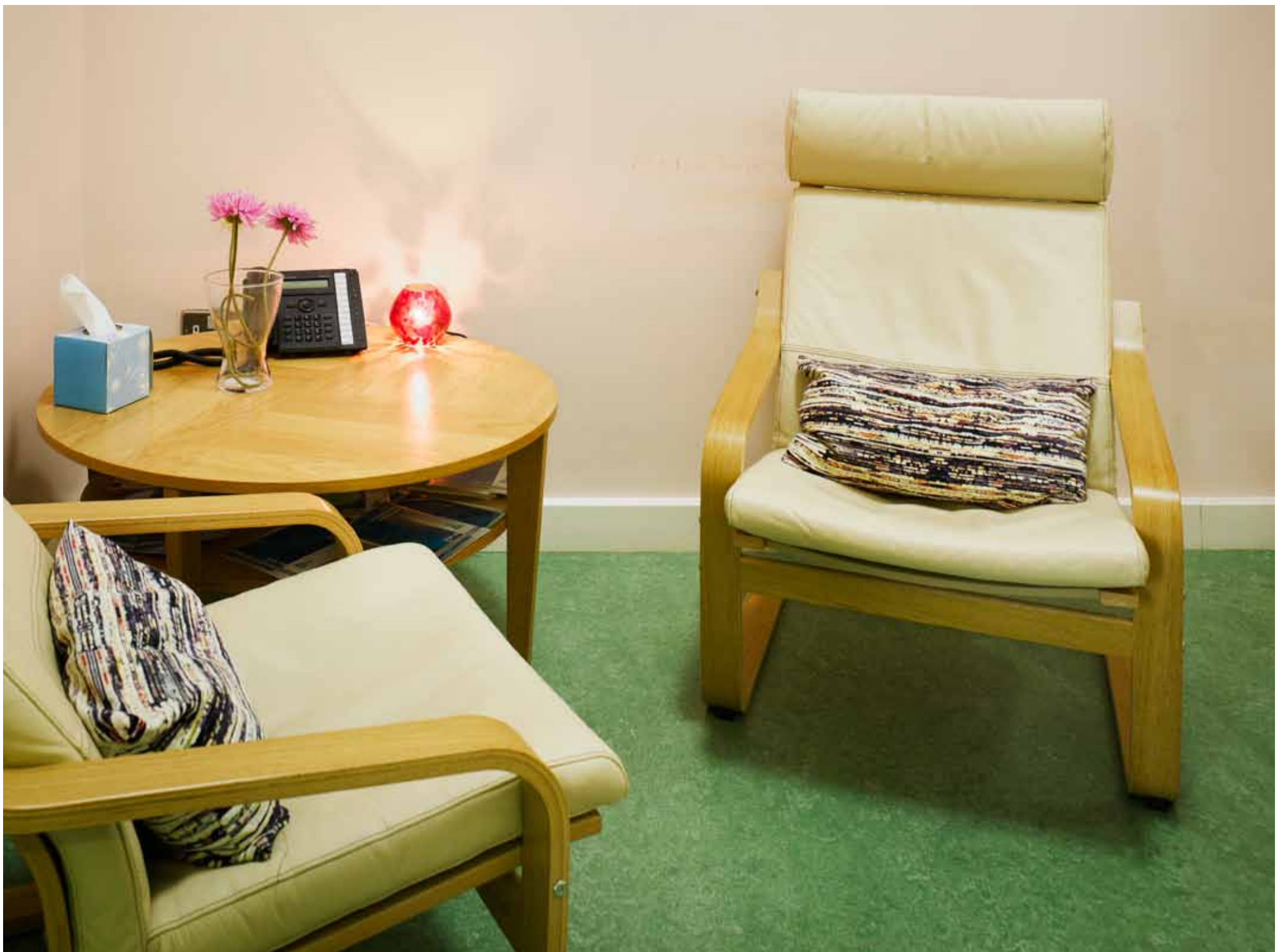


### 2.3.4 Demand for Viva Reach-out

The outreach service in Viva House, Viva Reach-out was in development in late 2010 and only began working with women directly near the end of year. For this reason the level of uptake appears low but is expected to be much higher in 2011. Chart 9 breaks down the number of enquiries with the number of women supported.

**Chart 9 Viva House outreach enquiries**





### Julie's story

Julie suffered a great deal of mental and emotional abuse and her confidence was at a very low ebb when she got a transitional house with Sonas in 2008. Her ex-partner was a heavy drinker and he was verbally and emotionally abusive to Julie. This affected her mental health and confidence and she experienced severe depression. Julie and her former partner had a daughter and she eventually left the relationship when her daughter was three. She felt very scared as her ex threatened to abduct their daughter around this time.

Julie spent two years in Sonas. Her time was very successful. Julie's confidence increased and she became very involved in the community. She completed many courses, including assertiveness/confidence building, made new friends and started to believe in herself again. She moved on from Sonas in 2010 to a lovely home where she and her daughter have settled well.



“Sonas helped me get back on my feet. We are very grateful.”

Sonas service user 2010

**Fact**

In total there were 433 enquiries about Sonas support services in 2010. We were able to accommodate 184 women and 234 children.

## 2.4 Support work with women and children

Support offered by Sonas is goal-orientated and individual to each woman or child presenting to us. The Sonas service ultimately aims to ensure:

- Sonas service users are empowered through care-related tasks.
- Sonas services users are better able to manage their home because of support.
- Sonas service users have their needs assessed, a support plan put in place and a safety plan put in place where required.

In all Sonas services the support is delivered at the service user's pace in a confidential and non-judgmental manner.

### 2.4.1 Types of support interaction

Sonas has a very flexible approach to service delivery. The type of support interaction with women includes:

- One-to-one support meetings
- Workshops on domestic violence, self-esteem, conflict resolution, family dynamics and communication, healthy lifestyle, safety, positive relationships, separation
- Advocacy and referrals on a woman's behalf
- Co-ordinating care with other agencies
- Accompaniments with women, for example to court, health appointments, local authority housing departments.

The types of support interaction with children include:

- One-to-one work
- Workshops on similar themes to the workshops with women as listed above as well as workshops on drug and alcohol awareness, loss and saying goodbye, behaviour management, feeling part of a community, how to recognise and cope with feelings
- After-school homework club – senior and junior clubs
- After-school themed sessions – for example, fun science, pets and animals, family tree, poetry, baking, nature table and other holiday and seasonal event and parties
- Family sessions with mums and children.

### 2.4.2 Extra-curricular activities

In addition to our direct support work, Sonas organised the following activities throughout our services and complexes in 2010:

For women:

- Yoga classes (10-week programme)
- Computer classes (10-week programme)
- Pancake Tuesday afternoon with fun and games
- Coffee mornings/afternoons (every three months)
- Bingo afternoons
- Summer refreshments afternoon
- Nutrition, cookery and budgeting course
- Self-development art course ran over five weeks in Viva House and culminated with an installation entitled 'The Door A women's journey from a domestic violence victim to survival'. The art project was exhibited at the launch of the refuge
- X-factor nights
- Christmas day celebrations in Viva House
- International Women's Day celebrations on each complex.

For children/teenagers

- Children's summer project [see panel on page 26]
- Christmas parties including a special visit from a Mr S Claus
- Halloween fancy dress parties
- Children's outings to RDS Royal Dublin Horse Show, Aviva Stadium and Croke Park visits, Dublin Zoo, Road Safety road show and beach
- Regular trips to local swimming pools and parks, shopping centres and cinemas.



Women in Viva House produced 'The Door', an artwork that reflected their journeys.



A thank you drawing made for Viva House staff by a service user

### 2.4.3 Outcomes of support work

In 2010 a new database system, Sprint was rolled out in the supported housing services. Support workers use the system to record support activities. Support activities are goal-focused and updated regularly.

Tables 1 and 2 show the support activity outcomes for support work in our supported housing women's service (Table 1) and children's service (Table 2). The system is only in place since May 2010 and was in development for a great part of this time therefore the figures are not exhaustive of all support work that took place in the year. Viva House did not use the system to record support work in 2010 but began to do so in early 2011.

Table 1 shows that of 707 support activities/goals with women recorded in 2010:

- 62% were successfully achieved/completed
- 10% were partially achieved
- 22% were open or ongoing as at end of 2010
- Only 2% were not achieved.

Table 1 also shows the many areas support was required in 2010 – with health and well-being, financial support and support linking into other services some of the top areas of support activity.

**Table 1: Support activity with women in Sonas supported housing complexes in 2010**

Sonas service aims:	Support activity outcome status				Total
	Support activity open	Support goal successfully achieved	Support goal partially achieved	Support goal not achieved	
Support needs assessment completed	11	84	5		100
Supporting with health and well-being	18	46	8	4	76
Help in managing finances and social welfare	10	48	4	1	63
Support linking in to other services	21	27	4	1	53
Support with moving on to independent living	17	32	2	1	52
Support with move-on into new property	6	42	1	1	50
Support with family issues	10	26	12		48
Help in establishing personal safety and security	9	24	7		40
Help in setting up a home	3	35	2		40
Support with employment and/or education	12	15	9	3	39
Practical and emotional support arising from the violence	7	19	2	2	30
Help with maintenance and home services issues	10	17			27
Support with legal issues	5	13	5	1	24
Help in maintaining a tenancy	7	12	2		21
Support in relation to addictions	5	8	1	1	15
Help with relationships with neighbours	4	6	2		12
Support with occupancy and rental agreements	1	4	1		6
Support children to come to terms with abuse and/or chaotic lifestyle		3	2		5
Help maintaining the safety and security of the accommodation		4			4
Support in relation to residency issues	1			1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>707</b>

**Table 2: Support activity with children in Sonas supported housing complexes in 2010**

Support Plan Activity Service Aim Option	Support activity status				Total
	Open	Closed Achieved	Closed Partially Achieved	Closed Not Achieved	
Activity in relation to putting support plan in place	11	30	11	7	52
Other	3	16	2		21
Support with school	1	4	1	1	6
Practical and emotional support arising from violence	2	3			5
An assessment process which identifies needs	2	1			3
Help in establishing personal safety and security		3			3
Support with family issues	2	1			3
Support with moving on to new area		2	1		3
Help in managing finances and social welfare		1			1
Support linking in to other services	1				1
Support with legal issues		1			1
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>99</b>

Table 2 shows that of 107 support activities/goals with children recorded on the system in 2010:

- 58% were successfully achieved/completed
- 14% were partially achieved
- 21% were open or ongoing as at end of 2010
- Only 7% were not achieved.

Table 2 also shows the many areas support was required in 2010. There was a great deal of support in relation to filling out a support plan. That is because conducting children's support plan is a best practice child-friendly exercise that takes a few meetings.

#### 2.4.4 Evaluation of supported housing services

Sonas gathers feedback from women in our supported housing service each year. In 2010 the findings from this feedback showed the following very positive outcomes for women. It found that due to Sonas support:

- 100% are more comfortable asking for support
- 100% are more confident in their decision-making
- 100% can do more things on their own
- 96% know that they will achieve the goals they set for themselves
- 96% are more hopeful about the future
- 96% know more ways to plan for their safety

- 92% know more about community resources

- 92% know more re rights and options

#### Service operation

Service users also rated the service they received from Sonas as follows:

- 96% felt the service treated them with respect and dignity
- 89% rated the help they received as helpful or very helpful
- 81% would recommend a friend to come to the service if they had to.

#### 2.5 Moving on from Sonas Housing services

##### 2.5.1 Length of stay

A great deal of support work in all of Sonas services includes working with women around moving on to permanent housing and/or follow-on options for women when leaving Viva House.

Due to uncertainty surrounding changes in homeless services funding, Sonas Housing offered six-month licences to women who come into our Sonas supported housing in 2010. It is expected this will be extended up to two years, dependent on the woman's needs.

In Viva House, the average length of stay in 2010 was 12 days with the longest stay 87 days and the shortest 4 hours.

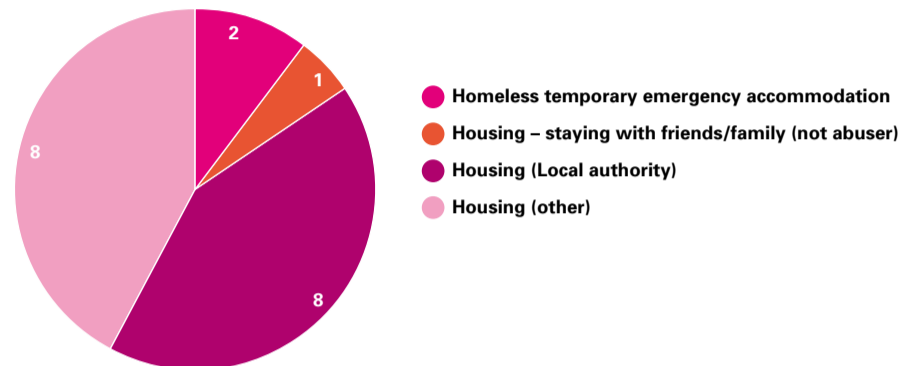


## 2.5.2 Move-ons from Sonas supported housing

There were 19 move-ons from Sonas Housing supported housing in 2010. Chart 10 breaks this down.

- 89% went on to independent living
- 11% returned to homeless temporary accommodation

Chart 10 – Move-ons out of Sonas Housing

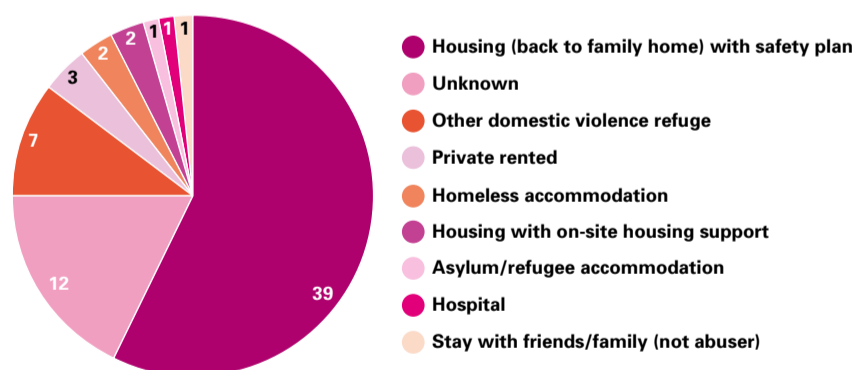


## 2.5.3 Move-on from Viva House

Chart 11 breaks down the move-on destinations from Viva House.

- At least 21 (29%) moved on to independent living either back to their family home with a legal order, to private rented or other supported accommodation
- 34% returned home with a safety plan. Refuge can often be used by women as a respite from their situation of abuse. However the information, support and safety planning can be used to ensure a woman is safe in her own home
- 10% went to another refuge. This could be due to a risk factor or proximity to local schools.

Chart 11 – Move-ons from Viva House



## 2.6 Innovation in service delivery

### 2.6.1 Case management put into practice

Sonas advocates a best practice case and care management approach in its work with service users. All of our support workers are trained in this approach and equipped in knowing how best to co-ordinate care for women and children in our services.

### 2.6.2 Working with high needs service users

Following a Safe Ireland domestic violence and substance use workshop facilitated by the Stella Project, London, a substance use working group was set up in Sonas in 2010.

Sonas works with women who have substance use issues. Viva House is one of the first women's refuges in Ireland to work on a non-judgemental basis with women with substance use issues.

### 2.6.3 Innovative data recording of work

Sonas rolled out its innovative Sprint system across all its supported housing complexes and developed reporting mechanisms. Sprint allows for easier case management, workflow handovers and reporting. The system was rolled out in Viva House in late 2010/early 2011. The Sonas housing management system Chics was also updated and rolled out to more areas allowing for multi-access by housing staff.

### 2.6.4 Continual development and review of quality standards

Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by management team and staff. We have also developed reflexive tools and forms for work with women and children – comprising needs assessments, goal-planning support tools and safety plans. In 2010 we also developed a suite of quality policy and procedures for Viva House. In 2010 Sonas was also invited on and participated in the HSE working group on quality standards in domestic violence services.

### 2.6.5 Continual development for workers in key issues

Training was held for staff and board members in relation to Sprint, substance use, mental health, best practice domestic violence support and child protection.

### 2.6.6 Redevelopment of children's spaces in three locations

The children's rooms in three of our complexes were redeveloped thanks to fundraising income. The new spaces for children are colourful, bright and full of toys to encourage play and group activity.

### 2.6.7 Children's curriculum

A curriculum outlining key areas of how to best support the children in Sonas Housing has been devised by children support workers and is ongoing.



## Marie's story

Marie was referred to Sonas with her 2 children by a women's refuge in Dublin, which she had accessed several times in her life. Marie has a profound hearing impairment. She was sexually abused as a child by family members and as an adult by different partners. In between her stays in the refuge, Marie lived in private rented accommodation but never felt safe and would always return to the refuge to get security and support.

Marie has been in Sonas for over 18 months - the longest she has been in the same accommodation. Since she arrived in Sonas, Marie has worked on her mental health and has been linked to a specialised counselling service for victims of sexual violence which has access to a sign language assistance. Marie has received emotional support around her life experience and is working to address her fear of trusting people.

Her two children have accessed the children service in Sonas regularly. They have attended one-to-one sessions with the children's worker, as well as workshops and afterschool activities.

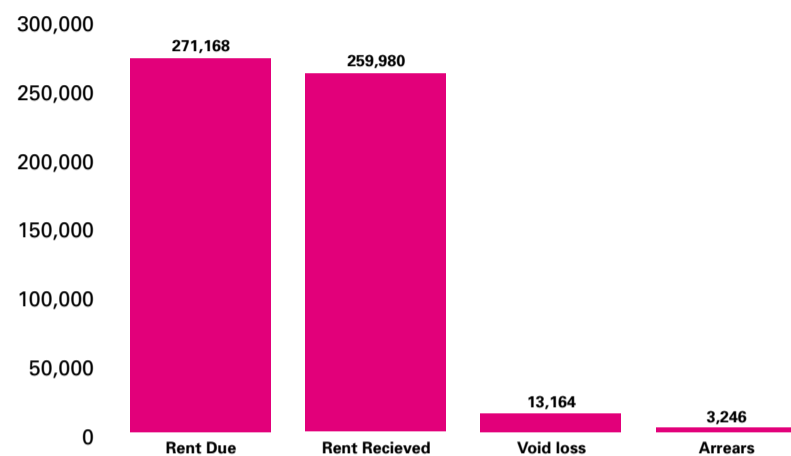
When it comes to move-on accommodation, Marie has identified that she needs ongoing support and that feeling safe is paramount to her. Sonas offered her a three-bedroom apartment with a specialist domestic violence visiting support service. This is her first permanent home.

## 2.7 Housing management statistics

### 2.7.1 Rental Income 2010

Rental income received in 2010 was kept at a high level, with 95% of income due collected and only 1.19% in rent arrears recorded. Chart 12 depicts the low rate of rent arrears: total rent due at €271,198 and total rent received at €259,980.

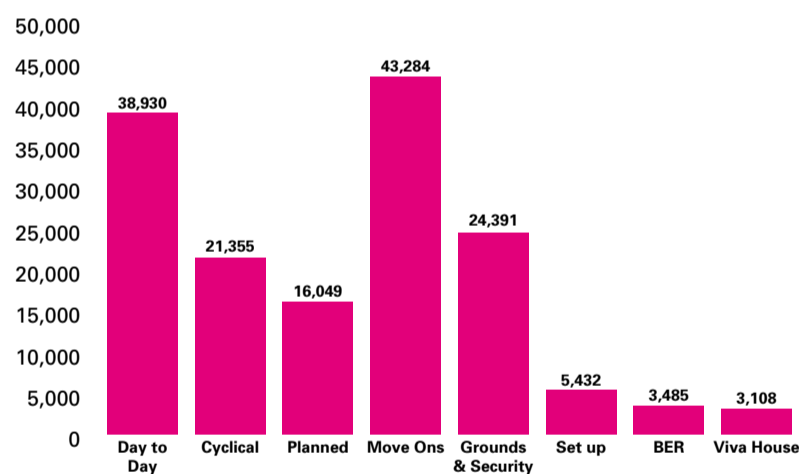
Chart 12 – Rental income 2010



### 2.7.2 Repairs and maintenance

Total maintenance costs were €157,567 in 2010. Chart 13 breaks down our maintenance expenditure. Move-ons were the highest cost in terms of maintenance with the average cost of re-let of a supported housing property €1,396.

Chart 13 – Maintenance costs



#### Repair and maintenance achievements

- Three permanent units in Killester received upgraded kitchens
- Annual boiler services to all units
- Set up of new units including floor covering, ovens, washers, hobs and fire blankets
- Repairs to two roofs in Ringsend
- Emergency repairs to Ringsend main building roof
- Energy-efficient loft insulations completed under Warmer Homes Scheme
- Installation of key storage reference system and key safes to all area offices
- Personal alarms for staff in high risk locations
- Clondalkin CCTV and lighting upgrade

- Removal of tunnel in Clondalkin to allow for children's play area
- Assistance in the upgrade to children's rooms in Clondalkin, Ringsend and Killester – flooring, painting and plumbing
- Fire improvement measures introduced including installation of window restrictors, fire blankets and fire evacuation notices to all units in multi-occupancy buildings
- 29 BER property assessments completed in 2010. All supported housing units have now been assessed
- In 2011 Sonas intends to apply for cavity wall insulation to be provided to all suitable units through the Warmer Homes Scheme. The scheme is temporarily closed until the backlog is cleared. Sonas will reapply when the scheme reopens.

### 2.7.3 Appointment of housing officer

A second housing officer was appointed in Sonas in 2010. This officer covers the south side of city and works closely with housing officer on the north side and support staff.

### 2.7.4 Improved housing management software

Chics, our housing management IT system, was upgraded and a remote server was installed which provides for simultaneous access by our housing management team. An updated programme of the housing management programme was installed in Viva House with training provided. This version allows for greater flexibility for shorter-term tenancies.

### 2.7.5 Local tenant meetings

Regular tenant meetings are held in local areas to ensure service users are empowered in their local services and can raise any housing management problems with staff.

### 2.7.6 Housing management policies developed

- Fire prevention and risk assessment procedures in place for new tenants
- Arrears recovery policy and procedure in development
- Anti-social behaviour policy and procedure in development
- Health and safety risk assessment training completed
- Health and safety statement for Viva House completed and approved
- Risk assessments ongoing for site specific locations.

## 3.0 Sonas work in 2010

**As well as its direct work with women, Sonas also focused on the following work related to domestic violence and homelessness:**

1. Influencing housing and social policy
2. Collaborative approaches and inter-agency working
3. Communications and awareness-raising
4. Fundraising initiatives
5. Good organisational development

### 3.1 Influencing housing and social policy

#### 3.1.1 Ensuring domestic violence services included in reconfiguration

2009's *Pathway to Home* outlined a major reconfiguration of homeless services in Dublin and the end of transitional housing. Sonas responded in 2009 and 2010 to ensure that services for victims of domestic violence were not lost.

Through negotiation with the Homeless Agency it was agreed that Sonas' transitional housing will be reconfigured into two services:

1. A regional specialist domestic violence visiting support service. This is the same support service we provide, but as well as into Sonas housing units, it will also be provided to women in non-Sonas housing across Dublin (a floating support service).
2. On-site specialist domestic violence supported housing to higher needs service users in two locations with extended hours in one or both locations.

We looked at how these types of services are delivered elsewhere and we are happy that they achieve good outcomes for women. Due to delays in agreeing the funding model between the HSE, the local authorities and the voluntary providers (including Sonas) we still do not have the green light to reconfigure. However this is expected later in 2011.

#### 3.1.2 Lobbying on the issue of gender-specific homeless services

Sonas highlighted gaps in homeless services reconfiguration documentation, specifically concerning ensuring a provision for women-only homeless accommodation. This is an ongoing debate that Sonas is working on into 2011.

#### 3.1.3 Dignity project

In 2010, Sonas continued to be involved in the Dignity project, a multi-agency project designed to develop a model of interagency working to deliver best practice approaches to addressing trafficking of women for sexual exploitation in Ireland.

In 2010 Sonas went on study trips to Sweden and London to examine how victims of trafficking are housed and supported in these jurisdictions.

## DIGNITY

*working to deliver quality services for victims of sex trafficking*

#### 3.1.4 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Feasibility study

Sonas finalised the co-ordination of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown feasibility study showing the need for a refuge facility in this area. The report will be published in 2011.



#### 3.1.5 Turn off the Red Light Campaign

Sonas joined a group of civil society organisations to campaign to end prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland. Trafficking women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is a modern, global form of slavery. We believe that the best way to combat this is to tackle the demand for prostitution by criminalising the purchase of sex.



### Louisa's story

Louisa is a foreign-national. Her husband, who already lived in Ireland, arranged for her and her daughter to move to Ireland a number of years ago. Once in Ireland, Louisa was forced to have sex with men her husband brought home. Louisa fell pregnant and a few months into the pregnancy she decided to leave her husband. She was housed in an emergency B&B and was referred to Sonas by the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

Because Louisa was trafficked into the country by her husband under forged documents for sexual exploitation, which means she has no legal status in the country. Louisa has been working with her Sonas support worker and her solicitor and is working towards being granted the right to remain in the country. Through the advocacy work of the Sonas support worker, Louisa has been granted an emergency social welfare payment. However because of her status she is not entitled to any other payments.

Despite all that Louisa has been through, she has returned to education and her youngest child attends a local crèche a few times a week. There are no move-on housing options for Louisa and her children at the moment as she will not be registered on any local authority housing list until her status is resolved.

### 3.2 Collaborative policy approaches

Sonas works in a collaborative way in both its frontline and high-level work. Sonas has developed networks with local community groups. It also works on a collaborative basis with other domestic violence groups, homeless services providers and local authorities.

In 2010 Sonas was involved in the following collaborative working groups:

- Chaired Homeless Network in 2010
- Member of Homeless Agency Consultative Forum
- Member of Eastern Region Advisory Committee
- Member of Clondalkin Forum
- Member of Fortunestown Consortium Meeting
- Member of HSE Quality Standards working group
- Member of Turn off the Red Light campaign
- Member of Dignity project steering group
- Co-organised a meeting with Safe Ireland in May 2010 to give information to domestic violence providers on pathway reconfiguration and the redevelopment of Sonas
- Co-ordinated DLR feasibility report with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, the Homeless Agency, Safe Ireland and SAVE in Dun Laoghaire
- Sonas worked with the Irish Council for Social Housing and Wicklow County Council to develop accommodation for women and children in the county.

### 3.3 Communications and awareness-raising

#### 3.3.1 Viva House

Viva House was a big focus in relation to communications and awareness-raising work. The refuge opened in June 2010. Just before it opened Bright Horizons launched its 'Bright Space' in Viva House, a well equipped children's room fully funded by Bright Horizons and set up by a team of volunteers.

A range of communications materials was developed for Viva, comprising leaflets for doctor's surgeries as well as key rings, pens and subtle stickers for women who may require our number but who may have to hide any identifying details.

Viva House was officially launched on 10th December 2010, the final day of the 16 days campaign. It was a very successful event held at local hotel, the Crowne Plaza in Blanchardstown. Local councillors, social workers, Gardaí and community workers attended. Fingal Mayor Ken Farrell opened the launch. He was followed by presentations from Amanda Middleton, an expert in the areas of domestic violence and substance misuse, Anne O'Connor from the HSE, Sharon Cosgrove Sonas CEO and Jayne Adams, project leader Viva House. RTÉ attended the launch and we received a huge amount of national and local coverage, as well as donations on the day.

#### 3.3.2 Media work

Sonas received the following media coverage in 2010:

- A Sonas support user confidentially appeared on Prime Time in early 2010 during a programme about domestic violence.
- When Viva House first officially opened its doors, RTÉ covered the piece and there were local articles in local newspapers and radio stations.
- The findings from our 2009 annual report were published in national newspapers, including the Irish Times and Irish Independent and national radio stations in October 2009.
- A Sonas support user and Paula McGovern appeared on TV3's The Morning Show in December 2010 to discuss domestic violence and Christmas.
- Viva House launch was covered by RTÉ, national radio and national and local newspapers.
- Sonas also responded to press queries from national, regional and local media outlets when required.



Viva House bedroom



Viva House children's playground



Viva House wall art



Viva House communications material

### 3.3.3 Other awareness-raising work

- Sonas staff made many presentations in 2010 to a range of stakeholders, including local authorities, local youth groups, schools, maternity hospitals, cultural groups, domestic violence groups and local forums.
- Communications materials were distributed to a wide audience including statutory bodies, primary healthcare teams, Citizen's Information Centres, health centres, and community development teams.
- Sonas Christmas cards were sold in November/December 2010.
- Monthly e-newsletters were sent to our contact list in 2010 informing people of Sonas updates, housing vacancies, jobs and events.
- All support staff participated in the Women's Aid International day opposing violence against women on 25th November including releasing balloons and conducting a minute's silence.
- Sonas participated in local neighbours' days on complexes.

### 3.4 Focus on fundraising

#### 3.4.1 Income and donations

Sonas received very generous donations of both money and material goods throughout 2010.

We received €20,861 in total. This was broken down as follows:

Corporate donations	€11,427
Individual donations	€1,141
Targeted fundraising (events or initiatives)	€8,294

We would like to sincerely thank the organisations, groups and individuals who supported us throughout the year. A special thank you to Gearoidin Charlton and all who worked on the fundraising sub-committee, which wound up towards the end of 2010. They worked tirelessly on behalf of Sonas and helped raise a huge amount of money in the last few years. A new fundraising sub-committee was developed in late 2010/early 2011.

In addition to this, the following donations of money, time and resources were gratefully received.

Viva House:

- Bright Horizons developed and fully fitted out a Bright Space children's room in the refuge free of charge. Bright Horizons also donated gifts to women and children at Christmas.
- Prior to the refuge opening D15 Charity organised a fundraiser which resulted in a donation of €5,000.
- Viva House was nominated to be the 2010 chosen charity for Symantec, an IT company based in the Blanchardstown area. Staff ran a charity carnival event which took place in the Symantec canteen in November and they raised €2,371 for the refuge. Through this scheme any money raised by Symantec staff is doubled by the parent company. Symantec have also supported us through the donation of computers and Symantec staff also donate clothing to the refuge on a regular basis. We also received a voucher at Christmas to buy presents for teenage children.
- On a weekly basis Avoca Handweavers give us a large quantity of fresh breads. They also donated a Christmas cake on Christmas day.
- Local retailers in the Blanchardstown area sent in donations to Viva House for Christmas.
- Atlantic Homecare donated Christmas lights and decorations.
- St Vincent de Paul provided on-going support to families throughout the year.

In Ringsend, Pfizer, Community Centre Ringsend, Anchorage and St Vincent De Paul all donated food, clothes and toys throughout the year

In Killester transitional year in St Paul's College, Sybill Hill, St Vincent De Paul and St Mary's College Fairview all donated food, clothes and toys throughout the year.

#### 3.4.2 What was fundraising money spent on in 2010?

In 2010, fundraising income was spent on:

- Significant redevelopment of children's rooms in three complexes
- Purchase of Christmas gifts and vouchers for women and children
- Contributions towards tenants' rent when they were in severe financial difficulty
- Construction of a large shed for additional storage of baby equipment and other bulky items in Viva House.



Sonas took part in a balloon release day opposing violence against women on November 25th, 2010.

**Without the work of organisations, individuals and groups who support Sonas, we would not be able to do what we do.**

**We really appreciate your help.**

**Thank you again.**

**Viva House launch – 10th December 2010**



(L-R) Sile McGuckian-Fitzpatrick and Ann McKeon



(L-R) Elaine Downes, Eavan Ward, Karen Quigley and Sarah Benson



Sharon Cosgrove speaking to Sharon Tobin from RTE News



Packed audience at launch



Jayne Adams and Sharon Cosgrove alongside the two doors created by women in Viva House illustrating the challenges facing women leaving domestic violence situations



Speakers at launch (L-R): Sharon Cosgrove, Mayor Ken Farrell, Amanda Middleton, Anne O'Connor and Jayne Adams



Jayne Adams speaking at launch



Viva House apartment



### **3.5 Good organisational development**

As the organisation expanded in 2010 there was a greater need for good governance and efficient back office resources. Sonas responded to these challenges in the following ways.

#### **3.5.1 Board and governance**

The board met frequently during 2010 to discuss the challenges of maintaining services, expanding into refuge provision and developing the organisation all within an environment of funding cuts. These together with reconfiguration, a new staffing structure, collaboration with other service providers and policy matters meant a busy agenda for all meetings. There was also some preparatory work completed for the new strategic plan 2011-2014.

Sonas welcomed four new members on to the board in 2010 - Sharron Kelleher, Sile McGuckian-Fitzpatrick, Anne McKeon and Siobhan Burke.

#### **3.5.2 Human resources**

There was a massive recruitment drive in 2010 with the number of staff employed by the organisation doubling and a need to include a 24/7 shift-working rota system. Sonas developed a human resources information system to record staff hours and rota shifts.

#### **3.5.3 Volunteering and work placements**

A volunteering policy was developed in 2010 and approved by the board. An active programme for volunteer engagement is currently in development in Sonas.

Two social work students from Trinity College were placed with the children's service for the month of July and worked with the children support workers in developing and delivering the summer project. We also had many volunteers who helped out in Viva House doing many different things. We would like to thank you all for your help.

#### **3.5.4 IT**

Sonas developed its back-end IT services in 2010 including:

- New web-based database for support work
- Housing management database updated and expanded
- New human resources information system
- New server put in place in Viva House
- New layout put in place in Killester allowing for hot desking
- Many old machines were updated to allow for more efficient working and use of time.

#### **3.5.5 Office moves**

Sonas moved one of its regional offices in Tallaght to a new facility shared by Cluid Housing Association and Hail Housing Association. At the end of 2010, the board decided to move from the head office location in Foley Street to a new area in the city centre. This is due to take place in mid-2011.

## Children's summer project

The Summer Project 2010 took place in July and comprised four weeks in total - two weeks on the north side of the city and two weeks on the south side. There was a great attendance with approximately 50 children taking part in total.

Each week was planned and co-ordinated by staff to ensure a variety of activities indoors and outdoors that were age and developmentally appropriate for children aged between 2 and 17 years. There were different programmes for toddlers, children aged 4-11 years and teens.

The project comprised a mixture of day trips and on-site activities including:

- Trip to Corkagh Park (Pet farm)
- Trip to Clara Lara
- Trip to Dublin Zoo
- Viking Splash tour
- Sandplay and play dough
- Make and play musical instruments
- Giant games
- Sport's day
- Teddy bear's picnic
- Drama and painting workshops

Specific activities for teenagers included:

- Viking splash tour
- Trip to Kart City
- Trip to bowling and games arcade
- Workshop with graffiti artist



“If it were not for the support I received I would not be here and moving on with my life.”

Sonas service user 2010

**Fact**

96% of Sonas service users feel the service treats them with respect and dignity at all times



## Statement of financial activities

for the year ended 31 December 2010

<b>Income and Expenditure</b>					
Incoming Resources	Restricted Funds 2010 €	Designated Funds 2010 €	Unrestricted Funds 2010 €	Total Funds 2010 €	Total Funds 2009 €
Corporation & Grant Funding	1,666,702	-	-	1,666,702	1,082,631
Rental Income	208,564	51,963	-	260,527	185,641
Donations & Fundraising	-	20,861	-	20,861	30,990
Amortisation of grant income	-	-	331,929	331,929	232,444
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>1,875,266</b>	<b>72,824</b>	<b>331,929</b>	<b>2,280,019</b>	<b>1,531,706</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>					
Crisis Intervention & Provision of Support Services	(1,703,057)	(18,997)	-	(1,722,054)	(1,106,393)
Depreciation	-	-	(370,914)	(370,914)	(264,826)
Legal, Professional & Administration	-	-	(115,582)	(115,582)	(90,434)
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>(1,703,057)</b>	<b>(18,997)</b>	<b>(486,496)</b>	<b>(2,208,550)</b>	<b>(1,461,653)</b>
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>172,209</b>	<b>53,827</b>	<b>(154,567)</b>	<b>71,469</b>	<b>70,053</b>
Provision for sinking fund	-	(51,963)	-	(51,963)	(73,213)
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) on ordinary activities before interest</b>	<b>172,209</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>(154,567)</b>	<b>19,506</b>	<b>(3,160)</b>
Interest receivable and similar income	-	-	9,525	9,525	1,792
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>172,209</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>(145,042)</b>	<b>29,031</b>	<b>(1,368)</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) retained for the year</b>	<b>172,209</b>	<b>1,864</b>	<b>(145,042)</b>	<b>29,031</b>	<b>(1,368)</b>

There are no recognised gains or losses other than the surplus or deficit for the above two financial years.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 11th May 2011 and signed on its behalf by:

**Rachel Mullen**  
Director

**Gearoidin Charlton**  
Director

## Balance sheet

as at 31 December 2010

	2010	2009
	€	€
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	16,235,901	16,259,844
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	111,938	41,544
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>943,435</u>	<u>931,027</u>
	1,055,373	972,571
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(503,693)</u>	<u>(528,731)</u>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<u>551,680</u>	<u>389,840</u>
<b>Total Assets Less Current Liabilities</b>	16,787,581	16,649,684
<b>Restricted Government Grants</b>	<u>(16,447,735)</u>	<u>(16,338,869)</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<u>339,846</u>	<u>310,815</u>
<b>Capital and Reserves</b>		
Accumulated Funds	<u>339,846</u>	<u>310,815</u>
<b>Funds</b>	<u>339,846</u>	<u>310,815</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 11th May 2011 and signed on its behalf by:

**Rachel Mullen**  
Director

**Gearoidin Charlton**  
Director

“Thanks to Sonas I learned it wasn't my fault and I learned how to live on my own again and survive.”

Sonas service user 2010

**Fact**

96% of Sonas service users know more ways to plan for their safety and are more hopeful about the future because of Sonas.

# Survive and thrive

## Sonas Housing Annual Report 2010

**Sonas Housing Association**  
14 Bachelor's Walk  
Dublin 1  
T: 01 8720068  
E: [info@sonashousing.ie](mailto:info@sonashousing.ie)  
W: [www.sonashousing.ie](http://www.sonashousing.ie)

**Viva House**  
PO Box 11855, Dublin 15  
T: 01 8662015



**SONAS**