




**WOMEN'S AID**

Making Women and Children Safe

# WOMEN'S AID ANNUAL REPORT 2012



**“WITHOUT  
WOMEN’S AID  
I WOULD NOT  
BE ALIVE.”**

Jane

**WOMEN'S AID**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**  
**2012**



# WHO IS THAT GIRL?

Who is that girl,  
With a bruise upon her face?  
Keeps her head down,  
Hides in disgrace.

He bullied, he mistrusted,  
He used and abused.  
Her sweet nature was clear to see,  
He never allowed her to just 'Be'.

She was broken, battered,  
No heart, no soul, confidence shattered.  
Run way the voices say,  
He convinces you to stay.

NO... NO... NO.  
You need to GO...,  
Help is out there.

Love and support, your chance to share,  
It's the start of your journey.  
Your new foundation will lead to restoration.

*A poem by Mel<sup>1</sup> sent to Women's Aid to thank us for our support.*

<sup>1</sup> Where used in this report, women's names have been fictionalised in the interests of protecting identity and to preserve the confidential nature of Women's Aid Direct Services.

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# DIRECTOR'S REVIEW



Domestic violence is a serious crime. It is also a very common crime and, as such, often goes unrecognised and is often minimised and ignored. **One in five women** in Ireland will experience violence and abuse from an intimate partner at some stage in her life. Domestic violence occurs in all age groups, all social classes as well as all ethnic, cultural and language groups. In 2012 the hard working Women's Aid team of staff and volunteers answered **11,729 calls to our National Freephone Helpline**. This equates to **32 calls per day** from women in fear of those closest to them - their husbands, partners and boyfriends. Living in fear of the next beating, the next time he'll try to strangle her, living with endless threats, intimidation and abuse. Our dedicated **One to One Support and Advocacy team** met with women on **508 occasions and went to court with women 162 times** throughout the year. The difficult and complex nature of domestic violence means that women need ongoing support and information when accessing legal protection and navigating other supports to make them and their children safe. The **Dolphin House Support and Referral Service**, run in partnership with Inchicore Outreach Centre and the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service, provided **drop in face to face support 239 times**. During all of these contacts with our Direct Services in 2012 a staggering **16,200 disclosures of emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse were made.**

## LEAVING AND POST-SEPARATION ABUSE

People often ask, "why doesn't she just leave?" If only it was that simple. The **recession has greatly reduced options** for women experiencing domestic violence, with many reporting that they have become **more trapped in abusive relationships**. It is heart-breaking to listen to women who, along with their children, have nowhere to go and who are living in fear of poverty and are at risk of becoming homeless. Unfortunately, our experience shows us that leaving an abusive relationship does not always mean an end to the abuse. In fact, it can, at times, escalate it. In 2012, **49% of the women** supported in our One to One service were experiencing **abuse from a former husband, partner or boyfriend**. The most dangerous time can be when a woman is planning or making her exit and in the period afterwards. Women's Aid supports many women during this time of high risk. We help women plan and manage their own and their children's safety in the short term and into the future. That's why we know we need to be here every day for women who need us. Women who have moved on into a time and place of safety and who are now enjoying normal lives and doing normal things often contact us with messages of thanks and encouragement. We pass these messages of hope on to other women we see who are just beginning their journey.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

The link between child abuse and domestic violence has been clearly established and is receiving growing recognition. **Domestic violence is a very common context in which child abuse takes place.** Research shows that the more severe the domestic violence is against the mother, the more severe the risk of abuse against the children in the home. In 2012, there were **3,230 disclosures of direct child abuse** to the Women's Aid Helpline, a **55% increase** on the previous year. Women tell us how they work hard to heal the hurt and to keep their children's lives as safe, stable and normal as possible despite the domestic violence at home. When the abuser takes the keys to both cars and there is no public transport, the outside world might wonder why she doesn't always bring the kids to their swimming lessons. They may even think she doesn't care about her children. But whether it's feeding them before the abuser gets home or sending them to bed early when she fears a beating, protecting the children is something many mothers spend their time thinking about. What comes across on our Helpline and through our support services is the strength and determination of women





*Minister Alan Shatter, T.D., and Chief Justice Susan Denham with Margaret Martin of Women's Aid at the launch of the Dolphin House Domestic Violence Support and Referral Service, June 2012. Photograph: Paul Sharp/Sharpix*

to protect their children, as well as their ingenuity and resourcefulness at doing so in a myriad of little ways. As the non-abusive and protective parent, these mothers are vital to their children's well-being and safety and are the key to a different life, safe and together, free from abuse and fear.

Unfortunately, custody and access arrangements in Family Law proceedings often disregard the impact of domestic violence on children and, therefore, risk continuing abuse of the children as well as exposure to abuse of their mother during the hand over period. Women's Aid believes that child contact should not displace child protection and safety should be prioritised in all custody and access proceedings. To do anything less is to fail women and children.

## REVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

Women's Aid welcomes the current Government commitment to improve domestic violence legislation. In view of this, in 2012 we commissioned legal research on international best practice in Domestic Violence legislation in other jurisdictions including the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Austria. This study, looking at how other jurisdictions deal with issues in the legal system identified by our direct services, training and specialist support agency work, has provided the basis for the development of a series of recommendations that, if acted upon, **would immediately increase protection for all women and children affected by domestic violence**. Key recommendations are for the provision of an on call system for accessing emergency barring orders to give women and children at risk 24/7 protection and the removal of strict cohabitation criteria that would extend eligibility for protection under the Domestic Violence Act to women abused in dating relationships.

## YOUNG WOMEN AND DATING ABUSE

Women's Aid continues to be concerned about how young women are affected by dating abuse, including how technology is used by abusive boyfriends, partners and ex-partners to monitor and control women in new ways. Continuing to highlight this issue Women's Aid re-launched our **2in2u National Public Awareness Campaign**, funded by Cosc, on St. Valentine's Day 2012. The [www.2in2u.ie](http://www.2in2u.ie) website which included a relationship health check quiz received 13,794 visits during the four week campaign (almost 500 visits per day). The campaign was a great success and we will continue to reach out to younger women affected by abuse.

## MIGRANT WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women's Aid has worked to make our services more accessible to, and increase the safety of, women from migrant communities. Women's Aid recognises the additional barriers faced by migrant women experiencing domestic violence. These can include the lack of independent residency status, ineligibility for social protection and limited access to emergency accommodation. In 2012, **271 calls** to the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline and **30% of first time one to one support visits** were with **women from migrant communities**. The National Freephone Helpline **Telephone Interpretation Service** facilitated **94 support calls in a language other than English** and the sections on our **website translated into 8 different languages were visited 12,305 times** in 2012. Women's Aid also collaborated with other organisations as part of the **Domestic Violence Coalition** to improve responses to and outcomes for migrant women experiencing domestic violence.

## OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2012

The Minister for Justice, Mr Alan Shatter, T.D., and the Honourable Mrs. Justice Susan Denham, Chief Justice and Chairperson of the Courts Service Board, launched the project evaluation report for the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service in June 2012. The service operates at the Dublin District Family Law Court as a partnership between Women's Aid, the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and the Inchicore Outreach Centre with support from the Courts Service. The drop in service is free and confidential and offers women emotional support, helps them prepare for court and refers them to other domestic violence services for ongoing support. The project is being used to help the development of similar models in other parts of the country.

The **Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline** has been operating since 1992. **In its 20th year**, its excellence in providing support and information to women affected by domestic violence was recognised through **accreditation by The Helplines Association**, the membership and good practice organisation for all Helplines in the UK, Ireland and beyond. The Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline is the only free, national, domestic violence Helpline in Ireland with specialised trained staff and with a Telephone Interpretation Service covering 170 languages for callers needing interpreting services.

To mark the 20 year anniversary of the Helpline, Women's Aid ran the new **Don't Be Afraid National Public Awareness Campaign** in September 2012. The campaign was very successful and it encouraged women living with domestic violence to find their voice and call the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline.

The **Women's Aid charity shops** in Aungier Street and Dundrum raise much needed funds for the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline and Support Services which help women experiencing domestic violence. A new, rebranded Dundrum shop opened for business at the end of October 2012 and has seen an increase in sales since then.

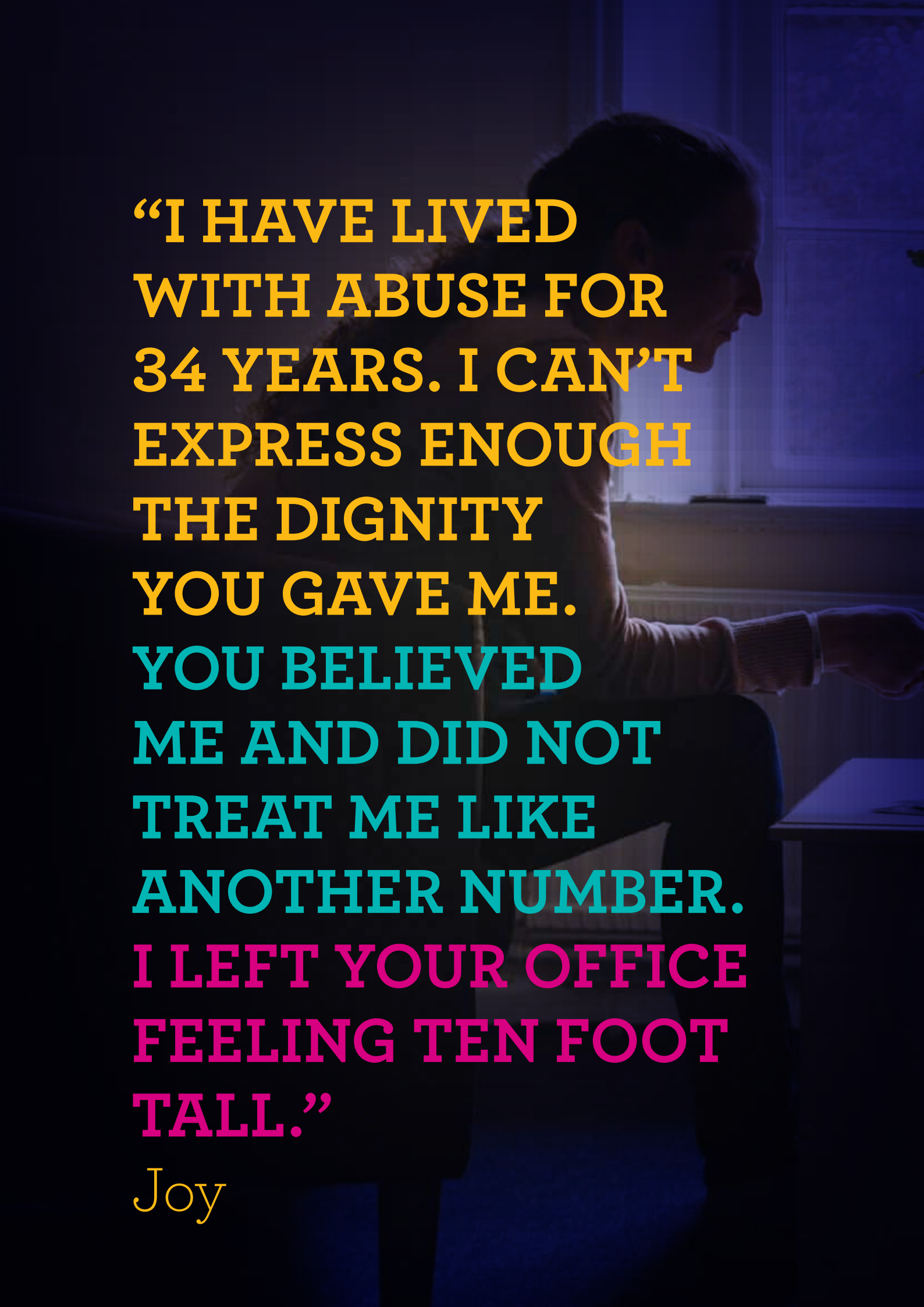
## THANK YOU

*The Board of Directors, staff and volunteer team at Women's Aid continued to work tirelessly in 2012 to make women and children safe from domestic violence. The achievements outlined in this report as well as the vital daily work undertaken by Women's Aid would not have been possible without our supporters, funders and donors. In a time of diminishing resources Women's Aid is grateful for their continued generosity of spirit and a determination to make a difference. With this support, Women's Aid will continue to be here for women who need us and to provide a range of valuable services that make women and children safe.*

Margaret Martin

June 2013



A woman is shown in profile, sitting at a desk in a dimly lit room. She is looking out a window. The lighting is soft and blue-toned. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, sans-serif font, with the first part in yellow and the rest in cyan and magenta.

**“I HAVE LIVED  
WITH ABUSE FOR  
34 YEARS. I CAN’T  
EXPRESS ENOUGH  
THE DIGNITY  
YOU GAVE ME.  
YOU BELIEVED  
ME AND DID NOT  
TREAT ME LIKE  
ANOTHER NUMBER.  
I LEFT YOUR OFFICE  
FEELING TEN FOOT  
TALL.”**

*Joy*

# ABOUT WOMEN'S AID

Women's Aid has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974. We work to make women and children safe from domestic violence, offer support, provide hope to women affected by abuse and work for justice and social change. Over the course of almost 40 years the organisation has built up a huge body of experience and expertise on the issue, enabling us to best support women and children and share this knowledge with other agencies responding to women experiencing domestic violence. Our Direct Services for women experiencing domestic violence underpin and inform all of our work to end domestic violence.

## OUR DIRECT SERVICES FOR WOMEN

The **Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900** operates from 10am to 10pm, every day of the year (except Christmas day), and provides support and information to callers experiencing abuse from current or former husbands, partners and boyfriends. The Women's Aid Helpline is the only free, national, domestic violence Helpline with specialised trained staff and volunteers, fully accredited by The Helplines Association and with a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 170 languages for callers needing interpreting services.

Women's Aid also offers a **One to One Support and Advocacy Service**. Our Support Services Team provides in-depth one to one information and support, Monday to Friday, in six locations throughout the greater Dublin area. The Support Services Team also offer a **Court Accompaniment Service**, which provides advocacy and support specific to the particular needs of women seeking legal redress regarding violence by a current or former husband, partner or boyfriend.

Women's Aid operates the **Dolphin House Support and Referral Service**, in partnership with the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre in the Dublin District Family Law Court in Dolphin House.

Women's Aid also refers women to local domestic violence refuges and support services around the country.

## WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In addition to our Direct Services, Women's Aid acts for justice and social change by engaging in **policy, representation and communications and campaigns** activity at a national level. Women's Aid also provides **extensive information and statistics on domestic violence in print and online**.

We also provide **specialised training and organisational support on responding to domestic violence** and we are the **Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women** to the **Local and Community Development Programme** and **Family Resource Centres** throughout the country.

Women's Aid operates from and is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Complete confidentiality.<sup>2</sup>
2. Maximising women's and children's safety at all times.
3. Understanding the trauma of violence and supporting women's increasing autonomy while recognising the woman as an expert in her own situation.
4. Being informed and knowledgeable about the rights, entitlements and options for women and ensuring referral is appropriate and responsible.
5. Advocating for women's rights.
6. Addressing additional barriers and discriminations that women experience.
7. Being committed to ensuring justice for the victim and accountability and sanctions against violent men.
8. Recognising the best form of child protection in domestic violence situations is the woman's protection.
9. Supporting women to move from crisis to safety and independence.
10. Ongoing commitment to action for political and institutional change.
11. Encompassing key feminist principles within the philosophy and ethos of the organisation.

All of our work is made possible by a combination of statutory funding, philanthropic, regular and once off donations, our charity shops and fundraising activities.

## WOMEN'S AID DIRECT SERVICES IN 2012<sup>3</sup>

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16,200 disclosures of abuse to our Direct Services<sup>4</sup>

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11,729 calls answered by the National Freephone Helpline

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508 One to One Support Visits

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162 Court Accompaniments

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239 One to One support sessions at the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service

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<sup>2</sup> Women's Aid has a policy in line with the Children First Guidelines which callers and clients are made aware of if disclosing child abuse.

<sup>3</sup> Note on Data collected: The information collected relates to details and facts disclosed by women in the process of their contact with Women's Aid. As the primary aim of these services is to provide support and information to women, Women's Aid does not solicit information for statistical purposes. For this reason, only partial information is available to us on the majority of women, particularly in relation to the extent of abuse being experienced and the barriers and obstacles to seeking help. The value of the statistics is that they build a picture of women's experiences of abuse and their contacts with Women's Aid Direct Services. Women's Aid hopes to build awareness of women's experiences, and of their need for protection and support.

<sup>4</sup> Women's Aid Direct Services are the National Freephone Helpline, One to One Support, Advocacy and Court Accompaniment Service and the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service. The Dolphin House Support and Referral Service is run in partnership between Women's Aid, Inchicore Outreach Centre and the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service.





**“I LIKED THE ANONYMITY. I STARTED TO SAY THINGS I HADN’T SAID TO FRIENDS, FAMILY OR ANYBODY BECAUSE I WAS SO AFRAID OF BEING JUDGED. YOU LISTENED AND YOU BELIEVED ME.”**

Rose

# PART 1:

## THE WOMEN'S AID NATIONAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE

### THE HELPLINE TEAM

*In 2012, the Helpline was staffed by a full time Helpline Manager; a part-time volunteer support worker; 4 part-time Helpline workers; 4 panel staff and a team of 27 volunteers.*

The Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900 is a service for women experiencing emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse by a current or former husband, partner or boyfriend. We are also available for family, friends and professionals concerned about women living with domestic violence.

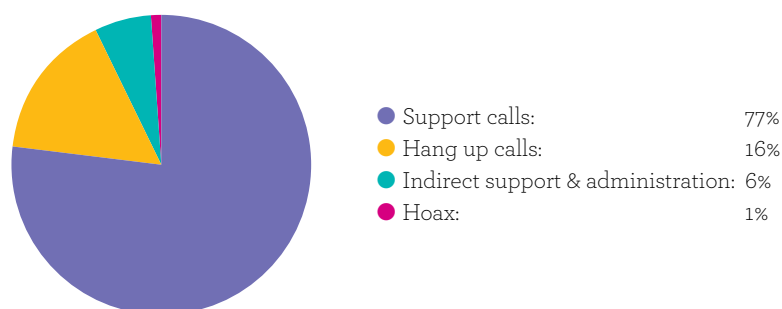
The National Freephone Helpline is open every day of the year (except Christmas day) from 10am to 10pm. The Helpline provides vital support and information to individual callers and serves as an access point to other Women's Aid Services and to support services and refuges nationwide. The National Helpline is free of charge to callers in the Republic of Ireland.

This confidential and anonymous Helpline is a valuable and essential service for the many women whose experiences of abuse may have isolated them from their family and social supports, and humiliated them into self-shame, self-blame and secrecy. All staff and volunteers working on the Helpline are highly trained in working with women experiencing abuse and share their support with gentleness and compassion to all callers to the Helpline. We will make space for a woman to speak and be heard and to acknowledge her feelings. We will, at all times, place the safety of women and children at the centre of our responses and will place responsibility for the abuse clearly with the perpetrator.

### 1.1. CALLS ANSWERED

In 2012, the **Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline answered 11,729 calls** from women, family, friends, and professionals seeking support for experiences of domestic violence. During these calls, **14,792 disclosures of abuse were made**.

Chart 1: Calls answered by the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline in 2012



**77% of calls were support calls** primarily from women experiencing emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse at the hands of an intimate male partner. Other support calls were from family and friends concerned about a loved one or from professionals working with women affected by domestic violence.

Making the first call to our Helpline can be a difficult step for anyone. We hear women struggle to find the words to describe what has been happening to them and to understand the abuse perpetrated against them. Women are hurt, confused and horrified about the pain they are experiencing.

**647 of these calls were silent support calls (6%).** Often women are at first unable to speak about their experiences. Silent calls are valuable support spaces. Sometimes a silent call will progress to where a woman will speak about her experiences. In these calls, Women's Aid Helpline workers offer gentle and encouraging support.

Being unable to speak about the abuse accounts for many of the hang up calls received. In 2012, we answered **1,873 hang up calls (16%)** where the caller immediately ended the call. Many women disclose that they have hung up a number of times before beginning to talk about the abuse. Speaking about the abuse can be a daunting prospect and it can frequently take a number of attempts to begin this process.

**Indirect support and administration calls (6%)** refers to the many calls that the Helpline receives from voluntary and statutory bodies looking for information or support on issues arising in their work in relation to domestic violence. The individuals using our service include members of An Garda Síochána, social workers, local support services, Family Resource Centres, Local Community Development Companies, GPs and hospital staff. Other administration calls include women accessing our One to One Support Services via the National Freephone Helpline, enquiries about volunteering and requests for information about Women's Aid.

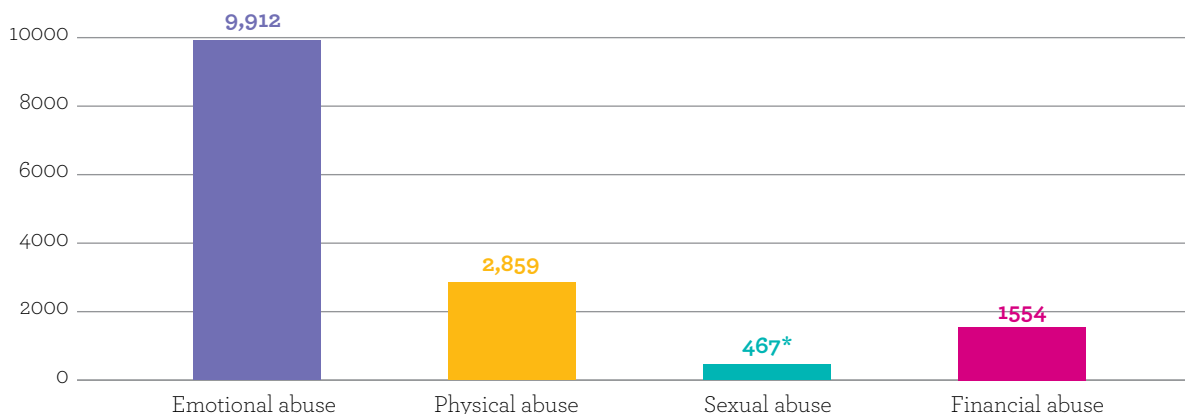
**58%** of callers were **first time callers** while **42% were repeat users** of the service. Calls to the Helpline vary in duration lasting from **60 seconds to 60 minutes or more** in length.

In addition to supporting women through our National Freephone Helpline, Women's Aid received an increasing number of emails from women. Some women find that this is their only safe way of communicating or contacting our service. **165 emails** from women experiencing abuse and concerned family and friends were responded to in 2012.

## 1.2 DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

In 2012, the Helpline listened to **14,792 disclosures of abuse**.

Chart 2: Disclosures of abuse made by callers to the Helpline



*\*This figure includes 176 reports of rape.*



The forms of abuse that women experience within the context of domestic violence include emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse. Many women experience overlapping forms of abuse and where there is physical, sexual or financial abuse, there is always emotional abuse. For this reason, the actual number of disclosures surpasses the number of support calls.

Many of the callers to the Helpline talk of the pain of emotional abuse and its invisibility to the rest of the world.

**Emotional abuse was disclosed on 9,912 occasions in 2012. This includes:**

- Being controlled, manipulated and isolated.
- Being constantly belittled, verbally abused, including being told she is a bad mother.
- Being constantly texted by the perpetrator with threats of self-harm and suicide and threats to kill her, the children and members of her family.
- Being blamed for the abuse including telling the woman and neighbours that she has mental health issues.
- Being constantly undermined, insulted, telling her that ‘something is wrong with her’.
- Being harassed by phone, text messages and through social networks, women’s access to the internet curtailed or monitored.
- Being followed, stalked and monitored while in the relationship and after leaving.
- Perpetrator ignoring orders under the Domestic Violence Act.
- Being threatened with physical and sexual assault.

Emotional abuse is responsible for high levels of mental and physical health issues. This includes anxiety, panic attacks, depression, alcohol or substance misuse, an inability to trust in other people or services, asthma and chronic insomnia. Despite this, legal protection for such abuse in the absence of physical abuse is extremely difficult for women to secure. Women will often describe emotional abuse as being worse than being physically assaulted due to its unrelenting and insidious nature.

A physical assault is a serious crime. In 2012, the Women’s Aid Helpline heard of **2,859 incidents of physical assaults** against women by current or former boyfriends, husbands and partners. The many ways that an abuser finds to physically abuse their partner remains shocking to those of us who support women, and most shocking at times is that bare hands remain the most common, and potentially lethal, weapons.

**Physical abuse disclosed in 2012 includes:**

- Being locked in and prevented from leaving the house.
- Being drugged, assaulted and hospitalised.
- Being punched and kicked while breast feeding.
- Being beaten while pregnant and in the post-natal period.
- Being restrained so that she cannot attend to her children’s needs.
- Being punched, thrown, slapped and kicked to the point of bleeding or injury.
- Being spat upon and threatened with weapons.
- Being gagged to stop the screaming.

Many women describe living in a constant state of fear that the next assault will result in serious injury or their death.

Sexual abuse has always been a part of domestic violence and includes a range of different behaviours. There were **467 disclosures of sexual abuse** in 2012. **This figure includes 176 rapes.**

**In 2012, sexual abuse disclosures include:**

- Being raped and sexually abused including being pinned down and assaulted.
- Being forced to have sex in return for money to feed the children.
- Being drugged and sexually assaulted.
- Being raped following a physical assault.
- Being woken up with demands for sex.

Many women find speaking about the sexual relationship with their abuser difficult and at times struggle to identify coercion and forced sexual activity as the crime of sexual violence. But sexual violence, even within a relationship or between ex-partners, is a crime.

**Financial abuse continues to be an issue for many women with 1,554 disclosures in 2012. This includes:**

- Being denied access to household monies for heating, food and clothing for the children.
- Being put out on the street with no place to go.
- Being left with no money after her account has been cleared out; household income being gambled away by the abuser.
- Being left with huge debt as she is responsible for all of the household bills and is forced to incur huge debt in her name.
- Abuser withholding maintenance and lying about his income to the Courts.

We hear from many women that the current recession has led to increased frequency and severity of abuse while limited options have trapped them in the relationship. Women, and our Helpline workers and volunteers, have to work much harder in this climate to identify possible supports to leave an abusive relationship.

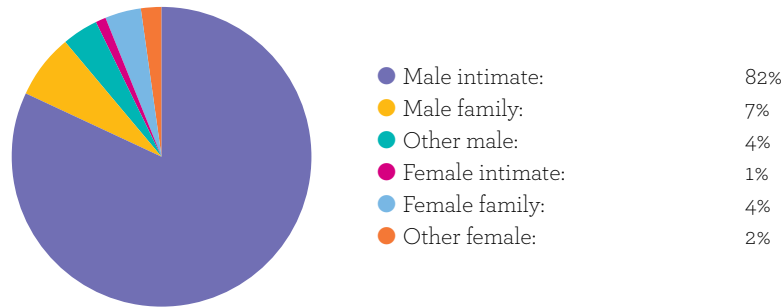
### 1.3 IMPACTS OF THE ABUSE

**The impacts reported by women experiencing domestic violence are understandably significant, long-term and wide-ranging. The impacts of abuse as disclosed to the Helpline in 2012 include:**

- Feeling distressed, vulnerable, and insecure.
- Feeling in fear of her life due to threats made to her safety.
- Being made vulnerable to homelessness after having to flee because of the abuse; being abandoned or thrown out onto the street.
- Anxiety because of debt, lack of access to household monies, loss of income or jobs due to the abuse.
- Feeling stressed, suffering stress related illnesses and women experiencing panic attacks and depression.
- Women self-harming, feeling suicidal and experiencing sleeplessness.
- Being physically sick after sexual and physical assaults.
- Unplanned pregnancy.
- Physical injuries including broken bones and bruises, hospitalisation due to the extent of physical injury.
- Women and children living in poverty.

## 1.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH ABUSER

Chart 3: Relationship with abuser



**The male intimate category (82%) includes current or former husbands and partners and can be broken down as follows:**

- Husband: 49%
- Ex-husband: 7%
- Partner: 16%
- Ex-partner: 10%

**65% of abuse disclosed was perpetrated by a current husband or partner** with marriage remaining the most common context for abuse. Abuse by a **former husband or partner** was disclosed by **17% of callers**.

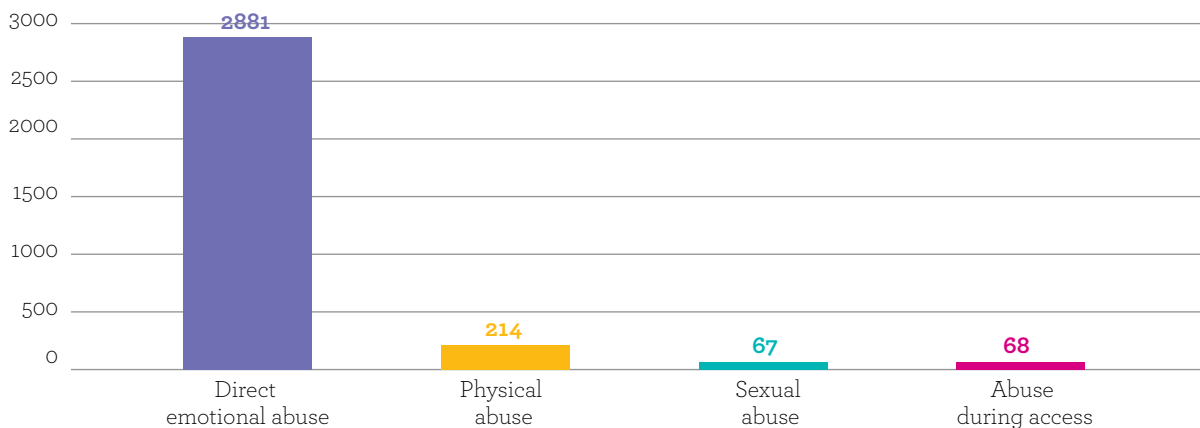
18% of callers disclosed abuse from a non-intimate male family member or another person.

## 1.5 ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Domestic violence continues to be a very common context in which children experience abuse, with the abuser of the mother being the abuser of the children. Chart 4 outlines disclosures of child abuse to the Helpline. In 2012, there were **3,230 disclosures of direct child abuse** to the Women's Aid Helpline.

This figure includes **2,881 disclosures of direct emotional abuse** and **281 disclosures** where **children were physically or sexually abused** by the perpetrator of their mother's abuse. It also includes **68 disclosures** of where **children were being abused during access visits**.

Chart 4: Disclosures of direct child abuse





### The abusive tactics used against children living in domestic violence situations disclosed to the National Freephone Helpline in 2012 include:

- Children being exposed to domestic violence against their mother.
- Abuser manipulating children against their mother.
- Abuser hitting children, including with household items.
- Abuser sexually abusing children.
- Abuser constantly shouting at and verbally abusing children.
- Children witnessing pets being abused, kicked and thrown against a wall.
- Children witnessing abuser self-harming.

Many children living in households where their mother is being abused will directly witness their mother being shouted at, threatened, physically assaulted and at times will see their mother being raped.

**In 1,221 calls it was disclosed that children were present in the home where domestic violence took place.** Where they do not directly see the abuse occurring they may overhear the abusive incidents, or will see the aftermath of it such as bruises, broken bones, damaged furniture and belongings. At times, the perpetrator will deliberately target children as a way to hurt both them and their mother. Women's Aid agrees with the 'Children First: National Guidelines on the Protection of Children in Ireland' which identifies the **exposure to domestic violence as a form of emotional abuse.**

In line with international best practice, Women's Aid believes that in these cases, protecting women offers the best protection to their children.

#### 1.5i Abuse during access arrangements

Many women will seek to end their abusive relationship when they become aware of risk to their children. However, for some women ending the relationship does not mean an end to their own abuse or that of their children. Women describe finding it more difficult to protect their children after a relationship ends due to ongoing abuse during unsupervised access visits. In **68 calls**, it was disclosed that **children were being abused during access arrangements.** In a further **261 calls mothers disclosed** that **they themselves had been directly abused during access visits.**

#### Access visits can be used as an ongoing means to control the women's and children's lives and continue to hold them in a state of fear and anxiety. Abuse during access arrangements in 2012 includes:

- Children witnessing the abuse of their mother during access visits.
- Women living in fear for herself and her children as the abuser ignores legal orders and tries to force access.
- Children having nightmares and being upset after overnight access due to exposure to 18+ films.
- Children upset when abuser regularly fails to show for access.
- Calls to tell her that her children will be killed or will never come home again.
- Abuser using access visits to physically abuse the woman and her children.
- Abuser refusing to pay maintenance.

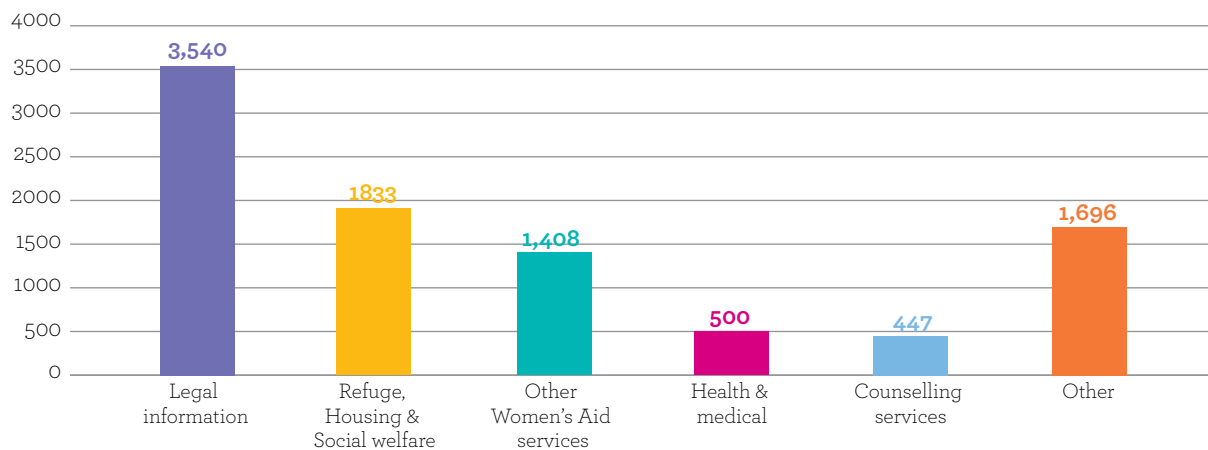
Where a woman has no concerns about the safety of her children she will very often do her utmost to facilitate time with their father. The majority of women using our services tell us of wanting to find ways to support ongoing relationships between children and their fathers. However, where there has been direct abuse to children and there continues to be the threat of harm to children, it is particularly distressing for women to have to send children to unsupervised access visits.

## 1.6 SERVICES PROVIDED

The Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline is a listening and support service and it is also a valuable source of practical information and onward referral to appropriate services. As Chart 5 illustrates, services provided in 2012 include:

- Information and support on legal options and how to access expert legal advice and representation.
- Information and support as women seek refuge, alternative housing and financial support.
- Referral to other Women's Aid services.
- Information and support on health, medical, counselling and other services.

Chart 5: Services provided



As part of the information and support to women seeking emergency accommodation, the **Women's Aid Helpline made calls on behalf of women to local refuges throughout the country on 325 occasions** in 2012.

We call on women's behalf when they have no credit to call the refuge directly. These women are seeking emergency and vital accommodation to ensure their safety and that of their children. The Women's Aid Helpline is quite literally a lifeline for women in these circumstances.

Women's Aid also refers women to local domestic violence support services throughout the country that provide one to one support and court accompaniment near where they live.

In 2012, Women's Aid Helpline workers **returned calls on 128 occasions** to women who left a voice message with the **out of hours service**.

## 1.7 GENDER, LOCATION AND MINORITY CALLERS

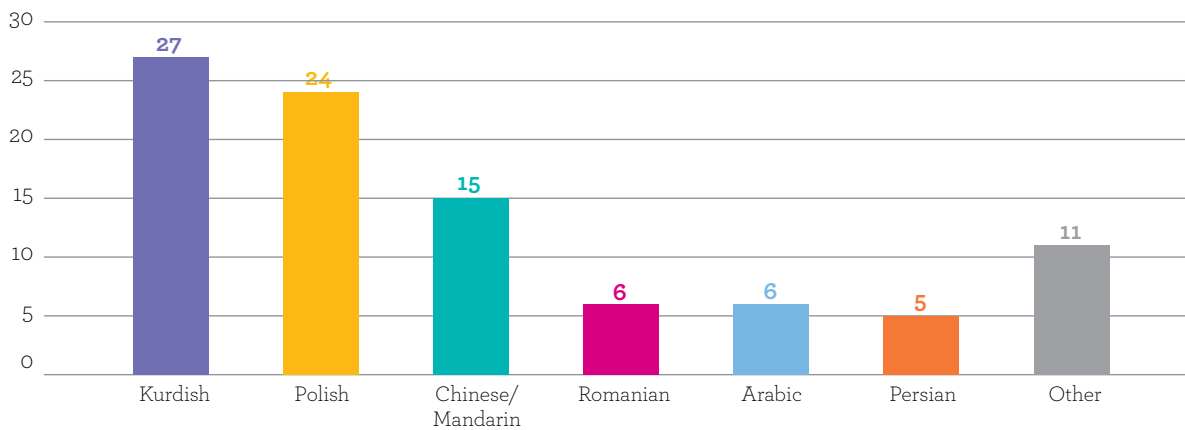
In 2012, **97% of callers were female** and **3% were male**. **42% of callers** came from the **Dublin area** while **27% of callers** were outside Dublin. **31% of callers did not disclose a location**. In addition to these figures, there were 31 calls from outside the Republic of Ireland.

**323 callers** to the Helpline were noted as **minority callers**. Of that total figure, **84% were migrant women**, **9% were women with disabilities** and **7% were Traveller women**.

## 1.8 TELEPHONE INTERPRETATION SERVICE 2012

Women's Aid aims to be available to all women who need us and in 2012 we continued our Telephone Interpretation Service which allows us to support women in over 170 languages. In 2012, **94 calls were facilitated** with women for whom English was not a fluent language using a number of different interpreters through the service.

Chart 6: Telephone Interpretation Service calls per language



The Women's Aid Telephone Interpretation Service is providing an essential service to women experiencing domestic violence. We aim to continue, with the support of our funders and our committed staff and volunteer team, to increase the accessibility of our service.

The Women's Aid **Telephone Interpretation Service** can be accessed via the **National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900** and is available from **10am-10pm, 7 days a week**. It is a **confidential service** and is **free of charge to the caller**.

## PART 2:

# THE WOMEN'S AID ONE TO ONE SUPPORT, ADVOCACY AND COURT ACCOMPANIMENT SERVICES

### THE SUPPORT SERVICES TEAM

The Support Services staff includes 1 part-time manager; 2 full-time and 2 part-time support workers and 1 part-time administrator.

Women's Aid provides **one to one support** to women experiencing domestic violence. We provide in depth information and support that includes face to face meetings, telephone support and accompanying women to court. We also advocate for women when they wish and refer them to other services.

**These services are available Monday to Friday. Appointments for these services are usually made by the woman through our National Freephone Helpline (1800 341 900). We can meet women in 6 locations in the greater Dublin area. These locations are:**

- Ballymun
- Coolock
- Dublin city centre – north and south sides
- Dun Laoghaire
- Swords

If a woman cannot access any of these locations we will arrange a safe alternative place to meet. Referrals for our Support Services come via the National Freephone Helpline as well as from a range of other services such as An Garda Síochána, GPs, Social workers, Family Resource Centres and hospital staff.

The Women's Aid **Court Accompaniment Service** provides advocacy and support specific to the particular needs of women seeking legal redress regarding violence by a current or former husband or partner, or those who have Family Law proceedings such as separation, divorce and custody and access in the context of domestic violence.

Women's Aid also operates the **Dolphin House Support and Referral Service**, in partnership with the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and Inchicore Outreach Centre in the Dublin District Family Law Court in Dolphin House.

### 2.1 OUR WORK WITH WOMEN

Each woman's situation is unique. We know that she is the expert of her own situation and she knows best what her abuser is capable of. Therefore, our support workers listen first to each woman they meet. The women we meet are experiencing emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse as outlined in Part 1 of this report.

We know that perpetrators of domestic violence use many abusive and controlling tactics designed to assert power and control over women. This is intentional and as a result, women feel trapped, undermined and lack confidence in their decision making abilities. Many women have been told and believe that they are responsible for the abuse and excuse his behaviour.

The abusive behaviours used by perpetrators of domestic violence have many negative effects on women and children. These can be short and long term effects on emotional and physical well-being. The ultimate cost can, in some extreme cases, be fatal.

Women's Aid support workers, alongside having understanding of what the women are experiencing, have



expert knowledge of the options available and provide emotional support that empowers women to take steps to try to escape the abuse.

We provide practical support and explore options while helping her to maximise her and any children's safety. We also provide ongoing telephone support.

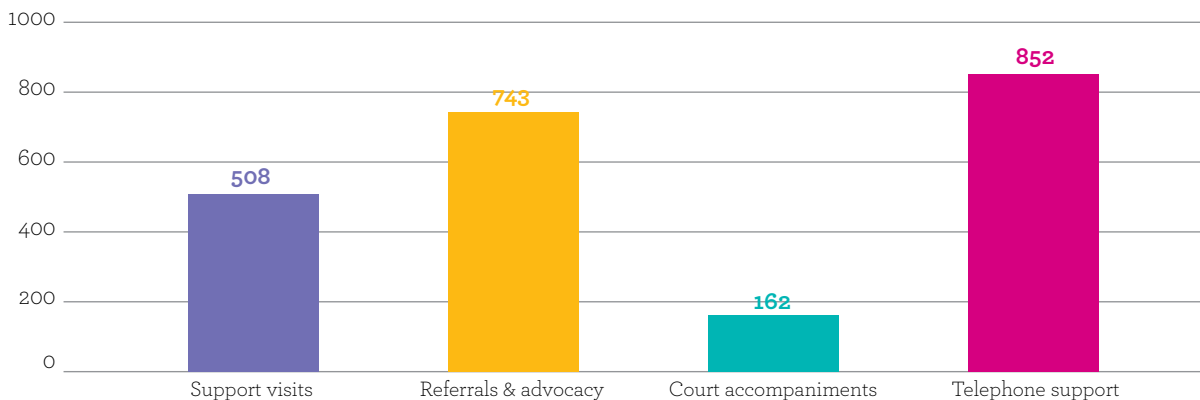
Women who are trying to leave an abusive partner need a range of options including somewhere safe to live, access to independent income, safe child contact arrangements and access to good legal representation. Women's Aid helps women to access these options and may advocate on their behalf if requested. Support workers will help women going through the legal system to gather information and prepare for court. Support workers will also accompany women to court and other appointments when needed.

## 2.2 SUPPORT PROVIDED

Chart 7 shows a breakdown of the support provided to women in 2012. In 2012 our support workers had **508 support visits with 364 women**. We **advocated and made referrals** to other agencies on **743 occasions** and we accompanied **91 women to court on 162 occasions**. Further **telephone support was provided on 852 occasions**.

Chart 7: Support provided

**A majority of women (295) used the services for the first time** in 2012. **69 women continued to use**



**the service from previous years.** This figure reflects the commitment of Women's Aid to see as many new women as possible each year. The level of support each woman needs is different. For some women, we have one to two contacts, while for others support can extend over years.

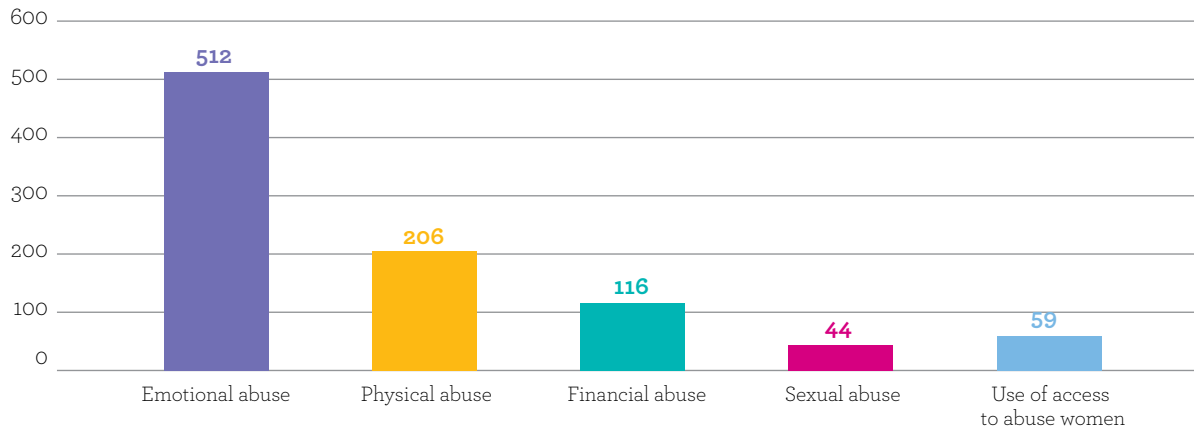
The women we support are diverse. Domestic violence can affect any woman, at any age and from any background. In 2012, we met with women aged 18-80 years old, some women had disabilities and faced difficulty securing safe, alternative accommodation because of accessibility issues, some younger women experiencing dating abuse were ineligible for protection under the Domestic Violence Act because they never lived with their boyfriends, while others faced additional barriers because they were migrant women.

**30% of the new women we saw in 2012 were migrant women.** The additional barriers faced by migrant women affected by domestic violence include the impact of the lack of independent residency status, ineligibility for social protection and limited access to emergency accommodation. Women may also face pressures and be limited in their options because of their cultural or religious background.

## 2.3 DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

The forms and extent of the abuse that women are disclosing to us continue to be disturbing, cruel and dangerous for them and their children. Chart 8 outlines the **937 disclosures of abuse** by women in 2012. The numbers of disclosures by far exceed the number of women because every woman is experiencing overlapping forms of abuse. This reflects the pattern of coercive control and intentional behaviour of the abuser to gain power and control in order to have his needs met.

Chart 8: Disclosures of abuse



We know that women will not necessarily disclose during a support visit all the types of abuse they have suffered. We can surmise that this figure is only the tip of the iceberg.

As outlined in Part 1 of this report, **the majority of disclosures are of emotional abuse (512 disclosures)**. Women tell us that emotional abuse is the most damaging and can be worse than physical abuse. When there is no actual physical and sexual violence there is the threat and fear of it. Abusers let their victims know what they could be capable of. These threats are detailed, brutal and very frightening.

Sadly, the high number of disclosures of physical and sexual abuse to all of our Direct Services highlight that many abusers do act on their threats and have shown women that they are capable of high levels of violence and intimidation.

Emotional abuse can involve threats of physical and sexual abuse and threats to kill her, the children or her family. In 2012, we heard **32 disclosures of death threats to women**. Many more women tell us that they believe that their abuser is capable of seriously harming them and killing them.

In **23 cases** women have told us that they are being **stalked by their abuser**.

The number of reports of actual **physical assaults is worryingly high with 206 incidents disclosed in 2012**. This is **206 serious crimes** committed against women. This figure includes **15 assaults** against **pregnant women** and **12 cases** where women were **assaulted with weapons**. We hear from women assaulted during pregnancy that they suffered miscarriages because of the abuse.

When a woman tells us of a physical attack we will always suggest she goes to her doctor or to A&E. We will also suggest she make a report to the Gardaí.

There were **116 disclosures of financial abuse** in 2012 including where women's access to money is totally controlled to restrict her freedom and where maintenance is withheld in cases where the relationship has ended.

The **44 disclosures of sexual abuse** include **16 disclosures of rape**. In **59 cases** women disclosed that they were **abused during access arrangements**.

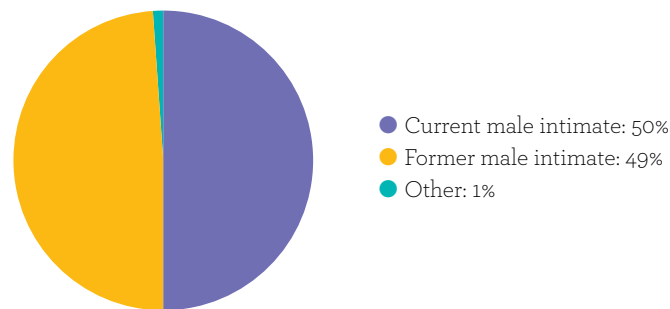
The **effects of the abuse on the women** we meet cannot be understated and should not be minimised. Women are controlled and treated as unequal human beings. They are put down to the extent that they don't have confidence in themselves and their abilities. Women are trapped with very few options to leave. They are beaten, hospitalised and can have ongoing and long term physical health issues. Women can develop mental health issues and in some cases be over-reliant on alcohol and drugs. Women are raped, sexually abused and have no freedom to negotiate a safe and respectful sexual relationship. Women are isolated from supports and from family and friends. Women are living in fear every day in Ireland.

## 2.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH ABUSER

Chart 9 shows women's relationship with their abuser. **50% of women** are being **abused by their current male intimate partners** including **38% of women who are married to their abuser**. **49% of women** were **abused by a former male intimate**, which highlights the fact that the end of the relationship does not necessarily mean an end to the abuse. Support services need to support women as they are preparing to leave but also to plan and manage their own and their children's safety until the abuse ends.

The former male intimate category also includes **34 women (12%)** who identified themselves as **single but who sought support** because of **ongoing abuse and harassment** by someone they were in a **short term dating relationship** with. This is a notable change from previous years and points to increase awareness of abuse in younger relationships as a result of the Women's Aid 2in2u National Public Awareness Campaign. Most of these women are not eligible for protection from domestic violence under the Domestic Violence Act because of strict co-habitation criteria.

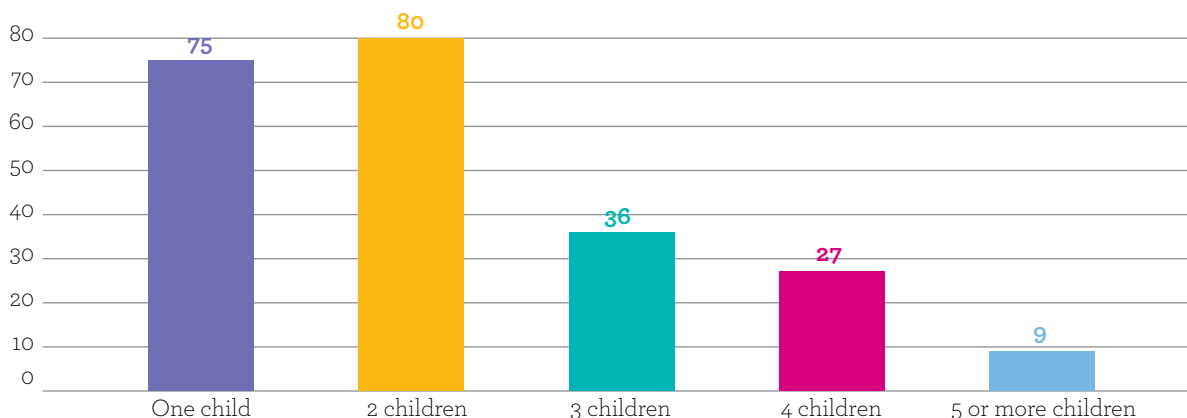
Chart 9: Relationship with abuser



## 2.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

The majority of women we support have children. Chart 10 illustrates that among the women we worked with for the first time in 2012, there are at least 496 children.

Chart 10: Number of new women with children



As outlined in section 1.5 of this report, **domestic violence is a very common context in which children experience abuse**. In line with international best practice, Women’s Aid believes that in these cases, protecting women offers the best protection to their children. We work to support the mother in her ongoing efforts to protect and care for her children. Although we do not work directly with children, when we work with women who have children, a lot of our work is focused on the children’s needs, in particular their safety and on how to support the mother as she cares for them.

When women do leave the abusive relationship they face negotiating the legal system for custody, access and maintenance which, in the context of domestic violence, leaves women vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Many of the women we support are concerned that access arrangements ordered by the court are placing their children at risk. Women have disclosed that children have been directly abused and neglected during access visits. They tell us that the abuser is also taking advantage of this contact to abuse them as well. Many abusive men also withhold maintenance payments.

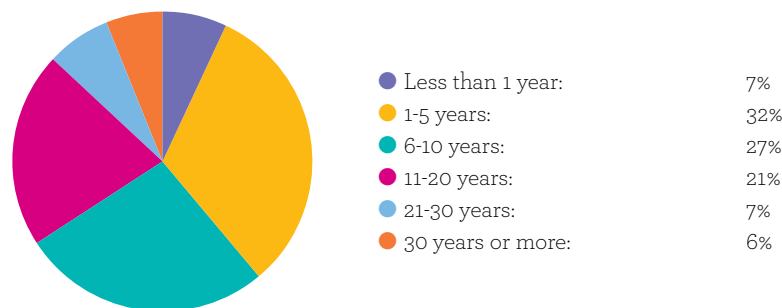
We support women going through the court system for as long as they need it. For child custody and access matters, the process can be long, drawn out and in many cases does not result in safe outcomes for women and children.

In some cases, women ask us for support in setting up safe access and counselling for their children. However, in our experience the majority of abusive men will not accept this support nor allow it for their children.

## 2.6 DURATION OF ABUSE

Chart 11 shows the duration of abuse disclosed by women in 2012. **39% of women** contacted Women’s Aid **during the first 5 years** of an abusive relationship, which is a welcome increase on 28% in 2011. The **majority of women (61%)** have been **living with abuse for more than six years** while many women were living with abuse for much longer with **13% experiencing abuse for over 21 years or more**.

Chart 11: Duration of abuse



We know that leaving an abusive relationship is fraught with difficulty. Women stay with abusive men because it is extremely difficult for them to leave. No one enjoys being beaten, threatened and humiliated in their own homes.

Women’s Aid believes that it is vital that good and effective supports are available to women when they begin to address their situation. These include good legal protection, the practical and emotional support of their family and friends, safe housing and support of organisations like Women’s Aid.

## 2.7 ADVOCACY AND REFERRALS TO OTHER AGENCIES

Women's Aid Support Services **advocated and made referrals** to other agencies on behalf of women on **743 occasions** in 2012 either by phone or letter. These agencies are outlined in Table 1. Due to the complexity of some women's situations and the nature of the service they are trying to access, support workers may also directly advocate for women. In some instances women will not have an automatic right to the service.

Table 1: Numbers of referrals and advocacy to other agencies

	Referrals	Advocacy
Courts	129	20
Legal Aid	112	8
Solicitors	66	16
Gardaí	46	4
Housing & Local Authorities	33	46
Social & Community Welfare	31	20
Counselling	10	3
Residency & Immigration	14	20
Refuge	19	10
Medical	2	5
Social worker	10	24
Other	15	80

**Housing is a major issue for women affected by domestic violence.** In a study by Women's Aid, having nowhere to go was the main reason women gave for not leaving an abusive relationship (Making the Links, 1995). This remains a huge barrier. Restrictions on social housing and rent allowance are problematic. For the last number of years we have also been noting the difficulties where a woman co-owns a house with an abusive partner. Often women cannot sell their home due to the recession and as joint owners they have no access to social housing. The lack of housing stock means that even women who are eligible for social housing have nowhere to move to. **Many women and their children have to stay in unsafe homes where they live in fear or face becoming homeless.**

Table 1 also shows the large number of referrals to **courts and legal services**. A large aspect of the support work is looking at legal options for women, for their protection and supporting them through Family Law court processes.

## 2.8 WOMEN'S AID COURT ACCOMPANIMENT

In 2012, the Women's Aid support workers went to court **162 times with 91 women**.

Court accompaniment takes place at the request of the woman and is a crucial part of our support work with women experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Aid support workers will accompany women to court to provide support on the day, as well as meeting her in advance and after the court hearing to prepare for court and to assist her in managing the outcome of the proceedings.

Women making applications for orders under domestic violence legislation experience great stress. Confronting a technical court system with unfamiliar language and procedures, can be intimidating. This can be compounded by many factors, including the fear of facing the abuser in a court of law and the very real threat and fear of retaliation by him.



Women find being accompanied to court very helpful. In fact, many women tell us that without support they do not think they would attend hearings. Our support empowers women to face their abuser and follow through on court processes. The support workers stay with the woman for as long as is needed on the actual day. They shield her from her abuser and try to ensure any negotiations are in her best interests and will enhance her and any children’s safety.

## 2.9 NATURE OF COURT APPLICATIONS

In 2012, the vast majority of cases where Women’s Aid accompanied women to court either dealt with **protection from abuse** (civil orders under the Domestic Violence Act, 1996) or **child related issues** such as **maintenance, access and custody**. We also supported women going through **separation and divorce** proceedings in the **context of domestic violence**. Table 2 outlines the number of court applications during which Women’s Aid provided support.

Table 2: Nature of court applications

Woman applicant		Woman respondent	
Child related orders	47	Child related orders	34
Domestic Violence orders	49	Domestic Violence orders	11
Divorce & Separation	8	Divorce & Separation	2

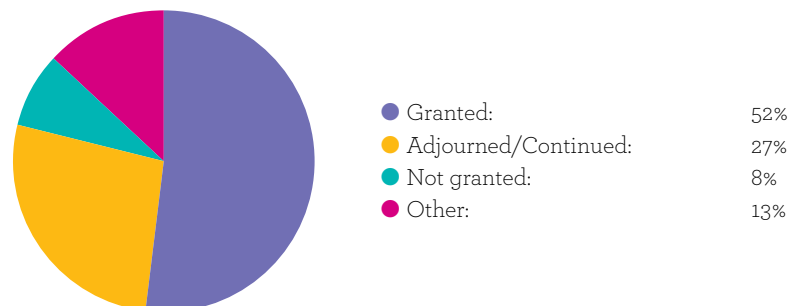
The number of court applications exceeds the amount of court accompaniments as a number of applications and issues can be dealt with at the same hearing. For example, a woman may be in court to apply for a barring order and maintenance order. Also, some matters may take more than one court appearance before being resolved.

While the majority of court accompaniments relate to Family Law proceedings, Women’s Aid support workers also went to court with women involved in **criminal law cases against their abuser on 6 occasions**.

## 2.10 OUTCOMES OF WOMEN’S APPLICATIONS FOR ORDERS UNDER THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

Chart 12 outlines the outcomes of the women’s applications for orders under the Domestic Violence Act. Where the Women’s Aid Support Service accompanied a woman to court who was seeking a Domestic Violence order, 52% of orders were granted, 27% adjourned or continued and 8% were not granted or struck out. The remainder (13%) were withdrawn or had another outcome.

Chart 12: Outcomes of applications for Orders



Engagement with the legal system can place women at heightened risk. Orders such as safety and protection orders, may mean the woman continues to live with her abuser. A woman's safety can be further compromised as the abuser can be angered by what she has done, or the abuser may hold no regard for the law.

Likewise, should her application for any order be unsuccessful, the woman may be placed at increased risk. Support throughout this process is essential to ensure that women remain safe and proceed with their application. A key element of the Women's Aid Court Accompaniment Service is examining the possible consequences of going to court and safety planning accordingly for before, during and after the court hearing.

## 2.11 DOLPHIN HOUSE SUPPORT AND REFERRAL SERVICE

In 2012, Women's Aid continued to operate the Support and Referral Service in Dolphin House, Dublin's Family Law District court, in partnership with the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and the Inchicore Outreach Centre, and supported by the Courts Service.

This is a free and confidential drop in service for women who attend Dolphin House for legal protection under the Domestic Violence Act and for child custody and access orders in the context of domestic violence. The service is staffed by experienced domestic violence workers. These workers provide women with information and support as they make new domestic violence applications. They look at immediate safety planning and they also link women into domestic violence and other support services for longer term support, if they wish.

In 2012, the service supported **226 women on 239 occasions** in face to face sessions. The service also provided **further telephone support on 11 occasions**. During the **239 sessions women disclosed 471 incidents of abuse**. In a marked difference from the disclosures of abuse outlined previously, nearly **70% of women were experiencing physical abuse** as well as other over-lapping forms of abuse. This suggests that women may feel that they need evidence of physical abuse when accessing the legal system for protection from domestic violence.

Women are mostly referred to the service by Court Clerks, the Family Mediation Service as well as other domestic violence support services, posters and word of mouth.

The majority of women come to us at the beginning of their journey through the court system but a significant number come to us after their court appearances, particularly if their initial applications have been unsuccessful and they now feel at heightened risk.

The Dolphin House Support and Referral Service is available on the 4th Floor and is available Monday to Friday from 9.30am - 1.30pm. This is a drop in service - no appointment necessary.

## PART 3:

# WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE



Part 3 of this report outlines the work of the Social Change Section of Women's Aid which is informed and underpinned by the experiences of women using our Direct Services.

Women's Aid works tirelessly to make women and children safe from domestic violence. In addition to our Direct Services, Women's Aid acts for justice and social change by engaging in **policy, representation and communications and campaigns** activity at a national level. We also provide **extensive information and statistics on domestic violence in print and online**.

Women's Aid also provides **specialised training** and **organisational support** on **responding to domestic violence** and is the **Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women** to the **Local and Community Development Programme** and **Family Resource Centres** throughout the country.

### 3.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIEW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION

In 2012, Women's Aid developed a set of **recommendations for the forthcoming review of domestic violence legislation** committed to in the current Programme for Government.

Women's Aid was extremely fortunate to be able to access a group of pro-bono barristers and solicitors through the Public Interest Law Alliance (PILA), who carried out excellent legal research for us on legislation and practice in other jurisdictions.

An internal working group then reviewed the research based on Women's Aid experience, and developed a paper with recommendations for the review of the Domestic Violence Act and other relevant legislation



*RTÉ Broadcaster Miriam O'Callaghan helps Margaret Martin, Director of Women's Aid to launch the new 'Don't Be Afraid' National Public Awareness Campaign in September 2012.*

**The paper deals with three main areas, where we believe that change is needed:**

- Eligibility for orders under the Domestic Violence Act and introduction of emergency orders for when the courts are not sitting;
- Measures to address the issue of child custody/access in the context of domestic violence;
- Stalking legislation.

### 3.2 PUTTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE AGENDA

Women's Aid continued to be active in the **Domestic Violence Coalition**, working on specific barriers faced by migrant women experiencing domestic violence. In early 2012 the Domestic Violence Coalition organised a Roundtable discussion and a briefing meeting for politicians on this topic, both of which were very successful. Following this Women's Aid, as a representative of the Coalition, met with Cosc and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) to progress this issue. A very positive outcome of this work was the publication online of the INIS policy on granting autonomous residence to dependent partners experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Aid has continued to **put domestic violence on the agenda** by organising a briefing morning for T.D.s and Senators and writing a number of briefings and submissions. Women's Aid supported the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

In 2012, Women's Aid continued to be **represented at national and international level**, including at the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSC), Legal Issues Subcommittee of the NSC, Public Awareness Subcommittee of the NSC, the Eastern Regional Advisory Committee (ERAC) on Violence against Women, Irish Observatory on Violence against Women, Southside Addressing Violence Effectively (SAVE), Legal Aid Board External Consultative Panel, Family Law Court Service Users Panel and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE).

### 3.3 RAISING AWARENESS AND PROVIDING HOPE

Women's Aid knows how important it is to raise awareness of domestic violence and promote our vital services to women experiencing domestic violence and to wider society. In 2012 we undertook **three national public awareness campaigns**. In February we re-ran the very successful **2in2u campaign on dating abuse**. The 2in2u campaign is designed to show the hidden reality for many young women who are experiencing abuse,

control and violence at the hands of their boyfriends and specifically targets younger women to try to prevent the next generation of domestic violence. During the four week campaign, the 2in2u website was visited almost 500 times a day.

In September Women's Aid launched the **Don't Be Afraid national public awareness campaign** to promote the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900 as a valuable resource for women experiencing domestic violence throughout the Republic of Ireland. This newly developed campaign was designed to show women that they do not have to suffer domestic violence in silence. It encouraged women living with domestic violence to speak up and call the National Freephone Helpline.

The campaign also targeted key professionals who support women affected by domestic violence and public places where women seek help and support. Awareness information packs were mailed out and included Women's Aid leaflets, posters and other items promoting the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline.

The impact of the campaign was immediate and significant. As a direct result of the campaign, the Women's Aid Helpline carried out more support calls, gave more support time, had fewer women staying silent and fewer women hanging up.

Women's Aid also ran the annual **One in Five Women campaign** during the **16 Days of Action Opposing Violence against Women** in November. Women's Aid supported over 135 groups and individuals to take part in a National balloon action and other 16 Days events in their local areas. Hundreds of people engaged and promoted the campaign online via the Women's Aid 16 Days blog and social media platforms, and shared new and innovative awareness raising tools like the Women's Aid One in Five women interactive campaign video and info-graphic on domestic violence.

### 3.4 WOMENSAID.IE – PROVIDING A LIFELINE, ONLINE

Traffic to the Women's Aid website continues to grow year on year. The website is an important way Women's Aid provides vital information to women experiencing domestic violence as well as to the general public. There were a total of **93,472 visitors to the Women's Aid website in 2012**. This represents **an increase of 49% on the previous year**, demonstrating the increasing importance of providing quality information online.

Our ability to connect using our social media platforms is also growing and provides us with a wonderful opportunity to engage with new audiences and to promote our services online.

### 3.5 NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT

Women's Aid aims to be a centre of excellence for the Training and Development of professional and organisational responses to women and children experiencing Domestic Violence. We provide a **national programme of specialised training and support to a variety of participants and organisations from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors**. Our vision is that any woman experiencing domestic violence will receive a high calibre response from a whole range of agencies so that she can easily and promptly access support, safety and protection for herself and her children.

Among the highlights of our 2012 calendar, was seeing **two new groups of volunteers complete our 39-hour training course for the Women's Aid Helpline** and become part of the Helpline team of staff and volunteers.

In 2012, we were proud to continue our programme of **specialised training for health and social care professionals on responding to domestic violence against women and children** and also for **those responding to domestic violence within mental health services**. Participants included child protection and mental health social workers, general and mental health nurses, doctors, addiction counsellors, occupational therapists and accident and emergency staff.



As Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women, we provided support to **106 Family Resource Centres** throughout the country to address and respond to the issue of violence against women and their children in their local communities. We provided two levels of training, the first equipping centres to recognise, respond and refer safely, the second providing a focus on woman and child protection where there is domestic violence, in line with practice arising from Children First Guidelines (2011). We also provided information, resources and support to centres, facilitating their participation in awareness-raising, campaigning and lobbying on domestic violence, such as 2in2u, Don't Be Afraid and the annual 16 Days Campaign opposing Violence against Women.

The year 2012 has seen the development of two new initiatives as part of our work as **Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women to the Local and Community Development Programme**. We have been researching how best to support students in Community Childcare on best practice in Woman and Child Protection where domestic violence is a feature. We have also been developing training and organisational supports for Local Employment Services in recognition that domestic violence can be a barrier to many women in accessing employment and training. We also continued to facilitate Local Development Companies throughout Ireland and other groups within the programme to participate in awareness-raising, campaigning and lobbying on domestic violence and provide them with specific information on local, national and regional support services for women and their children experiencing domestic violence.



*Our new look Dundrum Village Charity Shop.*



*Margaret Martin, Director of Women's Aid with John Warburton from DoneDeal.ie.*

# PART 4:

## THANK YOU

### 4.1 THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELP WOMEN'S AID

Women's Aid is indebted to all our volunteers, supporters, funders and donors who make our work possible. In 2012 we faced many challenges, particularly financial ones. The generosity we receive is deeply supportive and affirming. Without financial and fundraising support and the giving of time and expertise, we would not be able to provide the support to women outlined in this report.

#### *Our Helpline and Charity Shop volunteers*

Women's Aid is an organisation which receives huge volunteer support each year. Our National Freephone Helpline is supported by 27 committed volunteers who provide the thousands of women who call us with a listening ear and supportive space to talk about the abuse they are suffering. Our trained volunteers are essential to the operation of our National Helpline and enable us stay open 12 hours a day, every day of the year (except Christmas Day).

We also have a team of dedicated volunteers in our charity shops, which help raise much needed funds to keep our services operating.

**To each and every volunteer we thank you for your dedication and belief in the work of Women's Aid.**

#### *Our Charity Shops*

Our **two charity shops** in Aungier Street and Dundrum continue to contribute to the work of the organisation.

The range and quality of items donated during the year was amazing. We received a fine array of vintage and designer clothes and we have developed a reputation for our boutique style shops.

In October 2012 we moved premises in Dundrum and re-branded our shop. The new look Dundrum Village Charity Shop opened its doors and has pride of place in Dundrum Village. Our new shop has maintained the old charm for which we had become known and continues to provide great stock including trinkets, coats and shoes. There is something different every day. A re-launch of the Aungier Street Charity Shop is planned in the near future.

#### *Regular and once off donations*

Women's Aid is supported by a loyal and growing list of **regular donors**. We also receive once off donations and have been gifted legacies. This support remains the lifeblood of our organisation. Without it, we would not be able to provide our services to the thousands of women who need us.

#### *Avon Speak Out Against Domestic Violence programme*

Over the last five years Women's Aid has partnered with the **Avon Foundation** as part of the Avon Speak Out Against Domestic Violence programme.

This partnership helped us fund the re-development of the Women's Aid website, providing vital information and resources online to women experiencing domestic violence, and has helped us to support women on our National Freephone Helpline and raise awareness of domestic violence and support available in communities across Ireland.

In April 2013, Avon ceased operations in Ireland. As a result the Avon Foundation will no longer be in a position to support our work. Women's Aid would like to acknowledge the commitment of Avon, its distributors representatives and customers across Ireland in support of our work to make women and children safe from domestic violence and we wish them the very best in the future.

### *Fabulous fundraisers*

In 2012, we had a fit and healthy band of women donning trainers and tracksuits for **Team Women's Aid** in the **Flora Women's Mini Marathon**. We benefitted from the fundraising activities of sky divers, yoga instructors, bakers, as well as once off donations from individuals who just prefer to remain anonymous.

Women's Aid would also like to send an absolutely huge thank you to John Warburton and everyone at **DoneDeal.ie**, who chose Women's Aid as their charity for the month in August 2012. As a result we received a generous percentage of all advertisements placed on the website for that month. Margaret Martin, our Director, was delighted to visit the DoneDeal.ie team in Wexford to pick up the donation of €33,260.

Women's Aid was also chosen by Cassie Moore to be one of the beneficiaries of the sale of her moving autobiography **Did You Hear Me Crying?**. Cassie is a brave, strong and inspiring woman who endured and survived child abuse and domestic violence for many decades. The book launched in November 2012 and remains on sale.

Like all charities, we have suffered significant funding cuts over the past four years. We are indebted to all who take time to organise events and take initiatives to help raise much needed funds for Women's Aid.

## OUR FUNDERS

Women's Aid would like to thank our funders who recognise and continue to support the delivery of our services. We receive funding from the Health Services Executive, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the Family Support Agency, the Commission for the Support of the Victims of Crime and Cosc - the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence. We also receive funding from The Vodafone Foundation and the Avon Speak Out against Domestic Violence Programme.

### *And finally...*

Women's Aid would like to thank all of our colleagues in other domestic violence services around Ireland to whom we refer women for local face to face support and refuge and acknowledge the excellent co-operation that exists to help support women and children experiencing domestic violence.

We must also thank individuals and organisations who give freely of their time and expertise to support the work of Women's Aid. This includes the team at Language for their invaluable work on the Don't Be Afraid and 2in2u Public Awareness Campaigns and for working with us on this year's Annual Report, Paul Sharp at Sharpix, Lianne Murphy at Public Interest Law Alliance, Lynne McDonagh B.L., Aoife Mooney B.L., Catherine Dawson B.L., Michael Kinsley B.L., Gavin Elliot B.L., Fergal Crehan B.L., Elizabeth Mitrow, Solicitor, Simon McGarr, Solicitor, and the many others to whom we are very grateful.

The support and generosity we receive each year is overwhelming and so vital to the continuation of our work to make women and children safe.

Thank you all.

## 4.2 HOW YOU CAN HELP US MAKE WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE

Women's Aid relies on the support of fundraisers, donors and volunteers. Generous and committed people who care deeply about women and children experiencing violence and abuse. You can help us continue to make women and children safe from domestic violence.

### *How to donate*

**Online:** Visit [www.womensaid.ie/donate](http://www.womensaid.ie/donate) to make an immediate and secure donation.

**By post:** Send a cheque or postal order to Women's Aid, 5 Wilton Place, Dublin 2.

**Become a monthly donor:** Support Women's Aid by setting up a regular Direct Debit payment. All you have to do is download the Women's Aid Direct Debit form here [www.womensaid.ie/donate](http://www.womensaid.ie/donate), complete it and send it back to us. We'll then take it from there and set up the Direct Debit with your bank.

**Your legacy:** When the time is right for you to include a gift in your will, please remember us. Once you have looked after your loved ones, any gift however large or small would make a real and lasting difference to the lives of women and children experiencing domestic violence. Please contact us on 01-6788858 or email [info@womensaid.ie](mailto:info@womensaid.ie) to discuss your options for leaving a legacy to Women's Aid.

### *Other ways to support Women's Aid*


**Fundraise:** Organise your own event or take on a sponsored challenge and see how you can individually make a difference for women experiencing domestic violence. If you are planning fundraising activities, Women's Aid will help you along the way. Contact Women's Aid on 01-6788858 for more information or visit [www.womensaid.ie/support](http://www.womensaid.ie/support).

**Visit and Donate to the Women's Aid Charity Shops:** Call in and shop at The Dundrum Village Charity Shop or the Aungier Street Charity Shop and pick up some high end bargains. You can also donate good quality second hand and unwanted items including ladies, gents and kids clothing, unwanted gifts, jewellery, CDs, DVDs and videos, books and recent magazines. Call in at 39 Aungier Street, Dublin 2 (t: 01-4759927) or 14 Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14 (t: 01-2960284).

**Volunteer:** We need volunteers for our National Freephone Helpline and our Charity Shops. Contact Women's Aid on 01-678 8858 for more information or visit [www.womensaid.ie/support](http://www.womensaid.ie/support)

**And most importantly, spread the word:** If you know someone who is experiencing domestic violence, pass our Helpline number to her, if it is safe to do so. Remember - the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900 is open from 10am to 10pm every day (except Christmas Day) and is free and confidential.

**Find us at [Facebook.com/womensaid.ie](https://www.facebook.com/womensaid.ie) and [Twitter.com/@womens\\_aid](https://twitter.com/womens_aid) and sign up for our E-zine at [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)**

A woman with long brown hair is sitting on a bed, looking down at a young child. The child is sitting on the floor, and the woman is holding their hands. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint. The text is overlaid on the image in yellow, cyan, and magenta colors.

**“WOMEN’S AID IS  
A VERY SUPPORTIVE,  
SAFE AND  
REASSURING PLACE.  
I HAD ALL THE TIME  
IN THE WORLD  
HERE. YOU WERE  
INVALUABLE DURING  
VERY DIFFICULT  
TIMES. THANK YOU.”**

Monika



# PART 5:

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2012

Women's Aid Limited is a company, limited by guarantee not having a share capital.

### Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31st December 2012

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
<b>Income</b>	1,559,243	1,530,345
<b>Overheads</b>	(1,563,067)	(1,505,001)
<b>(Deficit)/Surplus for the year</b>	(3,824)	25,344
<b>Bequest income</b>	-	2,540
<b>Interest receivable</b>	15,554	18,074
<b>Surplus after other income</b>	11,730	45,958

### Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2012

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Tangible Assets	748,741	19,763
<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	12,895	784,708
Cash at bank/Building fund	1,107,048	1,023,273
	1,119,943	1,807,981
<b>Creditors and provisions (amount falling due within one year)</b>	(505,821)	(476,611)
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	614,122	1,331,370
<b>Net Assets</b>	1,362,863	1,351,133
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>income and expenditure account</b>	1,362,863	1,351,133
	1,362,863	1,351,133

## Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31st December 2012

	2012	2011
	€	€
<b>Reconciliation of operating (deficit)/ surplus to net cash inflow from operating activities</b>		
Operating (deficit)/surplus	(3,824)	27,884
Depreciation	20,621	21,325
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	-	21,573
Decrease in debtors	771,813	(767,451)
Increase in creditors	29,210	90,965
<b>Net cash flow from operating activities</b>	<u>817,820</u>	<u>(605,704)</u>
<b>Returns on investments and servicing of finance</b>	15,554	18,074
<b>Capital expenditure</b>	<u>(749,599)</u>	<u>434,872</u>
<b>Increase in cash in the year</b>	<u>83,775</u>	<u>(152,728)</u>

Ursula Regan, Chairperson

Margaret Martin, Director

15th May 2013

### Extract from the Auditors Report to the Members

We have audited the financial statements above in accordance with Auditing Standards.

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the statement of the company's affairs at 31st December 2012, and of its results and state of affairs for the year then ended, and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Acts 1963 to 2012. We have obtained all the information and explanations considered necessary for the purposes of our audit. In our opinion proper books of account have been kept by the company. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

John G Kelly for and on behalf of  
KSi Faulkner Orr

Registered Auditors

15th May 2013

A woman with long brown hair is shown in profile, talking on a black corded telephone. She is wearing a white top with a gold lace-like pattern. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an office or call center environment. The lighting is soft, highlighting her face and the phone.

**“I FEEL SO MUCH  
BETTER AFTER  
TALKING TO  
SOMEONE, I FELT  
VERY LOW BEFORE.  
YOU HAVE MADE ME  
FEEL VERY STRONG.”**

Elaine



**WOMEN'S AID**

Making Women and Children Safe

**WOMEN'S AID**

5 Wilton Place, Dublin 2, Ireland.  
Tel: 01-6788858 Fax: 01-6788915  
Email: [info@womensaid.ie](mailto:info@womensaid.ie)

[www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)

**National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900**

Registered charity number 6491