



CUAN

An Ghníomhaireacht um Fhoréigean Baile,
Gnéasach agus Inscnebhunaithe
The Domestic, Sexual and
Gender-Based Violence Agency

2025

Annual Report



Contents

1

About Cuan

Chair’s Message	3
Chief Executive Officer’s Message	5
Glossary of Abbreviations	7

2

Review of 2025

Strategic Objectives	14
Looking ahead to 2026	30

3

Governance, Finance and Public Sector Reporting Duties

Governance and Board Oversight	32
Board members	33
Cuan and the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty	36
Climate Action as Public Sector Leadership	38
Public Awareness Campaigns and the Official Languages Act	38
Financial Overview	39

Appendix

Cuan funded service providers	40
-------------------------------	----

Chair's Message



The context: a problem which is not receding

Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence is a widespread and pernicious violation of human rights occurring in homes, in relationships, and in every community. It is also chameleon with newer forms of abuse, amplified by technology and enabled by shifting social norms emerging faster than policy responses can keep pace.

The mandate of the Board of Cuan is to provide strategic direction to the Agency, to uphold the highest standards of governance and to advise the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration on the policies and priorities that will determine how Ireland responds to DSGBV.

This report covers a year of hard-won progress, documented with characteristic rigour and honesty in the Chief Executive's Message that follows. What I want to offer is the perspective of the Board on the current landscape, the strategic choices that matter most, and insight as to where Cuan must be positioned as we enter a new and pivotal chapter in how Ireland talks about this violence, where the ultimate accountability lies and what actions must be taken.

Prevention and response.

A response to DSGBV that focuses only on victim-survivors - however compassionate and well-resourced - addresses the consequences of violence, not its causes. The Board is serious about ensuring that prevention, and prosecution - the accountability of those who cause harm - are co-equal priorities in our strategic framework. The Board's focus is on supporting the executive to develop Cuan's thinking and advocacy on both prevention and prosecution in order to ensure that the development of the fourth national strategy reflects a genuinely purposeful and effective approach. We are committed to supporting both the Minister and the Department in that important endeavour.

We do so aware that technology is not a neutral backdrop. Artificial intelligence, the design of commercial digital platforms and the monetisation of content that normalises harmful attitudes and behaviours are shaping the context in which violence occurs and is perpetuated. The Board expects Cuan to build the expertise and the relationships needed to advise the Minister on these developments as they evolve - to be proactive, anticipate, analyse and inform.

Evidence as authority

Robust, current, and independently verifiable evidence is key. The Board's ability to advise the Minister effectively, and Cuan's capacity to inform the policy environment, depend on that strong foundation.

The ESRI research on the prevalence of adult sexual violence, published in 2025, is but the beginning of a sustained investment in evidence. We want Cuan to be the organisation that Irish policymakers turn to first - not because of its statutory role alone, but because of the quality and authority of its analysis and advice. That standard requires a Research Strategy, with systematic data collection from the services Cuan funds and the analytical capability to translate that evidence into actionable policy and recommendations.

A continuum of support

The Board is committed to continuing the expansion of refuge and safe accommodation. Our view is that a mature national response to DSGBV must encompass the full continuum: early intervention to keep people safe in their homes where that is genuinely achievable and supported; crisis provision that responds without hesitation when it is not; and clear, funded pathways out of emergency accommodation, so people are not stranded in crisis settings when they are ready to rebuild their lives.

That is the framework within which the Board is asking the executive to plan, commission and evaluate services - a focus not simply on the number of units alone, but on the quality and sustainability of the journey that those units are part of. This is a more ambitious and more demanding standard, and it is the right one.

What I want to offer is the perspective of the Board on the current landscape, the strategic choices that matter most, and insight as to where Cuan must be positioned as we enter a new and pivotal chapter in how Ireland talks about this violence, where the ultimate accountability lies and what actions must be taken.

Building an agency for what lies ahead

The CEO's report is candid about organisational challenges – and equally clear about what the team has achieved. The Board's perspective on staffing resources and capability is focussed less upon the operational reality of any given year, and more on the case for long-term investment.

Cuan is a relatively young agency carrying an outsized and important public mission. It is the Board's responsibility to ensure that the governance and resourcing environment keeps pace with that mission. The Board acknowledges the Minister has made resources available to address current resourcing and system challenges, thereby enabling Cuan to function at the level its mandate demands. The Board will continue to monitor the efficacy of resourcing plans and provide assurance to the Minister that appropriate investment in resources and organisational infrastructure is in place to allow Cuan to deliver not just for this year, but for the decades ahead.

Beyond Zero Tolerance

This report covers a year of activity, including coordinating the implementation of *Zero Tolerance*, the third national strategy on DSGBV. The strategy has provided a framework for accountability and coordination that has driven action and improvement. As it draws to a close, the development of its successor strategy becomes one of the most important policy processes in this field for a generation.

The fourth national strategy will be led by the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. The Board's position is that this must be a whole-of-government strategy in substance, not just in name. DSGBV intersects with housing, health, education, social protection and justice in ways that no single Department is equipped to address alone. The ambition of each relevant Government Department, and the accountability mechanisms in existence between and across them, must be fit for the scale of that challenge.

Cuan's role in that process should be that of a central expert partner - present from the earliest stages, contributing the evidence base and helping to shape the ambitions and accountability structures of the new strategy. The Board will work with the CEO to ensure that Cuan is positioned accordingly, and that the depth of expertise this organisation has accumulated is fully leveraged in what will be a defining policy moment.

In closing

The detailed record of what Cuan has delivered in 2025 is set out by the CEO with the clarity and conviction it deserves. From the Board's perspective the work documented in these pages matters because the people it serves matter, and the scale of what remains to be done is what must continue to animate our shared ambition.

The progress set out in this report is a collective achievement, and it deserves collective recognition.

To the Cuan CEO and Senior Leadership Team: your leadership, tenacity and professionalism throughout a demanding year have been exemplary and the Board is both appreciative and deeply grateful.

To my fellow Board members: your expertise, rigour and willingness to challenge have made this a better-governed organisation, sharpened our focus and deepened our shared sense of purpose.

To the Minister and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration: your commitment to this agenda, and the confidence thereby placed in Cuan to deliver, have been fundamental to everything achieved in these pages.

To the service providers, advocates and frontline workers who form the backbone of Ireland's DSGBV sector, the system stands because you do. The partnership Cuan holds with you is one we value greatly and work hard to be worthy of.

Finally, and most importantly: to those who have navigated this system, shared their experiences and held Cuan to account for the quality of its response - the Board hears you. Your experiences are the measure against which all of our strategic decisions must ultimately be judged.

Professor Emerita Caroline Fennell
Chair

Chief Executive Officer's Message

Cuan has moved decisively from establishment to delivery -and the evidence of that transition is evident throughout this report.

Reflecting on the breadth of what we accomplished, I am struck by both the scale of progress and the urgency that continues to drive us. This is not a moment for complacency; it is a moment to take stock of what has been achieved, to acknowledge and to set our sights clearly on what remains to be done.

2025 was a year of consolidation, expanding capacity and demonstrating results: growing services, driving national implementation of the Zero Tolerance Strategy and deepening our engagement with the DSGBV sector and our implementation partners.

Building an Agency fit for purpose

I am immensely proud of what the Cuan team have delivered in 2025 through their professionalism and resolve. Against 38 ambitious actions in our Business Plan, we achieved a 71% delivery rate across six key objectives. A substantial achievement and a direct reflection of the calibre and commitment of the people I have the privilege of leading.



Leading national change

As a dynamic and effective state body, strengthening Ireland's response in the context of both national and international concerns, Cuan undertakes significant actions. Engaging with 22 statutory implementation partners to improve coordination and implementation of the Zero Tolerance Strategy; publishing national progress reports and working with Government Departments and Agencies to introduce key performance indicators, strengthening whole-of-government accountability on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. We support alignment with other significant national policy developments across Government Departments, including the National Strategy on Women and Girls, Sexual Health Strategy, Our Rural Future and support the transposition of the EU Violence Against Women Directive.

In September, we launched the *Always Here* Sexual Violence campaign marking a meaningful shift in how Ireland addresses sexual violence as a matter of national concern. Alongside this, we published our first joint research output with the ESRI – *Measuring the Prevalence of Adult Sexual Violence* – an important research collaboration strengthening evidence for future national policy. This investment in research and public awareness reflects Cuan's commitment not only to responding to violence, but preventing it.

Expanding safe accommodation

The imperative to ensure that every person fleeing violence has access to safe accommodation is one that I hold as a personal and organisational priority, on behalf of the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. In 2025, we delivered 30 new refuge and safe home units across Ireland. Refuge capacity now stands at 172 units. Safe Home provision has grown to 60 units. New refuges in Drogheda and Ringsend became operational during the year, with Clondalkin due to open in early 2026.

Each represents a place of safety. We set ourselves ambitious targets, and work hard to meet them. Looking to 2026, we are augmenting the Cuan team with specialist engineering and capital development expertise to support that objective.

Zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is not simply a strategy, it is a defining commitment.



Investing in the sector and expanding services

Cuan stewarded €58.4 million in public funding across 78 service providers nationwide, an increase of €7 million on 2024. I am also pleased to report that we secured an additional €12.25 million for 2026, the majority of which will support service expansion. The additional investment made in 2025 is already delivering results: our open funding call attracted 160 submissions requesting over €12 million against €3.2 million available – a figure that speaks powerfully to both the appetite within the sector and the scale of unmet need. The awards made are expected to benefit more than 5,400 additional victims-survivors, train over 1,100 sector staff and support 167 additional individuals through perpetrator programmes.

All 78 DSGBV services are now fully engaged with the Cuan Hub IT platform, representing 100% participation. A rate which reflects the quality of the relationships Cuan has built with its partners.

Acknowledgements

None of the progress documented in this report would have been possible without people who give their very best to this work.

The Cuan team’s professionalism, dedication and sustained commitment throughout a demanding year has been outstanding. They have consistently delivered – often under real pressure – with the kind of integrity and purpose that this work demands. I am deeply grateful.

The Board has provided strategic leadership, challenge and guidance that has been invaluable throughout the year. I am grateful for its stewardship and continued confidence in the work. I am also very grateful to our Audit and Risk Committee members, who give their time generously to support Cuan in its work to establish robust foundations for accountability and probity.

The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration is critical to our success. Support and partnership with the Department is vital to the progress we want to deliver and the ambition we have for Cuan. I sincerely appreciate the support and confidence extended from our departmental colleagues and the Minister for Justice Home Affairs and Migration who prioritises the DSGBV agenda.

And to the victim-survivors who have engaged with Cuan, who have shared their experiences, informed our thinking and helped shape more effective responses: your voices are at the heart of everything we do. They ground our work, sharpen our sense of purpose and hold us to the highest standard of accountability.

Looking ahead

Zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is not simply a strategy, it is a defining commitment.

Cuan has a strong sense of confidence in what we are capable of delivering. The systems, partnerships and funding mechanisms established over 2024 and 2025 are now solid platforms from which to accelerate change. The work ahead is substantial, but I have no doubt about our collective capacity to meet it.

The progress set out in this report reflects what becomes possible when strong political will, dedicated public and civil servants and a committed sector work in genuine partnership toward a shared and urgent goal.

We will continue to honour that commitment with every resource at our disposal.

Dr. Stephanie O’Keeffe
Chief Executive Officer, Cuan

Glossary of Abbreviations

COALESCE	Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges (Research Ireland funding programme)
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DJHAM	Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LGFA	Ladies Gaelic Football Association
NSDP	National Services Development Plan

Our Vision

A society free from
domestic, sexual and
gender-based violence.



About Cuan

2025 - A year of consolidation and coordination

Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) remains one of the most serious and persistent human rights issues in Ireland today. It affects individuals, families and communities across every county and every background, and it places sustained pressure on the frontline across justice, health and social care. Addressing it effectively requires more than individual supports, it requires coordinated national action, sustained investment and clear public accountability.

Cuan was established to provide leadership and ensure that Ireland's response to DSGBV is coordinated, measurable and focused on impact. As Ireland's national statutory agency for DSGBV, its role is to fund and oversee frontline services, lead prevention and awareness initiatives, build the evidence base that informs policy and coordinate implementation of the Zero Tolerance Strategy across Government.

2025 was Cuan's first full year of operation, a year in which the Agency moved from initial establishment to active delivery. €58.4 million in public funding was directed to 78 service providers nationwide, an 11.6% increase on 2024 reflecting continued Government investment in the sector. In addition to €3.1m invested to expand refuge provision, increased funding provided €3.2 million for an Open Funding Call, targeted at expanding capacity, reaching marginalised communities and strengthening governance across 67 funded organisations.

Expanding safe accommodation for women and children seeking safety and refuge, remained a critical priority. A strategic review in spring 2025 led to increased delivery targets, putting Ireland on track for a significant step change in accommodation capacity. Refuge capacity grew to 172 units and Safe Home provision to 60 units, with a substantial pipeline of new developments progressing through planning and capital stages.

Alongside funding and service expansion, Cuan delivered four national awareness campaigns, working with services and victim survivors to strengthen the impact of key messages. We achieved extensive national reach and impact across TV, radio, out-of-home and online. Education is a central component of Cuan's approach to prevention and is a fundamental commitment in Ireland's national strategy Zero Tolerance: by building awareness and understanding of healthy relationships from an early age, it works to shift the attitudes and behaviours that underlie DSGBV. Consent education is one part of a broader, State-wide effort to embed healthy relationships across education, public life and society.

The Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026 was published, introducing defined performance indicators for each of its 95 actions and a new monitoring framework across 22 Government implementation partners. Three significant research outputs were completed and a landmark research funding strand for DSGBV was established with Research Ireland.

Internally, Cuan continued to invest in the systems, governance and people needed to sustain delivery at scale. Governance and risk management frameworks were put in place, a three-year internal audit programme commenced, and oversight arrangements were formalised to support responsible stewardship of public funds.

Demand for services continued to rise as more people came forward – a positive reflection of growing awareness and confidence to seek help, but also a reminder of the scale of the task that exists. Cuan has built real momentum: clearer structures, stronger accountability and a growing body of delivery to point to. There is much still to do, and we remain committed to delivering on our objectives. The pages that follow set out in detail what was delivered across each of Cuan's six strategic objectives.

2025 Milestones

2025 was Cuan’s first full year of delivery under its Corporate Plan 2025–2027, a year that marked a decisive shift from establishment to measurable action. The milestones capture the scale and breadth of what was achieved.

Coordinating National Strategy and Whole-of-Government Action

Zero Tolerance 2025–2026 Implementation Plan published with key performance indicators for each action for the first time, to support accountability and oversight.

Two national Zero Tolerance Progress Reports published, covering mid-year 2024 progress and implementation from July–December 2024.

Cuan produced a Partnership Development Strategy in 2025, a framework for deepening existing relationships and establishing new ones across every sector of Irish society.

Prevention, Education and Public Awareness

Cuan rolled out two brand new public awareness campaigns – ‘Hardest Stories’ and ‘You are not Alone’ – the first large-scale campaigns to be fully conceived, developed and delivered by the Agency. Designed to raise awareness of DSGBV, empower victim-survivors to tell their stories and signpost the services available. These campaigns have achieved extensive national reach and impact, with evaluation results showing extremely high levels of campaign recall, positive reception of the campaigns as being both ‘sensitive’ and ‘informative’, as well as excellent performance against the campaigns’ ‘acceptability’, ‘potential to act’, and ‘support signposting’ KPIs.

Cuan grew and expanded its flagship ‘Consent Ed’ education project which has seen over 1000 educators and professionals trained in consent and healthy relationships facilitation. Consent Ed develops fact-based and age-appropriate educational materials for young people that support them to have happy, healthy relationships as they grow. Over the course of 2025 Consent Ed is estimated to have reached over 80,000 students through delivery in schools.

Expanding and Strengthening Services and Supports

Services dedicated to supporting victims and survivors of sexual violence have grown significantly in recent years. Following Cuan’s Open Funding Call, dedicated counselling for adolescents is now available across Cuan-funded sexual violence services, ensuring that young people who need specialist support can access it.

Developing safe accommodation – whether refuge units or safe homes – involves complex multi-agency and multi stakeholder work. Over 2025 Cuan put in place a very strong delivery pipeline, providing support at each site to quicken the pace of delivery. Cuan fine-tuned its coordination of this work through the establishment of local multi-agency stakeholder groups to streamline collaboration across the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; the Housing Agency, the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, funded services, Approved Housing Bodies and Local Authorities.

Strengthening Governance and Organisational Foundations

Cuan’s Governance Framework and Risk Management Framework were approved by the Board.

Formal oversight structures were embedded to support accountability and stewardship of public funds, including the implementation a three-year internal audit plan, covering Cuan operations and funded services.

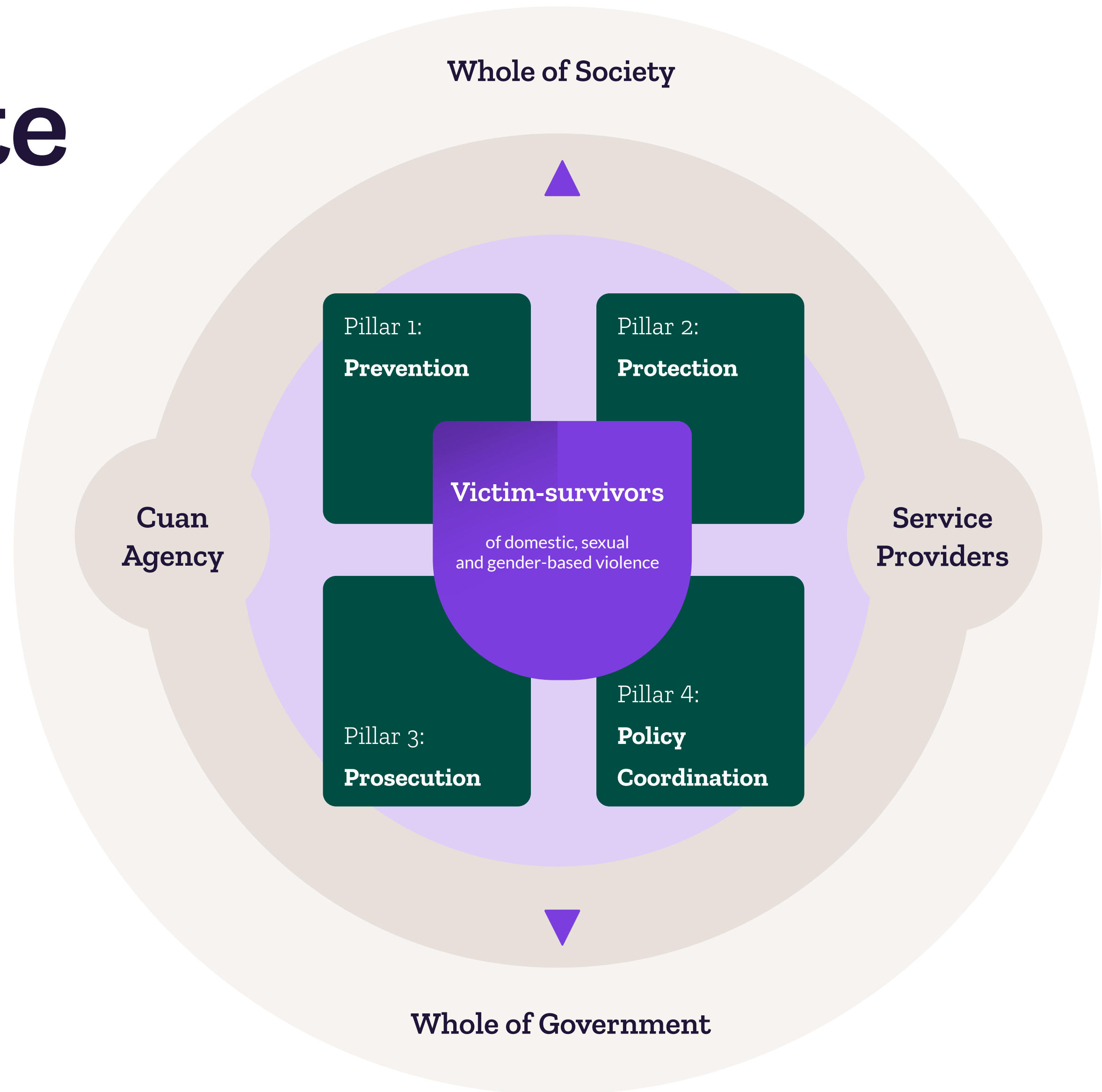
Building Evidence-Informed Delivery

Three national research outputs delivered, including publication of *Measuring the Prevalence of Adult Sexual Violence: A Review of Irish and International Literature* under the Cuan–ESRI Joint Research Programme.

Strategic research partnerships expanded, including a formal joint research programme with the ESRI and new funding partnerships with Research Ireland, CSO and the DPP.

Cuan's Mandate

Cuan was established under the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act 2023 as Ireland's national statutory agency for DSGBV violence. The Agency was created to ensure a whole-of-government, structured, accountable and consistent national response to DSGBV, supporting victims and survivors while working towards a society free from such violence.



Ireland ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) in 2019. The Convention provides the overarching framework for national action across four pillars - prevention, protection, prosecution and policy coordination which are embedded in the Zero Tolerance Strategy and its successive implementation plans. Cuan supports delivery of the Strategy through coordination, service oversight, communications, prevention initiatives and the development of research and monitoring systems to track progress.

Under its statutory functions, Cuan is responsible for:

- Coordinating and monitoring the development and delivery of services to victims of DSGBV, including delivering on the number of safe and accessible accommodation spaces available, as well as ensuring that helpline and other supports are available to anyone requiring them.
- Putting in place a robust set of national service standards and governance arrangements to ensure adherence to the appropriate standards for such supports.
- Leading on consistent and ongoing research to inform DSGBV policy development, working with others such as the CSO who have data projects underway.
- Leading on awareness-raising campaigns designed to reduce the incidence of DSGBV in Irish society as well as ensuring that all victims know how to access the supports, they require.
- Coordinating all Government actions set out in the Third National Strategy and reporting on their delivery to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Political oversight of the strategy will be provided by the Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Equality.

Through these functions, Cuan connects national policy, frontline services and public awareness efforts, ensuring that Ireland's response to DSGBV is coordinated, measurable and focused on impact.

Cuan’s Strategic Direction and Values

Purpose, ambition and vision

At the heart of Cuan’s work is a clear *purpose*: To drive Ireland’s response to the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and the protection of all victims and survivors.

Cuan’s *ambition* is to be nationally and internationally recognised for leading the drive towards zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, creating lasting societal change.

Its *vision* is of an Ireland free from domestic, sexual and gender-based violence – where safety, dignity and justice are fundamental rights for all.

Cuan’s values

Cuan’s values guide not only what the Agency does, but how it does it. They underpin organisational culture, inform decision-making and shape engagement with victims and survivors, service providers, public bodies and communities.

- **Courage:** We confront difficult issues with honesty and determination. Cuan is committed to speaking openly about DSGBV, challenging stigma and leading with strength and conviction.
- **Creativity:** Transformational change requires new thinking. Cuan fosters innovation in policies, services and public engagement, using new approaches to address long-standing and emerging challenges.
- **Empathy:** Survivor-centred practice is at the heart of everything we do. We listen to victims, value lived experience, and ensure that compassion, understanding and dignity guide all our actions.

- **Inclusion:** We work to ensure that all people, regardless of background, identity or circumstance, can access support and live free from violence. Cuan seeks to reduce inequalities and support the diverse needs of communities across Ireland.
- **Integrity:** We operate with transparency, professionalism and accountability. Our decisions are grounded in evidence, ethics and the responsible use of public resources.

While Cuan’s statutory remit defines its legal responsibilities, its Corporate Plan 2025–2027 sets out how the Agency intends to deliver on that mandate. The Plan provides a clear framework for leadership, coordination and impact, guiding Cuan’s priorities and defining its work across services, prevention, research and national strategy implementation.

Cuan’s strategic direction reflects both the scale of the challenge posed by DSGBV and the need for a coordinated national response. It recognises that progress requires sustained action across Government, public services, communities and civil society.

Over the lifetime of the Corporate Plan, Cuan aims to:

- Galvanise nationwide action to end DSGBV.
- Educate and empower all generations to challenge and transform the social and cultural norms that allow DSGBV to persist.
- Lead the development and delivery of quality and effective services and supports, accessible to all victim-survivors and persons at risk of DSGBV.
- Drive whole-of-government action to prevent DSGBV, protect victims and ensure effective and supportive pathways to and through justice.
- Build a knowledge base and evidence-informed response to DSGBV issues informed by the lived experience of victim-survivors.
- Establish a dynamic, effective, internationally recognised agency working towards an Ireland free from DSGBV.

These objectives reflect Cuan’s role as a national coordinator, connecting policy and practice, funding and standards, prevention and protection. They also reflect a clear commitment to measurable progress, transparency and continuous improvement.

A year of laying the
foundations for
future progress

2

Review of 2025



Strategic Objectives

Progress against strategic objectives

This section sets out Cuan’s progress in 2025 against the six objectives in the Corporate Plan 2025–2027 and the 2025 Business Plan. It describes what was delivered, how statutory functions were carried out and how learning from implementation is shaping priorities for 2026.

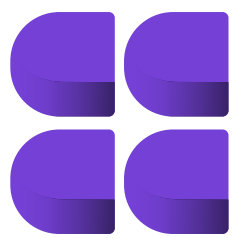
2025 marked a clear shift from initial establishment to measurable delivery. National coordination was strengthened, prevention and education activity expanded, service funding increased, and accommodation capacity grew. Monitoring and reporting became more structured, supporting greater accountability for delivery under the Zero Tolerance Strategy.

Demand for services rose throughout the year. There may be many reasons for this; it may reflect greater public awareness and willingness

to seek support, an actual increase in the prevalence of DSGBV or a combination of both. Research currently being undertaken by Cuan, in partnership with others, will in time provide a clearer evidential picture. What is certain is that rising demand places sustained pressure on frontline provision and that meeting it remains a central priority.

Progress was not uniform across all objectives. In some instances, activity was sequenced to reflect organisational capacity, planning timelines and dependencies across Government and sector partners. Where adjustments were made, they reflected a focused and pragmatic approach, prioritising the actions with the greatest impact while keeping commitments realistic and deliverable.

Taken together, the six objectives show how Cuan translated national commitments into coordinated action, visible outputs and increasing momentum in Ireland’s response to DSGBV.



Objective 1: Galvanise nationwide action to end domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Addressing DSGBV requires collective action that extends beyond individual services or isolated interventions. Responsibility spans communities, civil society organisations, educational institutions, workplaces, sporting bodies, healthcare and social care services, and the wider public. Bringing these sectors together around a shared commitment to action is essential to making lasting progress.

Cuan’s role is to coordinate action across that landscape. Across 2025, the Agency completed its Partnership Strategy, deepened international engagement and worked to embed DSGBV priorities within wider Government policy.

What was achieved and delivered in 2025 International cooperation and policy engagement.

Cuan deepened its international engagement recognising the value of shared learning and comparative insight in addressing DSGBV.

The Agency formally joined the EU Network on Gender-Based Violence Prevention. This European Commission-led forum brings together Member State officials and stakeholders to exchange best practice and improve preventive approaches to gender-based violence. Participation in the platform enabled dialogue with European counterparts, supported discussion of emerging risks and policy developments, and helped align Ireland’s approach with evolving EU priorities in prevention and awareness.

Engagement continued through the Five Jurisdictions Policy Forum for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, involving officials from Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. This work deepened bilateral relationships, particularly with counterparts in the Northern Ireland Executive, and supported collaboration on policy development and implementation challenges.

Cuan participated in Ireland’s National Delegation to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva, to respond to queries from the Committee on DSGBV during the State’s examination.

These interactions positioned Cuan within a wider international community of practice and supported alignment between national delivery and international human rights commitments.

Embedding DSGBV priorities across Government

Beyond formal partnerships, Cuan worked to embed a DSGBV lens within broader policy and service domains. Dialogue took place with Government departments and agencies to ensure that DSGBV considerations were reflected within wider strategies relating to women and girls, sexual health and community safety.

This work supports coherence between national priorities and helps ensure that responses to DSGBV are integrated across relevant policy areas rather than treated in isolation.

SPOTLIGHT:

Partnership
Development
Strategy



Cuan produced a Partnership Development Strategy in 2025, a framework for deepening existing relationships and establishing new ones across every sector of Irish society, grounded in the conviction that galvanising whole-of-society action is essential to achieving the Zero Tolerance vision of an Ireland free from domestic and sexual violence.

The Strategy was developed through a rigorous process of stakeholder mapping and analysis. Cuan began by examining its existing stakeholder relationships before expanding outward to identify opportunities for action across six ecosystems using a lifecycle approach– Health and Social Care; Schools and Youth; Further and Higher Education and Research; Workplace; Community, Civil Society and Human Rights; and Culture, Media and Sport.

For each ecosystem, the analysis set out current activity, identified gaps and surfaced opportunities

for collaboration and joint working. An intersectional lens was applied throughout, ensuring that factors including race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and age were built into the framework from the outset, reflecting the reality that groups that experience discrimination and marginalisation often face compounded barriers to protection and support.

The Strategy is deliberate in how it defines partnership. It encompasses not only organisations already working on DSGBV, but also those with a different primary mandate where a shared objective can be developed.

The Strategy is underpinned by defined partnership principles: mutual respect and shared purpose; transparency and trust; recognition of partner expertise and autonomy; a commitment to intersectionality; and defined accountability through

regular review. These principles reflect Cuan’s understanding that effective partnership is built on substance, not process; that the relationships which generate real change are those grounded in genuine collaboration and shared goals.

Publication of the Strategy marks the foundation of a new phase of engagement. In 2026, an action plan will activate key partnerships across the six ecosystems. Priority areas include the co-design and launch of a national DSGBV professional alliance, bringing together Section 40 funded services with statutory and educational partners, and the development of Operation Encompass¹, a multi-agency initiative to strengthen support for children affected by domestic abuse. Together, these steps will begin to translate the Strategy’s ambition into coordinated, society-wide action.

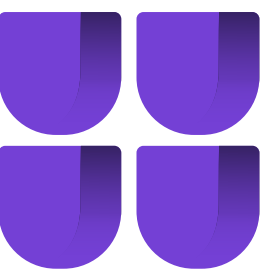


Cuan CEO at DkIT River Project Annual Community of Practice Conference themed 'Keeping the spotlight on Coercive Control: A multi-agency approach'

Key priorities for 2026

- Publishing Cuan’s Partnership Development Strategy and implementing a 2026 action plan to deepen strategic partnerships and strengthen whole-of-society commitment to the prevention of, and supportive response, to DSGBV.
- Supporting the operationalisation and implementation of Operation Encompass¹, in partnership with the DJHAM, the Department of Education and Youth, and An Garda Síochána to strengthen the multi-disciplinary responses to children affected by domestic abuse.
- Co-designing and launching a national DSGBV professional alliance, including Section 40 funded services and relevant statutory and educational partners.

¹ Operation Encompass is a Garda-led, school-based safeguarding initiative that ensures schools are notified when a child has been present at a domestic abuse incident, allowing designated school staff provide confidential, early support and intervention. It is an information-sharing partnership between Gardai and teachers to protect children from the negative impacts of domestic violence.



Objective 2:

All generations will be educated, informed and equipped to challenge and transform the social and cultural norms that contribute to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence

Ending DSGBV requires collective action to change the attitudes and behaviours that allow it to happen in the first instance. That takes time and part of the response requires education, public awareness campaigns and sustained national messaging; work that Cuan leads in partnership with educators, community organisations and prevention specialists across the country. That work included four national campaigns, consent education reaching over 88,000 students and new materials developed to address emerging risks such as online coercion and harmful digital content.

What was achieved and delivered in 2025

Raising awareness and challenging harmful social norms

Public awareness campaigns remained central to Cuan’s prevention work. In 2025 our focus was to increase awareness of DSGBV, improve understanding of supports and challenge harmful attitudes.

To strengthen our work, Cuan’s Campaign team developed an enhanced approach to measuring campaign effectiveness. A standardised campaign KPI framework was established and tested. This strengthens the Agency’s ability to measure and compare impact across campaigns and provides a basis for a broader evaluation strategy in 2026.

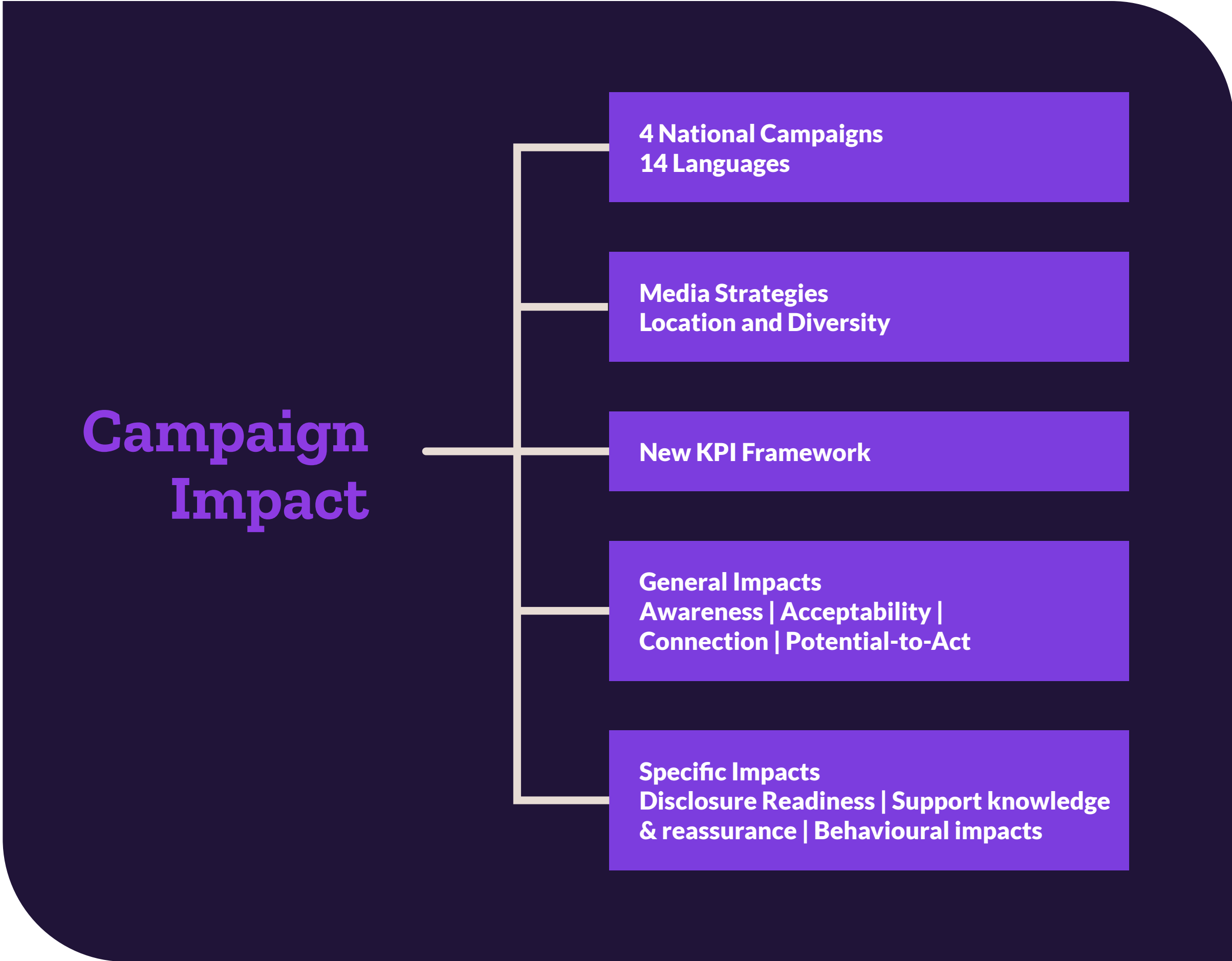
- Campaign delivery was underpinned by three complementary approaches:
1. A national media plan to ensure broad reach
 2. A localisation media plan to promote local supports
 3. A diversity-focused media plan designed to reach marginalised groups, including LGBTQ+ communities, migrant communities and Traveller and Roma communities.

Growing campaign impact

Cuan continued the delivery and further development of key national campaigns transferred from the Department of Justice, Migration and Home Affairs, including *Let’s Have the Consent Conversation* and *Always Here*. These campaigns focused on promoting healthy consent, signposting pathways to safety and encouraging help-seeking behaviour.

Let’s Have the Consent Conversation remained a cornerstone of prevention activity. Delivered through broadcast and digital channels, with materials translated into 14 languages, the campaign aimed to normalise conversations about consent, equality and respect.

In September, the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration described rising reporting as ‘a positive development’, noting that greater awareness and clearer pathways to support were encouraging more people to come forward. This is supported by feedback from services.



Independent nationally representative research, carried out amongst a sample of 1,000 people, shows that since the campaign launched:

- 78% of sexually active participants reported discussing consent with their partners (+14% from benchmark); with even larger increases among men (+18%), Gen X (+19%) and Baby Boomers (+18%)
- 77% reported actively thinking about consent in their own lives (+12%)
- Two-thirds reported increased likelihood of future consent conversations
- Campaign recall exceeded industry norms across television, radio and social media

Always Here focused on signposting supports for victim-survivors. Materials were placed in local frontline settings, including GP surgeries, pharmacies and hospital waiting areas, so that information was available at moments of need.

Cuan developed and launched two major national campaigns – *Hardest Stories* and *You're Not Alone* – the first large-scale public awareness campaigns fully conceived, developed and delivered by the Agency. They marked an important step in establishing Cuan's voice, values and public identity within Ireland's DSGBV landscape.

Hardest Stories sought to confront the reality and scale of domestic and sexual violence in Irish society. It recognised that while many stories remain untold, too many exist, challenging silence and stigma and inviting reflection, empathy and shared societal responsibility.

Prompted recall of the campaign was strong.

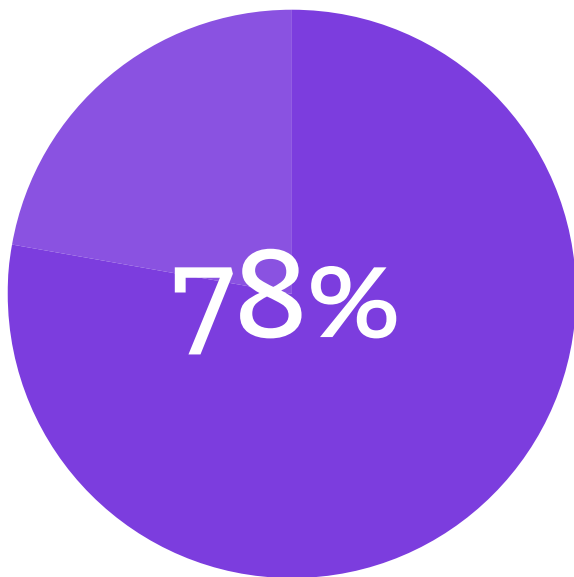
- Two-thirds of the population reported seeing the campaign – rising to three-quarters of 18–27-year-olds
- 50% recalled the television advertisements with recall across radio (32%), social media (35%) and out-of-home (33%) exceeded industry benchmarks
- Seven in ten said they would visit the campaign website if they or someone they knew needed support, demonstrating both resonance and practical impact.

You're Not Alone, the sexual violence stream of the *Always Here A*, focused on addressing barriers to disclosure and reassuring victim-survivors that support exists. Evaluation indicated research and impact following launch.

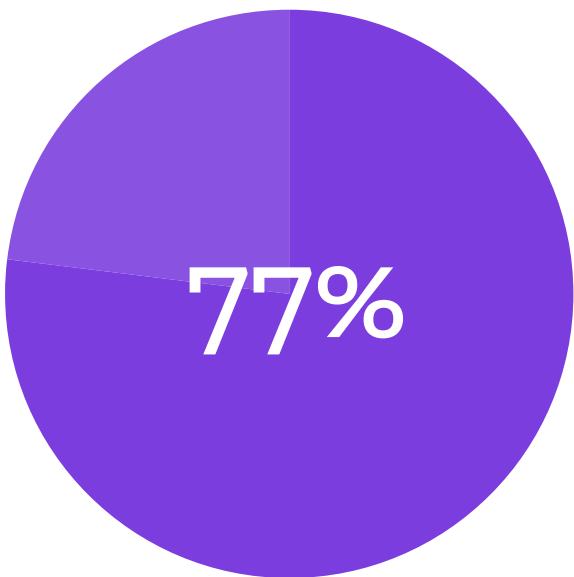
A defining feature of *You're Not Alone* was its victim-survivor-informed design process. Creative concepts were independently tested with a panel of sexual violence victim-survivors to ensure messaging was respectful, realistic and supportive – the first time a Government-led DSGBV campaign incorporated formal victim-survivor testing at this stage of development. The research underpinning this approach was shortlisted for the Marketing Society of Ireland's 2025 Research Excellence Awards. *See spotlight*

"The You're Not Alone campaign is an extremely important campaign as it lets people who are victims of domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence know that they can get help and that they can report it and that it will be properly investigated. It's an essential part of the work that's been done by my department through Cuan."

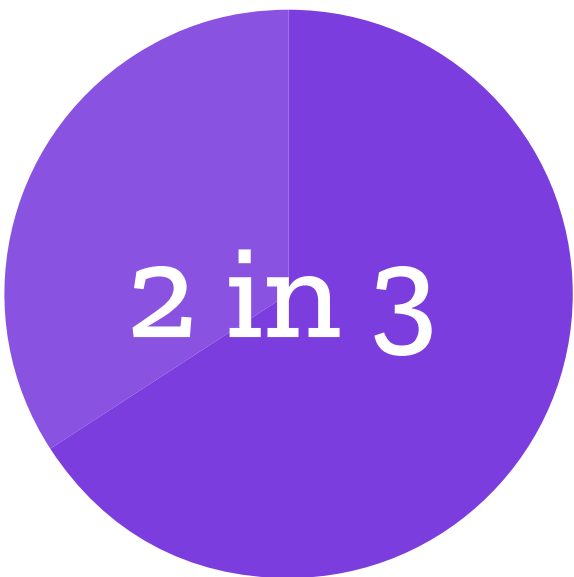
Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O'Callaghan



Discussing
Consent
(+14%)



Thinking
About Consent
(+12%)



More Likely to
Discuss Consent

Men +18%
Gen X +19%
Baby Boomers +18%

Education: Integrating prevention across formal and informal settings

Education is a major strand of prevention activity across the Zero Tolerance Strategy. In 2025 Cuan formally established its Education Function to integrate education as a core element of its work. A Senior Education, Training and Intervention Specialist was appointed enabling work to benchmark existing provision, identify gaps and begin shaping a more coherent national approach to DSGBV education and training across the life course.

2025 also saw Cuan continue to deliver and scale its flagship ‘Consent Ed’ project, which creates and trains educators in the use of engaging, fact-based and age-appropriate educational materials for young people to support them to have happy, healthy relationships.

By the end of the year:

- 1,052 educators and professionals had been trained
- 426 schools and organisations had engaged with the programme
- An estimated 88,564 students were reached during the 2024/25 academic year

Programme materials were updated to address emerging risks including digital coercion, misogynistic online content, deepfake sexual imagery and pornography literacy. These updates supported educators’ capacity to respond to new forms of harm while maintaining the integrity of the programme’s core prevention objectives.

A new suite of educational videos for young people was developed, covering consent, healthy relationships,

coercive control and sexual exploitation. The videos were informed by youth engagement and survivor-informed practice and were designed for use across both school and youth settings, supporting accessible and age-appropriate learning.

Evaluation findings demonstrate strong professional impact:

- 88.5% reported high or very high knowledge of sexual violence and its impact
- Over 90% reported high or very high knowledge of online sexual harm
- 97% rated the training as highly useful

Engagement from young people was consistently strong. Feedback from teachers and educators indicated that Consent Ed supports meaningful conversations, critical thinking and reflection around respect, boundaries, gender norms and online influences, while helping young people to develop skills to challenge harmful behaviours and support one another.

Communications and wider engagement

Prevention depends not only on campaign bursts but on sustained, trusted communication. Cuan further developed its Communications function, including the rollout of a new brand strategy encompassing brand narrative, tone and visual identity.

Official Instagram and LinkedIn channels were launched in February, complementing national campaigns and reinforcing signposting to services and resources. By year end, Cuan had established a credible and engaged online presence, with approximately 2,130 LinkedIn followers and 1,000 Instagram followers.

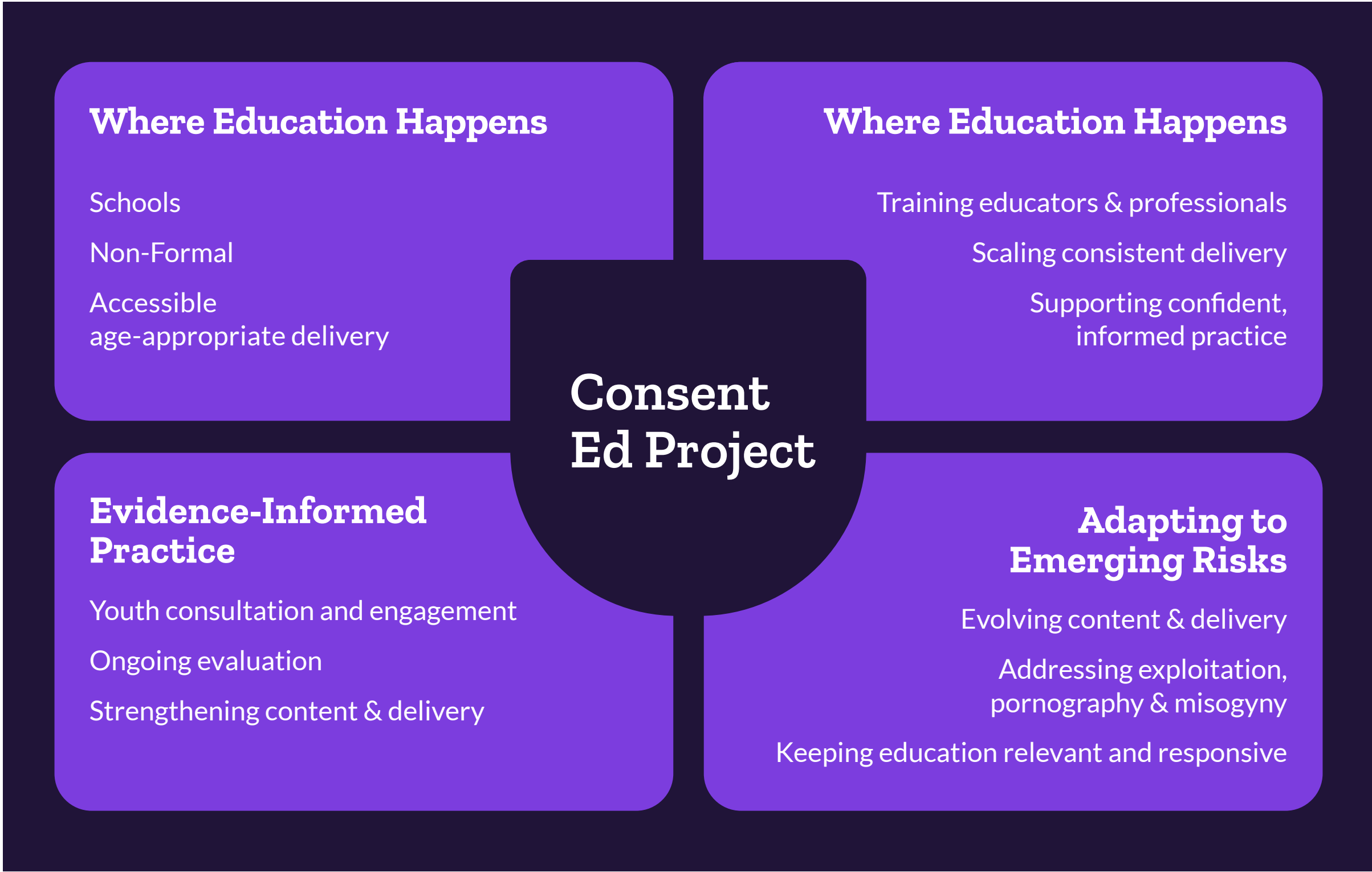
Social media played a key role during campaign launches and major public initiatives, including *Hardest Stories*, *You Are Not Alone*, Zero Tolerance publications and the 16 Days of Activism, maintaining sustained visibility beyond traditional media bursts.

Cuan also provided funding and support to complementary prevention initiatives delivered by partners, including:

- *Game Changer*: A national prevention initiative led by Ruhama in partnership with the GAA and

White Ribbon Ireland, with support from the LGFA and the Camogie Association. The programme harnesses the reach of Gaelic Games to challenge harmful norms linked to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.

- *We Consent*: Grant-supported by Cuan and delivered by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, this campaign forms part of a broader national effort to promote understanding of consent. It delivered workshops to diverse community groups, including farmers, men’s sheds, youth groups, health practitioners and marginalised communities.



Spotlight:

***Listening to Victim-Survivors —
Shaping the You're Not Alone Campaign***

Cuan developed *You're Not Alone*, the sexual violence stream of the *Always Here* campaign, with a clear commitment to placing victim-survivors at the centre of campaign design. The aim was not only to raise awareness of available supports, but to address the barriers to help-seeking that many victim-survivors experience, including fear of not being believed, shame and isolation.

The campaign development process prioritised sensitivity, credibility and victim-survivor-centred practice. With the support of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, proposed creative concepts, imagery and messaging were independently tested with a panel of sexual violence victim-survivors in a safe, facilitated environment. This process enabled them to articulate how different concepts resonated emotionally and to identify potential risks, unintended harm or triggering content.

The *You're Not Alone* concept was unanimously preferred by the victim-survivors panel. Participants strongly identified with the sense of isolation depicted and emphasised the importance of the central message – that victim-survivors are not alone and that support is available. They highlighted the campaign's gentle tone as critical in encouraging people to seek help, while maintaining the seriousness of the issue.

Frontline service providers, including Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and One in Four, were closely involved in refining campaign materials. Their insights helped ensure that victim-survivors experiences were portrayed accurately, respectfully and without sensationalism, grounding the campaign in the realities of frontline support provision.

Victim-survivor voice was also central to the public launch of the campaign. Bláthnaid Raleigh, a survivor of sexual violence, launched *You're Not Alone* and spoke publicly about her experience, reinforcing the campaign's core message.

Her participation, alongside national media coverage, strengthened survivor-to-survivor encouragement and helped normalise conversations about seeking support.

Independent evaluation data following the launch demonstrates the value of this victim-survivor-informed approach. The campaign was widely regarded as trustworthy and sensitive, with 84% of respondents describing it as sensitive and 85% as informative. Importantly, 80% reported feeling more ready to reach out for support, representing an 8-percentage-point increase on benchmark levels. Awareness of Cuan also increased during the campaign period.

The campaign also improved public understanding of where to seek help. Among those aware of Cuan and *You're Not Alone*, 88% knew where to get help if they or someone they knew experienced sexual violence, compared with 75% of the general population. These findings indicate that victim-survivor-led design strengthened both emotional credibility and practical help-seeking outcomes.

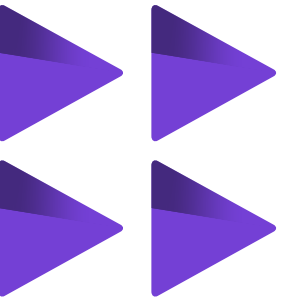
Together, these outcomes demonstrate how placing victim-survivors at the heart of campaign development created trust, reduced the risk of backlash or fatigue, and delivered measurable impact. *You're Not Alone* sets a clear benchmark for victim-survivor-centred practice in Government-led DSGBV campaigns and provides a strong foundation for continued rollout.



Bláthnaid Raleigh, a survivor of sexual violence, at the launch of the *You're Not Alone* campaign.

So many survivors will look at this ad and see themselves. So many survivors share the same feelings of guilt and self-blame. I think what stops a lot of people from coming forward is the fear of not being believed – but I was believed by everybody.

- Key priorities for 2026**
- Continue building national momentum on tackling DSGBV through strategic collaborations, using evaluation-led learning to refine and target prevention activity.
 - Strengthening and growing education across formal and informal settings, working with delivery partners to integrate DSGBV prevention within education systems and community-based learning.
 - Enhancing Cuan's public profile and communications, raising awareness of the Agency's remit and role as a trusted State body on DSGBV, through delivery of a modern and engaging digital presence, and enhancement of the Agency's public affairs, parliamentary engagement and Departmental liaison.



Objective 3:

Lead the development and delivery of quality and effective services and supports, accessible to all victim-survivors and persons at risk of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence



Cuan staff review progress at a new refuge site

When someone experiencing domestic or sexual violence seeks help, the quality, accessibility and availability of local services can help to provide the conditions necessary for safety and recovery. Cuan’s role is to fund and coordinate frontline services, put in place national service standards and governance arrangements, and monitor delivery to ensure that helpline and other supports are available to anyone who needs them.

In 2025, €58.4 million in public funding was directed to 78 service providers nationwide, an increase of €7 million on the previous year, reflecting continued Government investment in the sector. A portion of that increase enabled €3.2 million to be allocated through an Open Funding Call.

A dedicated investment of €3.1 million supported the expansion of domestic violence accommodation services, including the fit-out costs for two new refuge facilities and the set-up costs for 11 new Safe Homes brought into operation nationally, alongside part-year service provision costs.

What was achieved and delivered in 2025

This investment sustained and expanded frontline service delivery across the country, from domestic violence refuges and helplines to sexual violence counselling, perpetrator programmes and community outreach.

Cuan-funded services reached 29,408 adults, 1,229 adolescents and 2,927 children and adolescents representing an increase of 14% on 2024. The 78 funded organisations collectively provided essential supports to 33,564 service users, reflecting both rising demand and the sector’s growing capacity to respond.

Alongside core funding, Cuan formalised service arrangements for 2025–2026, replacing legacy grant structures with clear contractual frameworks aligned to the DSGBV Agency Act 2023. This shift established defined service outputs, agreed performance expectations and a direct link between funding and delivery – a material step forward in accountability and transparency across the sector.

Services reported continued growth in demand throughout the year, particularly in sexual violence counselling and helpline activity. Rising demand places real and sustained pressure on frontline provision. Cuan’s focus was therefore to expand capacity where possible, while strengthening the governance and infrastructure needed to ensure that growth remains sustainable.

Investing in the sector: the Open Funding Call

A major Open Funding Call allocated a €3.2 million to expand and enhance service capacity and accessibility. This additional investment was targeted at specific gaps and priorities across the sector from broadening reach to strengthening services for those hardest to access and building the governance and training infrastructure that high-quality services depend on.

Based on approved submissions, these allocations are projected to support:

- Up to 5,651 additional victim-survivors
- 167 participants in perpetrator programmes
- Professional development for more than 1,100 staff and board members

Delivery against these projections will be verified through Cuan’s monitoring processes in 2026.

“The development of this refuge comes as part of a wider programme of investment by the government into refuge spaces and safe accommodation in line with the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. I am pleased to say that there are a significant number of similar projects under development across the country which demonstrates the government’s commitment to expanding capacity.”

Minister of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O’Callaghan speaking at the opening of new nine-unit refuge in Dublin 4 which will be operated by Sonas Domestic Violence Charity.

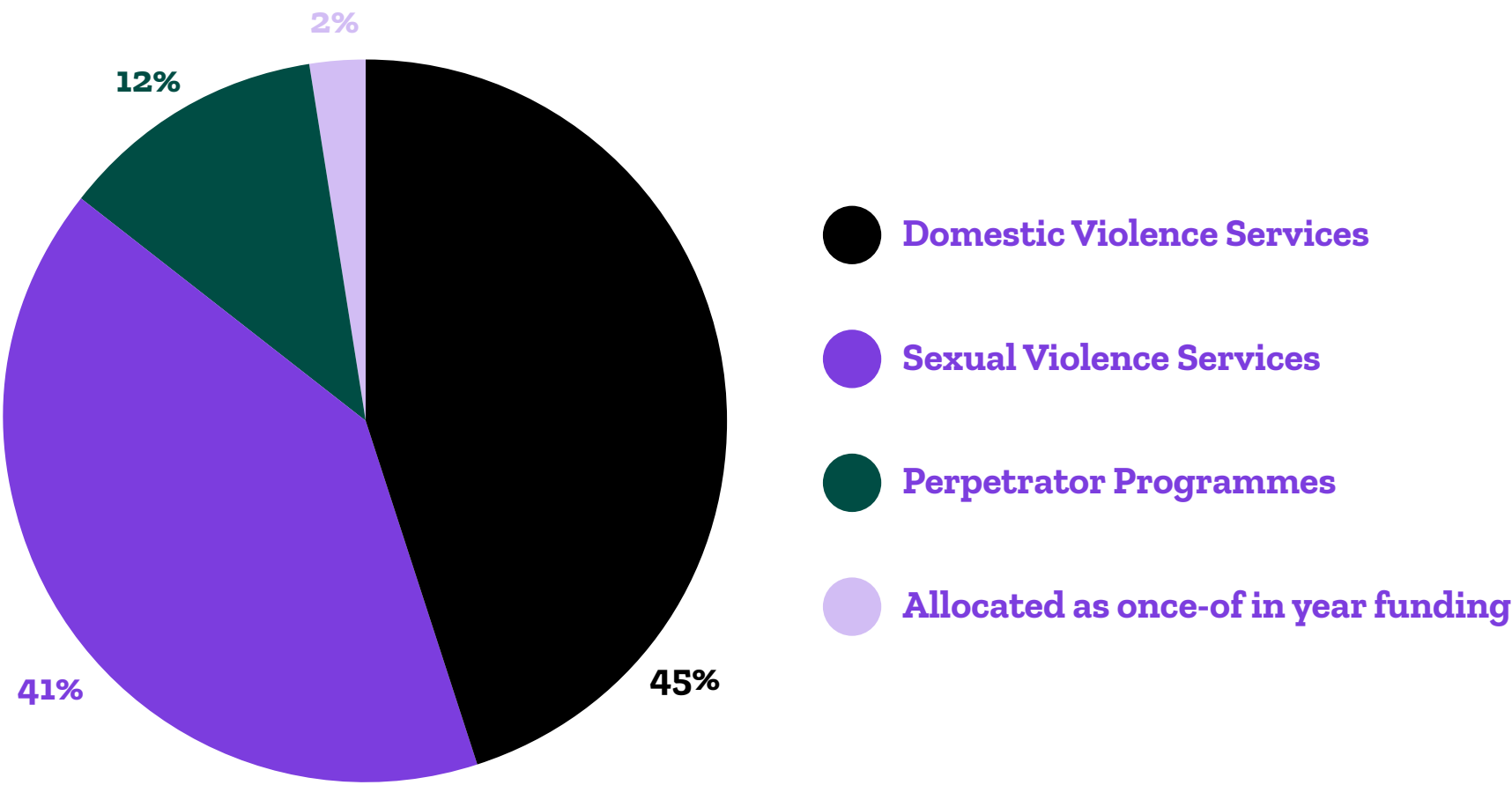


Figure: Cuan 2025 service category for the Open Funding Call allocation (total €3.2million)

“In our day-to-day engagement with funded services we see firsthand the dedication that they bring to their work, and the challenges they face. This open call has sought to support services in meeting these challenges through enhancing training and governance, and expanding their reach in the community.”

Dr. Stephanie O’Keeffe, Cuan CEO



The allocation reflected a deliberate spread of investment across five priority areas.

- The largest share (36%) was directed towards 26 services targeting marginalised groups, including Traveller and Roma communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, migrants and people with disabilities, recognising that these groups face additional barriers to accessing help.
- A further 24% funded counselling services for adolescents, extending sexual violence counselling for adolescents to Cuan-funded rape crisis centres.
- Training and capacity building for boards and staff across 66 services received 20% of the allocation, supporting governance, compliance and skills development across the sector.
- Increasing access to perpetrator programmes received 11%
- Enhancing the two national helplines, including investment in staffing, translation services and technology upgrades to better serve younger service users, received the remaining 9%.

Services delivered in 2025

Domestic violence services

1,655 households were accommodated in domestic violence refuges and Safe Homes, with an average length of stay of 6 weeks per household. Beyond residential provision, 19,706 individuals received community-based supports outside accommodation settings. This demonstrates the vital role services play in local prevention and continuity of care, keeping referral pathways open and responsive as families rebuild their lives.

Sexual violence services

Specialist sexual violence services supported 7,216 individuals and 802 adolescents and young people who received age-appropriate, tailored care. While formal data collection on service uptake by marginalised groups is ongoing, a marked increase in service delivery to Traveller and Roma communities, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities was recorded during the year.

Accompaniment services

The majority of Cuan-funded services provide dedicated accompaniment for adults, adolescents and children navigating court, Garda and healthcare processes. 15,844 individuals received accompaniment, to a total of 21,611 and 15,450 adults and 394 were children and adolescents.

Perpetrator programmes

792 males were supported by dedicated perpetrator services. These programmes focus on preventing re-offending and shifting responsibility firmly to the perpetrator.

National helplines

The three national helplines – the Domestic Violence National Helpline, the Sexual Violence National Helpline and the Male Advice Line – responded to 52,745 calls in 2025, providing a rapid, confidential first point of contact for those in crisis. This is a 9.6% increase on 2024.

Expanding services for adolescents

Services dedicated to supporting victims and survivors of sexual violence have grown significantly in recent years. Following Cuan’s Open Funding Call, dedicated counselling for adolescents is now available across Cuan-funded sexual violence services, ensuring that young people who need specialist support can access it. Demand for these services is expected to continue to rise in 2026, and Cuan will monitor access and capacity closely so that provision keeps pace.

Supporting services, building capacity

Engagement with service providers deepened throughout the year. Cuan’s Service Delivery and Development (SD&D) team attended 534 service-related meetings, including structured funding discussions, governance sessions and meetings linked to domestic violence accommodation planning. This work guaranteed that funding was tied to defined activity and outcomes and supported improved governance practices across the sector.

A comprehensive internal audit programme was implemented across funded services, the most extensive audit activity undertaken within the sector to date. Cuan worked in partnership with services to address findings, strengthen board oversight and tighten financial controls.

Central to this work was continued development of the Cuan Hub, the national platform supporting funding oversight, service monitoring and long-term planning. The Hub captures key organisational, workforce, financial and activity data in a standardised format, improving national visibility of service capacity and helping ensure resources go where they are most needed. Reporting tools were enhanced to enable more structured analysis of service activity, and early dashboard prototypes were developed to analyse capacity levels and projected demand. While further technical refinement is required, the Hub represents a significant move away from fragmented reporting and towards a coordinated national data infrastructure, one that supports transparency and evidence-led planning, and will inform development of the forthcoming National Services Development Plan.

Safe accommodation: a continuum of support

The Domestic violence services section provides a summary of the number of people who accessed Domestic Violence services in 2025. Expanding refuge and Safe Home provision remains one of the most visible commitments under the Zero Tolerance Strategy and represents a core priority for Cuan.

Cuan engaged with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to develop pathways of prevention and safe accommodation, work that sits at the heart of a continuum-based approach to DSGBV response. Effective national provision must encompass more than physical units: it includes early intervention that supports people to remain safely in their homes where that is genuinely achievable; crisis provision that responds without hesitation when it is not; and clear, funded pathways out of emergency accommodation, so that people are not stranded in crisis settings when they are ready to rebuild their lives.

“Domestic Violence Refuges deliver a crucial service for families during a hugely traumatic time in their lives, providing not just shelter but a suite of wraparound services such as counselling and support, delivered in a safe and therapeutic environment in which a family can heal.”

Minister for Housing James Browne



Spotlight:

Building Ireland's Domestic Violence Accommodation Network – A National Expansion Programme

Safe accommodation is fundamental to protection, and expanding refuge and Safe Home provision remains a core priority for Cuan and a central commitment under the Zero Tolerance Strategy.

At the outset of the Strategy in 2022, Ireland had 141 refuge units and 49 Safe Homes. By the end of 2025, refuge capacity had increased to 172 units and Safe Home provision to 60 units. While this progress is notable, the scale of ambition for 2026 and beyond signals a significant step change in delivery.

Following a strategic review of the domestic violence accommodation programme in spring 2025, Cuan increased delivery targets to meet demand and capitalise on enhanced delivery capacity. By the end of 2026, Ireland is on track to have additional refuge units and Safe Homes in operation. Safe Homes provide crucial dispersed accommodation in areas where refuge facilities may not be immediately available.

Behind these numbers lies a capital programme across 17 counties, involving partnerships with local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), service providers and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Each development moves through multiple stages from site identification and acquisition to planning permission, Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) approval stages, procurement, construction and commissioning.



Cuan CEO Dr, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Sonas Chair Kimberly Tully, Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Jim O'Callaghan and Siobhán Ferguson Head of Services Sonas

Navigating complexity

Each of these developments faces unique challenges – from site availability in rural areas, to regulatory compliance issues requiring partnership restructuring. Cuan works closely with local authorities, service providers and state bodies to identify solutions, ensure quality and maintain momentum.

The programme demonstrates adaptive capacity. Where service providers lack AHB status or capacity, Cuan facilitates partnerships and amalgamations. Where population projections change, unit numbers are revised upward. Where sites prove unsuitable, alternatives are identified and assessed.

The programme is also designed to distribute domestic violence accommodation capacity across the country,

addressing historic gaps in provision. Counties including Monaghan, Westmeath, Offaly, Cork, Laois, Roscommon, Sligo, Clare and Longford, many without dedicated refuge facilities, are now part of a coordinated national expansion plan.

Ireland's domestic violence accommodation programme now operates with greater coordination, transparency and ambition than at any previous point. By 2027, the combination of completed units and projects under construction will represent a substantial expansion in safe accommodation availability nationwide. This progress reflects sustained political commitment, dedicated partnership working across Government and local authorities, and the determination of frontline service providers who will operate these facilities and support the families who need them.

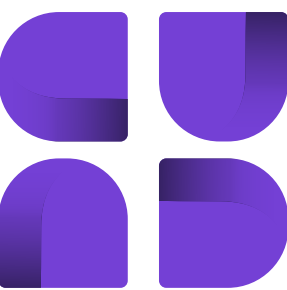
Pathways to safety and stability

Recognising that accommodation is just one stage of the victim-survivor journey, Cuan works in close alignment with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Social Protection. Both departments remain deeply committed to this agenda, responding to the complex needs of those fleeing violence and continuing to identify new ways to expand support.

We know we have more to do to ensure that this collaboration focuses on building integrated frameworks that prioritise safety at every step – from the initial point of crisis through to long-term stability. By strengthening safe-home pathways and targeted financial assistance, the aim is to bridge the gap between emergency intervention and lasting security, ensuring that the needs of victim-survivors, including children, are met with an appropriate and consistent standard of care and protection as they move toward a safe and independent future.

Key priorities for 2026

- Enhancing capacity to strengthen oversight and delivery of domestic violence accommodation, executing the capital programme to meet mandated 2026 expansion targets under the Zero Tolerance Strategy, including the delivery of new family refuge units and Safe Homes.
- Advancing service monitoring, data and reporting infrastructure, including the phased operationalisation of the Cuan Hub as a centralised data system for the sector, supported by comprehensive reporting dashboards capturing service capacity, activity and outputs.
- Commencing work on a NSDP, shaped by sector expertise and the lived experience of victim-survivors, and developed in collaboration with Government departments and statutory agencies.



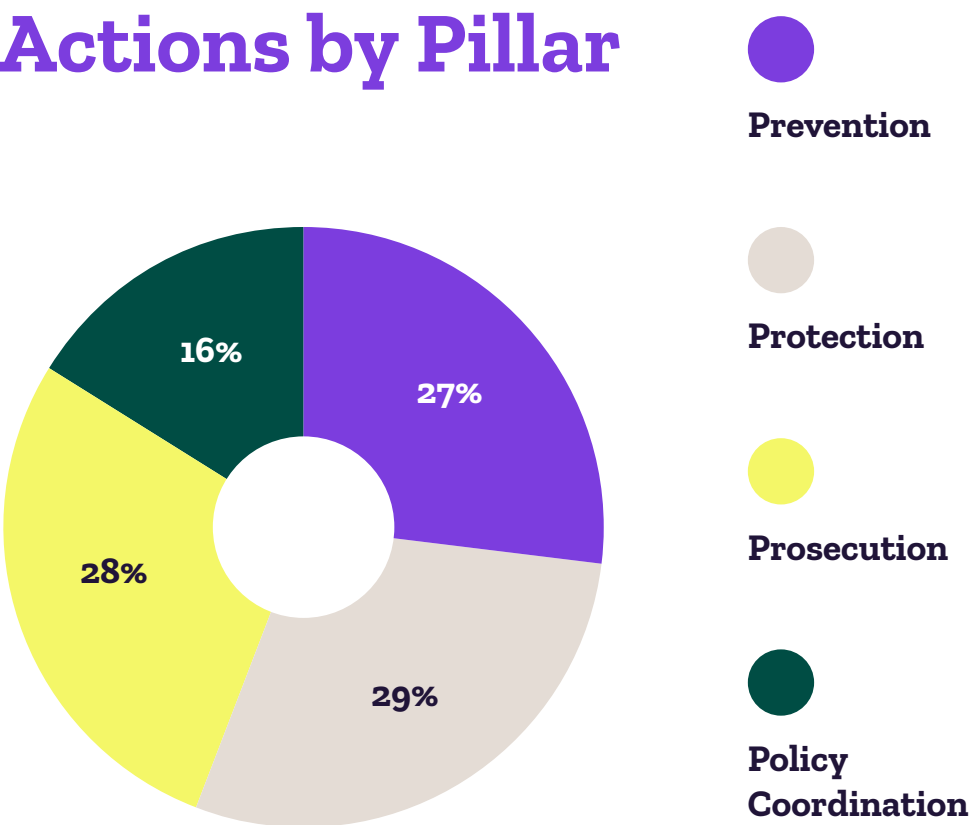
Objective 4:

Drive whole-of-government action to prevent domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, protect victims and ensure effective and supportive pathways to and through justice

Ireland’s Zero Tolerance Strategy commits twenty-two Government departments and agencies to a shared programme of action on DSGBV. Making that commitment real by ensuring progress is tracked, gaps are addressed and accountability is clear, is one of Cuan’s core statutory functions.

The publication of the Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026 was a major achievement. For the first time, every action under the Strategy has defined performance indicators, and a monitoring and reporting framework is now in place with implementation partners reporting biannually to the Minister.

Actions by Pillar



What was achieved and delivered in 2025

Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026

In June, the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration published the final Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026, developed by Cuan in collaboration with officials from DJHAM and in close consultation with other government departments and state agencies.

The Plan sets out 95 actions across the four pillars of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Coordination. For the first time, each action is supported by defined performance indicators. This represents a significant shift from policy intent towards measurable, performance-led delivery.

Twenty-two implementing partners across Government are responsible for delivery, including four new partners: the Judicial Council, Coimisiún na Meán, the Department of Social Protection, the Policing and Community Safety Authority and Sport Ireland.



Pictured (left-right) at the launch of the final Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026: CUAN CEO Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe and Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O'Callaghan.

In line with the Plan, Cuan established a bespoke monitoring and reporting framework. Implementation partners now report biannually on progress against agreed performance indicators to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, and an annual progress report will be published for each year of the current Plan. This structured approach supports accountability and transparency, ensuring that delivery challenges can be addressed at governance level by the Minister, the High-Level Oversight Board and the Cabinet Committee on Justice, Migration and Social Affairs.

Two biannual Progress Reports on Implementation of the Zero Tolerance Strategy have been published since Cuan’s establishment – the first at mid-year 2024, and the second covering July to December 2024, which was published in early 2025

Supporting cross-departmental engagement and policy integration on DSGBV

Throughout 2025, Cuan engaged actively with implementation partners to support delivery and maintain alignment across departments and state agencies. This included participation in multistakeholder working groups chaired by DOJHAM, to support a DSGBV lens in ongoing family justice reform, including on the Voice of the Child in private family law.

Cuan also worked to embed DSGBV priorities within broader Government strategies and initiatives, reducing the risk of siloed implementation across policy domains.

Spotlight:

Embedding Monitoring and Accountability in National Delivery

A central focus of Cuan’s work is strengthening how Ireland monitors and accounts for national commitments under the Zero Tolerance Strategy.

While previous phases of the Strategy set out actions, 2025 marked the first time that a structured performance and monitoring framework was embedded across Government delivery. The Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026 introduced defined KPIs for each of the 95 actions under the Strategy, moving from descriptive reporting to measurable implementation.

The Plan was informed by analysis of Programme for Government commitments relating to DSGBV and by recommendations made to Ireland by GREVIO, the Council of Europe’s monitoring body under the Istanbul Convention. This ensured that national actions remained aligned with both domestic policy priorities and international obligations.

To support delivery, Cuan designed and operationalised a bespoke national monitoring and reporting framework. All 22 implementation partners now report biannually on progress against agreed indicators. This approach strengthens accountability by:

- Clarifying responsibility for each action
- Supporting early identification of delivery risks
- Providing transparent oversight reporting to the Minister and senior governance bodies
- Enabling a consolidated view of cross-government progress

For the first time, two national progress reports were produced enhancing public transparency by detailing action across Government.

Embedding this performance-led approach represents a significant evolution in Ireland’s response to DSGBV. It brings coherence to cross-government effort, demonstrates the State’s commitment to measurable delivery and ensures that progress under Zero Tolerance remains visible and verifiable.

“This final phase shows how seriously we take implementation. The new framework gives us a clearer line of sight on what’s being delivered, what impact it’s having, and where greater focus is needed. However, this is not just about measuring activity - it’s also about assessing real impact, understanding the challenges in implementing a strategy with over 20 partner organisations and continuously improving our collective response. The inclusion of survivor perspectives is a key strength of this approach.”

Dr. Stephanie O’Keeffe, Cuan CEO



Cuan CEO Dr Stephanie O’Keeffe speaking at the November 2025 National DSGBV Forum

Key priorities for 2026

- Coordinating monitoring and reporting on the implementation of Zero Tolerance, including the ongoing delivery of bi-annual progress reporting to the Minister and the publication of an annual implementation report.
- Supporting and advising Government departments and public sector bodies on DSGBV implementation, through analysis, evidence generation and participation in cross-departmental working groups
- Supporting the development of the Fourth National Strategy on DSGBV, working in partnership with the DJHAM and cross-sectoral partners.

Objective 5:

Build a knowledge base and evidence-informed response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence issues informed by the lived experience of victim-survivors

Policy and services are only as strong as the evidence behind them. Understanding how widespread DSGBV is, which groups are hardest to reach and whether interventions are making a difference requires sustained investment in research and data, and a commitment to keeping victim-survivor experience at the centre.

Cuan has a responsibility to build that evidence base, with victim-survivor perspectives central to how it does so. During the year, three significant research outputs were completed, awards made from a dedicated national research funding strand with Research Ireland and plans for Ireland's first national prevalence survey of domestic abuse advanced.

What was achieved and delivered in 2025

Advancing national measurement and research

A national consultation to scope the data requirements for a future National Domestic Violence and Abuse Survey was concluded, producing a comprehensive evidence base to inform the design of Ireland's first dedicated national prevalence study.

The first output from the Cuan–ESRI Joint Research Programme on Adult Sexual Violence, a peer-reviewed literature review on measuring the prevalence of adult sexual violence, was published in September 2025. A comprehensive bibliometric analysis of DSGBV research conducted nationally and internationally between 2012 and 2024 was also completed, mapping the research landscape and identifying gaps and

priorities for future work. Further detail on these outputs is provided in the spotlight below.

Cuan expanded its research partnerships significantly during the year. In a landmark development, the Agency partnered with Research Ireland to establish the first dedicated national research funding strand for DSGBV, within the Collaborative Alliances for Societal Challenges (COALESCE) 2025 programme, resulting in funding for two new research projects. A third researcher was also supported through the Research Ireland Research Enterprise Partnership Scheme. Three-year support was provided to the All-Ireland Network on Sexual Violence Research (AINSVR), connecting researchers across the island of Ireland.

Research governance structures were strengthened during the year. Two project-specific research advisory groups were established, and the Cuan Research Advisory Committee of the Board was formally constituted, providing strategic oversight of research priorities. A Cuan Research Commissioning Plan for 2026 and 2027 was drafted and is being finalised for completion in early 2026.

At European level, Cuan was nominated as Ireland's representative on the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Taskforce on data collection under the EU Violence Against Women Directive. The Taskforce is developing a harmonised system for administrative data collection across EU Member States under Article 44 of the Directive, which Ireland is required to have in place by June 2027. Cuan's participation

ensures that Ireland's data infrastructure and national context inform the design of EU-wide standards from the outset.

A Research Governance Framework and a national DSGBV Data Plan, both planned for 2025, were deferred to 2026 due to capacity constraints. These, along with the recruitment of a dedicated data lead, are priorities for the coming year as Cuan continues to build the evidence base Ireland's long-term response to DSGBV requires.



Dr Conor Linnie (Programme Manager, Research Ireland), Marie-Claire McAleer (Assistant Principal Officer, Research, Cuan), Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe (Cuan CEO) and Prof Roja Fazaeli (University of Galway (one of the Cuan funded COALESCE awardees) and Dr Diarmuid O'Brien (Research Ireland CEO)

Spotlight:

Building Ireland's Evidence Base for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Cuan completed a coordinated programme of research that begins to address some of the most significant gaps in Ireland's knowledge of DSGBV. Taken together, the three research outputs completed during the year provide a clearer picture of where the evidence base stands, where it falls short and what is needed to build a measurement infrastructure capable of informing policy and service development over the long term.

The scoping of data requirements for a future National Domestic Violence and Abuse Survey was a major undertaking. An expert advisory group was established and an extensive consultation process was conducted with DSGBV stakeholders, researchers, government departments, statutory agencies and victim-survivors. The process examined national and international policy-related data requirements and produced a comprehensive list of variables for the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to consider for inclusion in the survey design. This work establishes the evidence base for Ireland's first dedicated national prevalence study of domestic violence and abuse, a significant step in building the robust, comparable data that effective policy requires.

The first output from the Cuan–ESRI Joint Research Programme on Adult Sexual Violence was published in September 2025: a peer-reviewed literature review titled *Measuring the Prevalence of Adult Sexual Violence: A Review of Irish and International Literature*. The review examined international methodologies and highlighted the importance of consistent definitions, survey instruments and recall periods in enabling reliable cross-jurisdictional comparison. To coincide with publication, Cuan hosted a research seminar for stakeholders and services working in the field of sexual violence, facilitating discussion on research gaps and opportunities.

“The 2022 Sexual Violence Survey in Ireland estimated the lifetime prevalence of sexual violence to be 52 per cent among women and 28 per cent among men. Over 20 years ago, similar levels were reported in the SAVI report.”

Dr. Elish Kelly, lead author of the Cuan-ESRI report.

The persistence of these figures across two decades underlines both the scale of the challenge and the urgent need for consistent, high-quality measurement. Work on the second and third outputs from the programme – an analysis of the 2023 CSO Sexual Violence Survey data examining patterns of victimisation and service use – is due for completion in Q2 2026.

The third output was a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of DSGBV research conducted nationally and internationally between 2012 and 2024, undertaken in collaboration with the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS) at Leiden University. The analysis mapped thematic strengths, key actors, research trends, collaboration networks and gaps in the research landscape. It provides Cuan with a structured, evidence-based foundation for future research prioritisation; identifying where Ireland’s DSGBV research is strong, where gaps exist and where international collaboration offers the greatest opportunity.

Alongside these outputs, 2025 saw a landmark development in research funding. In partnership with Research Ireland, Cuan established Strand 1M within the COALESCE 2025 programme – the first time

a strand of this national interdisciplinary research fund has been ringfenced for domestic and sexual violence research. Awards of up to €240,000 were made available for action and policy-oriented research designed to generate evidence directly relevant to practitioners, policymakers and victim-survivors.

Two projects were funded under the COALESCE strand. Each addresses a gap in the evidence base that existing research has not reached.

Lived Realities, led by Dr Susan Leahy at University of Limerick, is the first Irish study to examine the lived experiences of victim-survivors in sexual offence trials. The research will capture, in victim-survivors’ own words, how they experience the criminal justice process: what supports them, what compounds their distress and what reform is needed. Its findings are designed to inform future legal reform and to ensure that the justice system’s response to sexual violence is shaped by those who have navigated it.

FATIHA (Faith-Inclusive and Culturally Competent Responses to DSGBV), led by Prof. Roja Fazaeli at University of Galway, examines the systemic barriers facing Muslim women in Ireland when seeking protection and support in response to DSGBV. Taking an intersectional approach, the project explores how faith, culture, ethnicity and immigration status interact with existing service frameworks and legal protections. Its findings will inform more inclusive service design and policy, helping to ensure that Ireland’s response to DSGBV reaches those who currently fall outside its scope.

Both projects reflect Cuan’s commitment to research that centres lived experience – not as a supplement to the evidence base, but as its foundation.

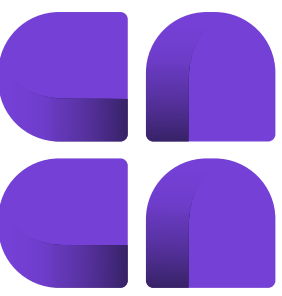
A third researcher was also supported through the Research Ireland Research Enterprise Partnership Scheme: Míde Power, a PhD candidate at Trinity College Dublin, is focused on developing training to empower students to recognise, address and prevent sexual violence and harassment, using a bystander intervention framework. This work contributes to the evidence base on effective prevention at third level and complements the broader COALESCE investment in understanding and responding to DSGBV.

“Cuan is delighted to partner with Research Ireland to establish a new research funding strand for COALESCE 2025, dedicated to DSGBV research. A key objective for Cuan is to strengthen the existing knowledge base and build an evidence-informed response to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, informed by the lived experience of victim-survivors. In this regard, the creation of this important research strand is of great significance to Cuan. Given so many academic disciplines are of relevance to the study of domestic and sexual violence, Research Ireland’s COALESCE funding strand provides a rich opportunity to support action and policy-oriented research, providing much-needed insights for policy makers and practitioners, and improving outcomes for victims and survivors.” —

Dr Stephanie O’Keeffe, Cuan CEO.

Key priorities for 2026

- Establishing strong research governance and translation arrangements, through the publication of a Cuan Research Governance Framework and associated research translation and dissemination policy.
- Expanding formal collaborations with research partners to strengthen national research capacity and support active, interdisciplinary research networks.
- Enhancing victim-survivor-centred and intersectional engagement to ensure lived experience, including that of marginalised groups, informs future DSGBV plans and strategies.



Objective 6:

Establish a dynamic, effective, internationally recognised agency working towards an Ireland free from domestic, sexual and gender-based violence

Delivering on Cuan’s mandate requires more than funding decisions and policy coordination. It relies on having the people, systems and governance structures in place to deliver the work and to account for it transparently.

2025 was Cuan’s first full year of operation – a year in which the Agency delivered a substantial national work programme while continuing to build its own organisational foundations. This section covers the staffing, governance, financial management and internal development that underpinned that delivery.

What was achieved and delivered in 2025

Building the organisational capacity to deliver

Organisational capacity remained a key factor in delivery across Cuan’s programme of work. In 2025 Cuan had an approved complement of 39 posts. Recruitment progressed across strategic, operational and specialist roles; however, lengthy timelines and staff turnover continued to affect overall organisational

capacity and the pace at which vacancies could be filled. By year end, ten vacancies remained, although three posts were filled in early 2026.

There are many areas of Cuan’s work that require specialist skills. This is particularly critical in areas such as the capital expansion programme, research, data and analytics, and education and training– each central to fulfilling Cuan’s statutory mandate.

A significant development in 2025 was the strengthening of key capabilities across Cuan’s five functional areas. 2025 marked the formal establishment of Cuan’s education function, through the appointment of a Senior Education, Training and Intervention Specialist at Assistant Principal level. This began the process of developing a more coherent national approach to DSGBV education and training across formal education, youth and community settings and frontline professional development.

In addition, a dedicated audit role was established at middle management level to support the delivery of

Cuan’s expanding multi-annual audit programme. This role oversees all audit engagements and works with funded service providers to ensure that audit findings are addressed, and improvements implemented. This role is important for ensuring prudent use of public money for the purpose intended and to strengthen governance of funded services.

A further dedicated policy analysis role was established to respond directly to Cuan’s founding legislation, requiring that we support public bodies in the implementation of actions in the national strategy.

Despite not being at full capacity, the Agency delivered a significant body of work across the year. This reflects the commitment and resilience of staff working within a relatively small organisation managing over €66 million in public funding, overseeing 78 funded services, coordinating implementation of 95 national strategy actions and progressing a substantial domestic violence accommodation expansion programme. The scale of activity delivered relative to the size of the organisation is significant.

As awareness campaigns increase knowledge of supports and societal willingness to disclose grows, demand on services continues to rise. Cuan’s role is to expand capacity within the system while also improving oversight, standards and accountability. The pace of progress in key areas therefore remains closely linked to staffing and specialist expertise.

Capacity is not an internal administrative issue; it is central to delivery. The Board has consistently identified staffing as a key strategic risk and continues to engage with the Department to ensure that Cuan’s resourcing matches its statutory responsibilities.

In recognition of the scale of Cuan’s work programme, the Department of Justice Home Affairs and Migration approved five additional posts for Cuan at the end of 2025, bringing the total approved complement to 44 WTE in 2026. This increase will enable Cuan to further build teams, strengthen core competencies and expertise to deliver our statutory functions and achieve our vision of a society free of domestic, sexual and gender based violence.



Embedding culture, values and ways of working

Cuan continued to embed its values of courage, creativity, empathy, inclusion and integrity within organisational practice. Fortnightly all-staff meetings remained central to shared understanding of work across teams and reinforcing the Agency’s values. The Agency invested in staff capability and consistent ways of working. All staff completed core compliance training, including data protection and cyber security. Role-specific development was supported through OneLearning and HSELand platforms, including Children First training. Bespoke training in governance and report writing was also delivered.

We reflected our values in our work practices, for example, involving the victim-survivor voice in our communications work and research projects; ensuring the involvement of services as we develop data and monitoring systems; keeping children to the forefront of our work and recognising them as victims and survivors of DSGBV, ensuring that the two-year implementation plan has a clear focus on children.

Enhancing public profile and institutional credibility

Cuan continued to build its public identity as Ireland’s national agency for DSGBV. Brand and communications strategies were developed and digital channels expanded. National awareness of Cuan increased from approximately one in five to one in four people during the year.

Social media platforms were used to amplify national campaigns, share research outputs and signpost supports. A visible and credible public presence is important in building trust, reinforcing Cuan’s role within the national system and supporting access to services.

Preparatory work progressed on the development of a dedicated Cuan website. Approval to proceed was received later than anticipated, resulting in delivery being rescheduled to 2026.

Spotlight:

Governance and Risk –
Foundations of Public Trust

Cuan operates under its legislation and the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The Code sets high expectations for transparency, accountability and stewardship of public resources. For an agency coordinating national strategy and overseeing significant public funding across 78 service providers, governance is foundational.

In its first full year of full operation, Cuan moved from establishing itself as a new agency to demonstrating what it can deliver. Board oversight structures became embedded in routine practice. Risk management evolved from identification to active mitigation and structured reporting. As outlined in Part 3 of this report, Cuan now has a Board approved risk management framework, with an agreed appetite for risk across risk categories.

Internal audit processes shifted from design to delivery. A three-year internal audit plan was approved by Board with oversight from the Audit and Risk Committee. Fourteen audits of funded service providers were undertaken, generating recommendations aimed at improving governance, financial controls and operational consistency across the sector. Cuan now has a programme of work to monitor the recommendations arising from service provider audits. During 2025, this resulted in a total of 240 open recommendations to monitor and progress. Services engaged constructively in this process, reflecting a shared commitment to transparency and improvement.

A high-level review of Cuan’s internal financial controls was undertaken as part of the 2025 internal audit plan. The outcome, received in early 2026, confirmed that reasonable assurance can be placed on the adequacy and operation of the Agency’s financial controls, providing important confidence in relation to financial governance to the Board, Minister and the public. While areas for further formalisation were identified, these were consistent with an organisation at an early stage of development rather than indicative of systemic weakness.

Strong governance enables strong delivery. It ensures that expansion of refuge accommodation, funding of frontline services and implementation of national strategy are underpinned by robust oversight.

In an area that depends on public confidence, victim-survivor trust and cross-government coordination, these foundations are essential. Governance and associated systems, policies and procedures will continue to be a key focus in 2026 to ensure that Cuan is operating on a strong footing and set up to react to opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Key priorities for 2026

- Building organisational capacity and capability through targeted recruitment and development.
- Development of a staffing skills and capacity assessment for Cuan
- Embedding organisational culture and values through structured engagement and staff initiatives.
- Further strengthening Cuan’s governance, assurance and audit frameworks

Looking ahead to 2026

Building on the foundations of 2024 and 2025, Cuan enters 2026 with clear priorities and stronger systems to deliver them. The focus will remain on translating national commitments into tangible supports for victim-survivors while building the institutional capacity required for long-term change.

Domestic violence accommodation remains a critical priority. Expanding on the units delivered in 2025, Cuan is working to deliver a further 32 new family refuge units by the end of 2026, with an additional 18 units under construction for delivery in 2027. Safe Home provision will also continue to expand, with 34 additional units progressing to bring projected national capacity to 94 Safe Homes by 2027. Each of these developments represents a direct, visible increase in safety and protection for families affected by domestic violence.

Alongside accommodation expansion, work will advance on strengthening partnerships with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and local authorities to go beyond refuge and safe home provision and look at addressing wider issues – early intervention that supports people to remain safely in their homes where that is genuinely achievable; crisis provision that responds without hesitation when it is not; and clear, funded pathways out of emergency accommodation, so that people are not stranded in crisis settings when they are ready to rebuild their lives.

2026 will also see Cuan leverage data collected from services to develop National Services Development Plans for the range of services it funds. Informed by sector expertise, victim-survivor experience and robust data, the NSDP will provide a roadmap for ensuring services are accessible, effective and responsive to the diverse needs of victim-survivors nationwide.

2026 marks the final year of Ireland's Third National Strategy on DSGBV. Cuan will continue to coordinate monitoring and reporting under the Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026, maintaining accountability and transparent oversight. Critically, preparatory work will commence on the Fourth National Strategy – in partnership with DJHAM to support scoping, consultation design and stakeholder engagement. This work will draw on implementation learning from the current Strategy, evolving evidence on prevalence and need, and victim-survivor perspectives to ensure the next Strategy is ambitious, evidence-based and grounded in the realities of frontline delivery.

Prevention and public awareness remain central to long-term change. Cuan will continue to deliver national campaigns, using evaluation learning from 2025 to refine messaging and improve reach to marginalised communities. The Agency's education function, established in 2025, will advance work to integrate DSGBV prevention across formal education systems and community-based learning. A new Cuan website will launch in 2026, improving public access to information and supporting the Agency's visibility as Ireland's trusted national body on DSGBV.

Work to strengthen Ireland's research and data infrastructure will intensify, with development of a comprehensive DSGBV Data Plan and further expansion of research partnerships to support more informed decision-making across policy, service planning and national monitoring.

Organisational capacity remains fundamental to delivery. Recruitment will continue to address specialist gaps, particularly in areas critical to accommodation expansion, data infrastructure and national service development. Governance and oversight will continue to mature, with implementation of audit recommendations, further strengthening of internal controls and ongoing enhancement of funding oversight arrangements across the service providers Cuan supports.

Demand for services continues to rise as awareness grows and more people find the confidence to seek help. This reflects the impact of awareness raising efforts, but also reinforces the urgency of continued investment and system strengthening so that services are available for those that need them.

2026 will be a year of building on the progress made by delivering real and tangible results for victim-survivors while preparing Ireland's response for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

3

Governance, Finance and Public Sector Reporting Duties



WILL WE
KEEP
GOING?



Governance and Board Oversight

Cuan is accountable to the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and operates under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration. Established under the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Act 2023, the Agency is governed by a statutory Board appointed by the Minister.

The Board sets the strategic direction of Cuan, oversees its performance and ensures that the Agency fulfils its statutory mandate. 2025 marked the first full year in which the Board and its Committees operated across a complete annual governance cycle, including approval of plans, monitoring of delivery, review of financial statements and structured oversight of risk and assurance.

Key functions and responsibilities include:

- To provide strategic direction to the Agency.
- To adopt the annual report.
- To oversee the implementation by the chief executive of the corporate plan as laid out under section 31 (1) and the annual business plan.
- To provide guidance and advice to the chief executive where requested under section 19.
- To promote high standards of corporate governance in the Agency.

- To advise, or make recommendations to the Minister in relation to the policies of the Minister and the Government relating to or affecting the functions of the Agency

Throughout the year, the Board maintained oversight of delivery of the Corporate Plan 2025–2027 and the Zero Tolerance Implementation Plan 2025–2026. Regular reporting from the Executive enabled structured discussion on performance, funding oversight, risk exposure and organisational capacity.

Audit and Risk Oversight

A significant governance development was the formal establishment of an outsourced internal audit function. Following a competitive tendering process, Crowleys DFK were appointed in February 2025 as Cuan’s auditors.

The Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) approved a three-year internal audit plan covering both Cuan’s internal operations and audits of organisations funded by Cuan to deliver DSGBV services. This dual focus reflects the Agency’s statutory responsibility to maintain strong internal controls while also providing assurance over funding arrangements across the wider DSGBV sector.

Implementation of the plan commenced during the year. Cuan initiated 14 audits of funded service providers, generating findings relating to governance, financial management and compliance arrangements within those organisations. These findings are subject to follow-up and monitoring.

Separately, an internal audit preparedness review of Cuan was completed. This review assessed the Agency’s governance structures, control environment and policy frameworks and generated 23 recommendations aimed at further strengthening internal systems and documentation. The recommendations were sequenced for implementation over defined timeframes, and progress against them is being actively monitored.

A high-level review of Cuan’s system of internal financial controls was undertaken as part of the 2025 internal audit plan, with the outcome received in early 2026. The review notes that Cuan has established a foundational framework of financial controls and governance arrangements, with a number of key controls operating effectively in practice. It states arrangements in place provide a strong platform for effective oversight of performance, strategic direction, and accountability as the organisation continues to mature. Areas identified for further formalisation were consistent with an organisation at an early stage of development rather than reflective of systemic weakness.

The Committee also oversaw the external audit process and reviewed and recommended the 2024 financial statements to the Board. An unqualified audit certificate was received from the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Governance Framework and Risk Management

Cuan finalised and approved a comprehensive Governance Framework bringing together roles, delegated authorities, reporting structures and compliance arrangements.

The ARC also supported the development of a formal Risk Management Framework, including a defined risk appetite statement, set by Cuan’s Board. Risk registers were reviewed regularly during the year, with high-rated risks discussed in detail and mitigation actions monitored. Particular attention was given to staffing capacity, systems maturity, funding oversight at scale and delivery dependencies within the domestic violence accommodation programme.

Priorities for 2026

In 2026, the Board and Audit and Risk Committee will focus on overseeing a work programme to further strengthen governance systems in Cuan. Priority areas include delivery of the second year of the three-year internal audit plan; continued oversight of the implementation of audit recommendations; further embedding of the Risk Management Framework; and maintaining strong assurance over financial stewardship and funding oversight at scale.

The Board will continue to work with CEO and executive to advise on risk management, particularly risks relating to staffing capacity, systems development and programme delivery dependencies, ensuring governance arrangements remain robust and responsive as Cuan’s remit evolves.



Chair - Professor Emerita Caroline Fennell:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

A founder member of the Board of Women’s Studies and the Centre for Criminal Justice in UCC, she has served as a Commissioner on the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and a Commissioner on An Coimisiún Toghcháin. Caroline’s research interests focus on gender, due process, evidence and criminal justice, on which she has published widely.



Sarah Benson:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

Sarah has worked for 25 years in senior leadership with organisations supporting victims-survivors of DSGBV, including her current role as CEO of Women’s Aid. Sarah is also an experienced Board member with strong knowledge of governance, compliance and accountability. Sarah is a Ministerial appointee to the Board of the Court Service.



Denise Charlton:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

Denise has in depth experience relating to DSGBV, with over 25 years in the sector. Denise has led pioneering initiatives working on legal and policy reform around domestic violence, prostitution, and human trafficking, nationally, and across the EU. At Community Foundation Ireland, she has embedded DSGBV as a priority— supporting charities that provide frontline services, commissioning evidence-led research and influencing systemic change.



Conor Hanly:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

Lecturer/Assistant Professor of Law at University of Galway, where his primary academic interest is in the field of criminal law and especially the issue of sexual and domestic violence. He is on the Board of the Galway Rape Crisis Centre.

Board members



Molly Buckley:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

A Public Health Nurse by profession and has worked extensively in the community and voluntary sector, locally, nationally and internationally. Can best be described as an Equality and Disability Rights Activist. Is a founder member of Offaly Domestic Support Service.



Vivian Geiran:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

Registered social worker and Adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work and Social Policy at TCD. Worked in the Irish Probation Service for over thirty years, the final seven years as Director of the Service.

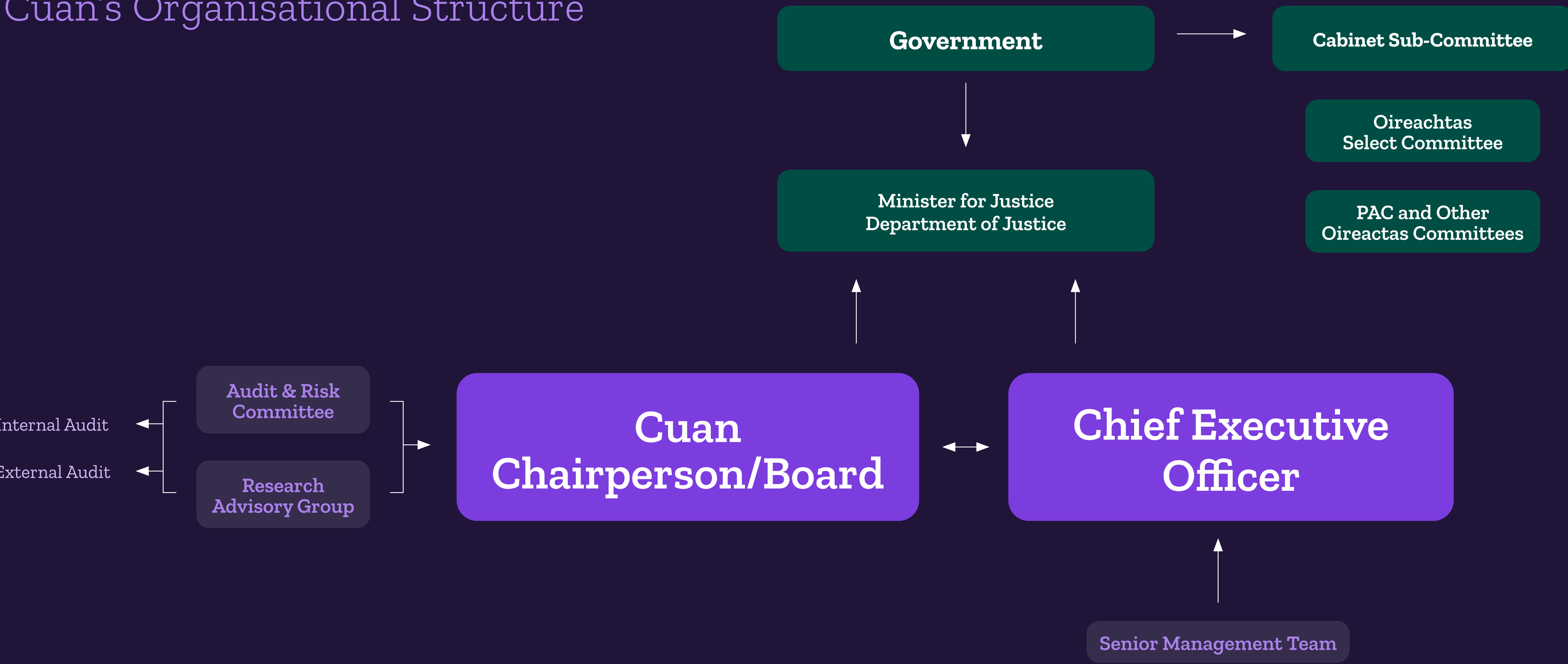


Claire Loftus:

Appointed to Board: April 2024

Qualified as a solicitor, spending 28 years as a prosecutor, the final ten years as Director of Public Prosecutions for Ireland. She is also a director of the board of An Garda Síochána, and an independent adviser to the Scottish Ministerial Code.

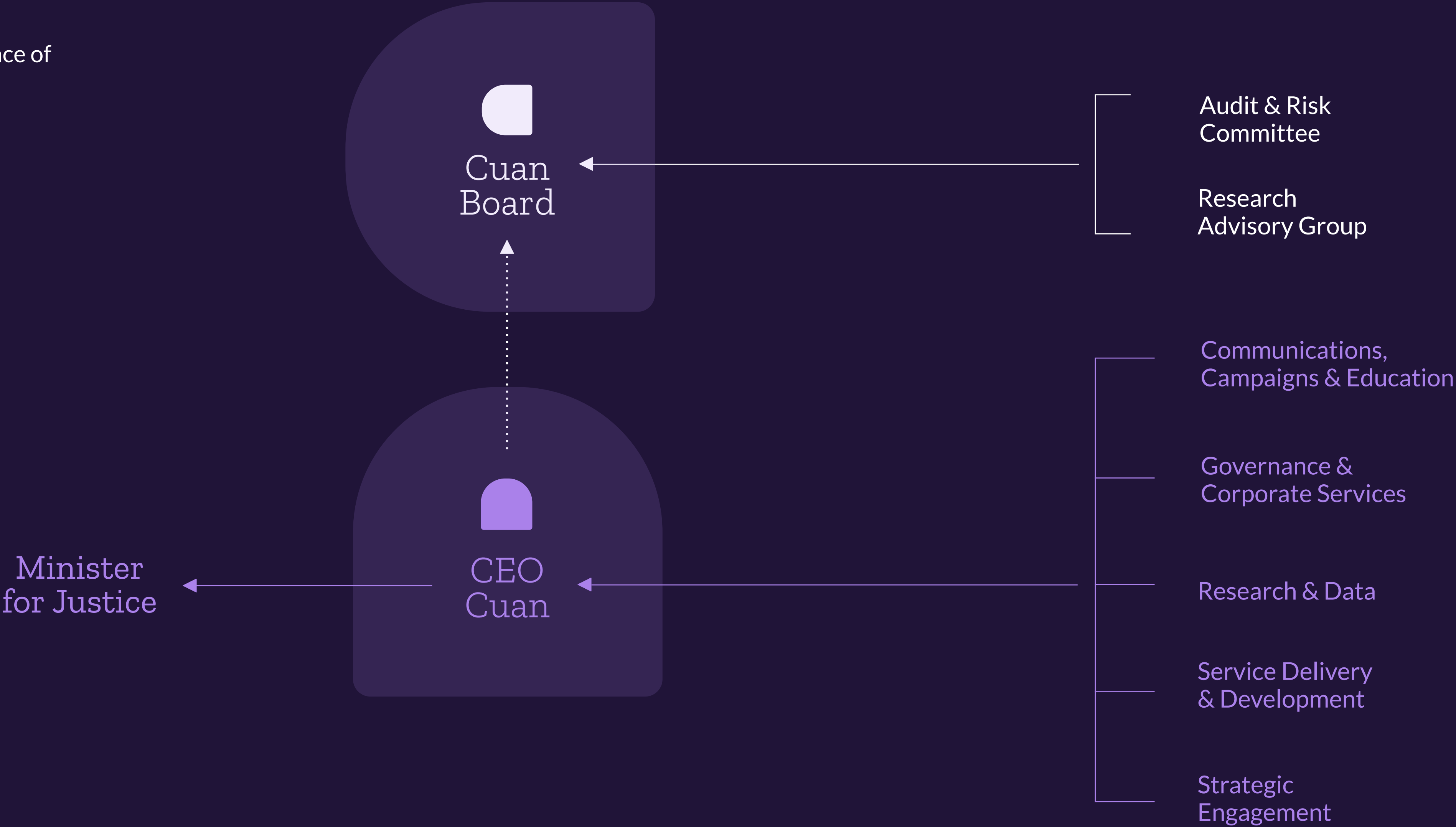
Cuan's Organisational Structure



Cuan's Organisational Structure

Reports to
→

Has regard to guidance of
.....→



Cuan and the Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty

Embedding Equality and Human Rights at the Core of Cuan’s Mission

Cuan forms part of Ireland’s public service framework for addressing DSGBV. In carrying out its legislative mandate to fund services, coordinate national strategy and oversee delivery, the Agency must ensure that equality and human rights considerations are fully integrated into how it plans, allocates resources, makes decisions and reports on progress.

Central to this obligation is the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (the Public Sector Duty), set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission ((IHREC) Act 2014. The Duty requires public bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and protect the human rights of staff, service users and those affected by their work.

In practical terms, public bodies must:

- Assess the equality and human rights issues relevant to their remit
- Address these issues through policies, actions and organisational practice
- Report publicly, in an accessible manner, on progress and outcomes

IHREC issued guidance to support implementation of the Duty. That guidance emphasises that equality and human rights considerations should be embedded within strategic planning, governance and decision-making, forming part of the organisation’s overall accountability framework rather than being treated as a standalone compliance exercise.

Cuan’s Corporate Plan 2025–2027 and the Public Sector Duty

Cuan’s Corporate Plan 2025–2027 sets out the Agency’s strategic direction for leading and coordinating Ireland’s response to DSGBV. While focused on prevention, protection, prosecution and policy coordination outcomes, the Plan also provides the structure through which equality and human rights are advanced throughout the Agency’s activities. These objectives come from Cuan’s founding legislation which very much reinforce and respond to the spirit and intent of the 2014 Act.

Cuan continues to develop its organisational culture so that equality and human rights inform decision-making, funding arrangements and service design.

The Corporate Plan reflects the Duty in several important respects:

- *Human-rights-centred strategy:* The Plan recognises domestic and sexual violence as human rights abuses and as forms of gender-based violence rooted in inequality. Its objectives position the protection of rights and the promotion of equality as central to Ireland’s national response.
- *Reducing inequality in access and outcomes:* The emphasis on accessible, effective and geographically distributed services, with due regard to diversity of experience and need, reflects a commitment to reduce and eliminate inequalities relating to access and experience, particularly for those facing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.
- *Evidence and lived experience:* The commitment to building a knowledge base informed by lived experience of all victims and survivors ensures that policy development and service improvement are shaped by diverse perspectives, including those of marginalised groups.

Through these priorities, the Corporate Plan provides a clear basis for advancing equality and human rights across service funding, prevention initiatives, research

development and national coordination. Cuan’s annual business plan sets out the range of actions that bring these priorities to life.

Implementing the Duty Across Cuan’s Functions

In giving effect to the Public Sector Duty, Cuan will continue to examine the equality and human rights dimensions of its work, including how DSGBV is experienced by different groups such as migrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, victim-survivors with disabilities and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

This analysis informs how the Agency prioritises activity, shapes service development and allocates resources. Where risks or inequalities are identified, appropriate actions are reflected in corporate objectives, annual business plans and oversight arrangements.

Progress in this area is reported through Cuan’s annual reporting cycle and other statutory reporting mechanisms. In this way, equality and human rights are treated not as peripheral considerations, but as core elements influencing service oversight, prevention activity, research development and national coordination.

Cuan’s Commitment to the Public Sector Duty

For Cuan, implementation of the Public Sector Duty strengthens transparency, accountability and public confidence. It reinforces the Agency’s role in addressing DSGBV as a matter of human rights and gender equality, consistent with national strategy and legislative obligations.

Cuan continues to develop its organisational culture so that equality and human rights inform decision-making, funding arrangements and service design. The Agency also supports meaningful participation by stakeholders – including victim-survivors and civil society organisations – in shaping the responses that affect them.

Through sustained attention to these principles, Cuan aims to demonstrate measurable and transparent progress in advancing equality and protecting human rights as it implements its Corporate Plan 2025–2027.

Climate Action as Public Sector Leadership

Ireland’s Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, underpinned by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and successive Climate Action Plans, requires public bodies to contribute to national emissions reduction and sustainability objectives.

Cuan recognises its responsibility within this framework. Although the Agency does not manage an extensive estate or fleet and operates from serviced office accommodation with limited control over core infrastructure such as energy systems and building performance, it remains accountable for integrating sustainability within its governance and operational practices.

- In 2025, climate responsibility was advanced through:
- A digital-first approach to documentation and reporting, reducing paper consumption
 - Blended and remote working arrangements that limit travel-related emissions
 - Consideration of environmental criteria in procurement decisions
 - Participation in public sector climate reporting processes, including annual Climate Action Roadmap updates
- Cuan’s Corporate Plan 2025–2027 embeds sustainability commitments in line with the Agency’s scale, remit and operational context. As organisational systems continue to mature, climate considerations will remain integrated into planning, governance and procurement processes, consistent with national public sector obligations.

Public Awareness Campaigns and the Official Languages Act

- As a public body, Cuan is required to ensure visibility of its Irish Language advertising content across all media channels, as well as to ensure sufficient spending on Irish-Language-specific media (defined as media that has more than 50% Irish language content).
- Both of Cuan’s newly-launched campaigns in 2025 – *Hardest Stories* and *You are not Alone* – were produced bilingually for broadcast, digital and out-of-home, in keeping with the approach taken with DSGBV campaigns to date. In 2025 Cuan put particular effort not only into producing and rolling out advertising in Irish, but ensuring that these advertisements reached and impacted Irish speakers. This included spend on a high-profile primetime programming sponsorship partnership with TG4.
- In 2025 Cuan achieved 16.96% placement of Irish Language advertising across media channels. This is based on an average of Irish Language visibility across media. Applying revised metric calculations soon to be adopted by An Coimisinéir Teanga to improve accuracy, this total figure exceeds 20%.
- Cuan spent 5.45% of its advertising budget on advertising in Irish-Language-specific media, and this represents an investment of nearly 10% more than the statutory requirement.
- In 2026 and beyond, Cuan intends to continue to build the visibility of Irish language advertising across media channels, as well as in Irish-language-specific media, as part of its localisation strategy.

Financial Overview

In 2025 Cuan’s financial management focused on building robust systems, allocating resources efficiently and maintaining full compliance with public sector financial regulations.

Cuan’s total budget for the year was €66.917 million, representing a 13.3% increase on the 2024 budget. This was allocated across two subheads in the Appropriation Account for Vote 24 Justice:

- Subhead A.20 (€61.210 million) – funding for DSGBV services, awareness campaigns and prevention initiatives.
- Subhead A.26 (€5.707 million) – operating costs for Cuan’s core functions, including staffing, governance and strategic initiatives.

Throughout the year, financial management efforts focused on budget forecasting, expenditure monitoring and strengthening financial governance structures to ensure full compliance with statutory requirements.

- €58.4 million allocated to fund 78 domestic, sexual and gender-based violence service organisations, including emergency refuges, rape crisis centres, outreach services and specialist support providers.
- €15.6 million in Q1 2026 service funding payments were processed in December to ensure continuity of services.
- €1.7 million allocated to service providers in respect of the 2025 Workplace Relations Commission agreement, with further funding adjustments required in 2026.
- A €7 million budget uplift enabled an open funding call to DSGBV service providers, supporting domestic violence accommodation development and the maintenance of existing service levels.

Financial governance and audit

Cuan progressed several key governance measures to ensure financial transparency, accountability and statutory compliance.

- **Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration Governance:** Cuan signed a yearly agreement with the Department setting out service delivery commitments and delivery expectations for Cuan. These are published on the Department’s website.
- **Audit and Risk Committee (ARC):** The terms of reference for this committee were approved by the Board in February. The ARC is part of the Cuan control environment, tasked with providing independent advice to the Board and supporting them in their responsibilities for issues of risk, internal control and governance. The first formal meeting of the ARC took place in February and met five times during 2025.
- **Service audits and financial oversight:** Cuan established an outsourced internal audit function. The internal auditors, Crowleys DFK, conducted 14 audits on DSGBV service providers.
- **Public financial procedures and compliance:** As required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, Cuan conducted an annual review of the effectiveness of internal controls for 2025. This review did not identify any evidence of systemic control failures. Compliance with public sector procurement guidelines, financial reporting and budgetary management processes was closely monitored.

Financial outlook for 2026

Cuan’s financial performance in 2025 demonstrated strong fiscal responsibility, effective resource allocation and a commitment to financial governance. The Agency successfully managed a budget of over €66 million through the implementation of robust financial oversight structures. A further €12.2 million increase was secured through the 2026 Estimates process – an 18.3% increase on the 2025 budget – providing for service expansion, research projects and staffing growth.

As Cuan moves into 2026, the Agency will continue to build financial efficiency, expand service funding and strengthen its audit and risk management frameworks to support long-term sustainability and impact.

Key financial highlights:

€66.9M	€58.4M	€15.6M	€1.7M	€79.1M
Total budget	Service funding	Q1 2026 payments	WRC Agreement	2026 budget secured
+13.3% on 2024	78 organisations funded	Processed Dec 2025	2025 funding	+18.3% on 2025

Cuan funded service providers

Service Provider	2025 Funding (€)
A.S.S.C Accompaniment Support Services for Children	450,925.29
Accessible Counselling Tullamore	21,128.08
Adapt Domestic Abuse Services (Limerick)	2,073,935.91
AkiDwA	63,591.15
Amal Women Ireland	82,850.08
An Cosán	10,778.96
Aoibhneas CLG	1,886,826.73
ASCEND (North Tipperary Development Company)	465,624.37
Athlone Community Services Council	1,063,208.39
Athlone (Midland) Rape Crisis Centre	236,722.46
Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre	11,649.88
Barnardos Republic of Ireland Ltd	689,897.45
Beacon of Light Counselling Centre	21,630.00
Bray Women's Refuge Housing Association	967,301.02
Carlow & South Leinster Rape Crisis Centre	364,991.49
Carlow Women's Aid	317,641.58
Clare Haven Services	1,180,844.78
COPE Galway	2,370,830.38
Cork Rape Crisis Centre t/a Sexual Violence Centre Cork	534,951.97
Cuan Saor Women's Refuge & Support Services	889,718.21
Cuanlee CLG	872,331.67
Dignity4Patients	105,604.45
Domestic Violence Advocacy Service	672,392.58
Domestic Violence Response	273,049.46
Donegal Domestic Violence Services	1,093,036.65
Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis	573,857.36

Service Provider	2025 Funding (€)
Donegal Women's Centre	207,724.99
Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge	1,244,889.64
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre	4,107,603.74
Dundalk Counselling Centre	35,700.00
Galway Rape Crisis Centre	1,514,715.95
Good Shepherd Cork	366,470.34
Greystones People's Project Ltd	7,000.00
Hope Trust	3,060.00
Family Resource Centre CLG	163,703.10
Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre	412,076.62
Adapt Kerry	1,144,801.46
Kilkenny Rape Crisis Centre	366,267.69
Amber Domestic Abuse CLG	1,044,865.89
Laois Support Services Against Domestic Abuse	550,884.85
Le Chéile Mentoring CLG	13,500.00
Lifeline (Inishowen)	25,746.73
Living Life Voluntary Counselling Centre	15,795.14
Longford Women's Link	493,369.04
Mayo Rape Crisis Centre	333,336.25
Meath Women's Aid Housing Association	1,788,091.50
Men's Aid Ireland	546,320.53
Men's Development Network CLG	1,460,292.54
Mná Feasa - Cork Anti Poverty Resource Network CLG	226,228.50
MOVE Ireland	987,996.23
Women's Community Projects (Mullingar) Association Ltd	28,347.84
Newpark Close Community Development CLG	30,440.88

Service Provider	2025 Funding (€)
Oasis Housing Association CLG	1,220,311.20
Offaly Domestic Violence Support Services CLG	534,381.13
One in Four Ireland CLG	547,835.78
OSS Cork - Domestic Violence Information Resource Centre	301,371.48
Pavee Point (Dublin Travellers Education & Development Group CLG)	418,753.11
Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Counselling Sligo Ltd	478,450.35
Rape Crisis Midwest Ltd	724,790.59
Rape Crisis Ireland	255,125.98
Rape Crisis North East	409,988.24
Roscommon Safe Link CLG	435,118.10
Ruhama	252,006.64
Safe Ireland National Social Change Agency CLG	1,550,741.13
Saoirse Housing Association CLG	3,140,306.91
SAOL Project	165,035.58
Sonas Domestic Violence Charity CLG	5,254,740.00
Teach Tearmainn Housing Association CLG	961,753.35
Tipperary Rape Crisis and Counselling Centre	356,312.77
Tullamore Rape Crisis Centre	219,527.45
Waterford Rape Crisis Centre	327,172.45
West Cork Beacon Domestic Abuse Support Services	557,151.65
Westmeath Support Service Against Domestic Abuse	44,377.29
Wexford Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Service DAC	650,894.37
Wexford Women's Refuge	1,692,012.13
Women's Aid Dundalk	1,174,640.11
Women's Aid	1,799,943.90
YANA North Cork Domestic Violence Project CLG	475,801.88
Total incl accruals	58,363,093.38