

Statement of Strategy

2022–24



Women's Aid

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Preface by Women's Aid CEO

Women's Aid is an organisation which has been working on the issue of violence against women for over 45 years since our foundation in 1974. Our new Strategic Plan has been developed through an unprecedented period of global upheaval. The current operating environment presents both challenges but also opportunities. This plan will guide us in the coming three years from 2022 to 2024, to work strategically and with purpose. We aim to make an effective contribution towards achieving an equal Ireland, with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.

Women's Aid are a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse. We do this by advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland, and by providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services.

¹ Vision, Action, Change, 2002

The values and strategic priorities set out in our new Vision, Action, Change, 2002 strategic plan explicitly draw from and build upon the ground-breaking model of work Women's Aid produced over 20 years ago in 'Vision Action Change'¹. This has always been a working, living, document and our practice continually develops as we have continued to learn from women's experiences and our changing environment.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations in the world. It is present in every country, cutting across national, cultural, economic, social and political boundaries. It takes many forms and its causes are not individualised, but are located in a complex interweaving of political, cultural and social factors that both stem from and lead to unequal power relations between men and women.

Within the private sphere of home and intimate relationships, men's violence is focused on denying women sexual autonomy, reproductive choice and economic



Sarah Benson
Women's Aid CEO

independence. Within the public sphere, the sexual violation of women through pornography, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault denies women the freedom to exercise their full human rights. Male violence prevents all women from fully participating in and benefiting from social, economic, cultural and political life.

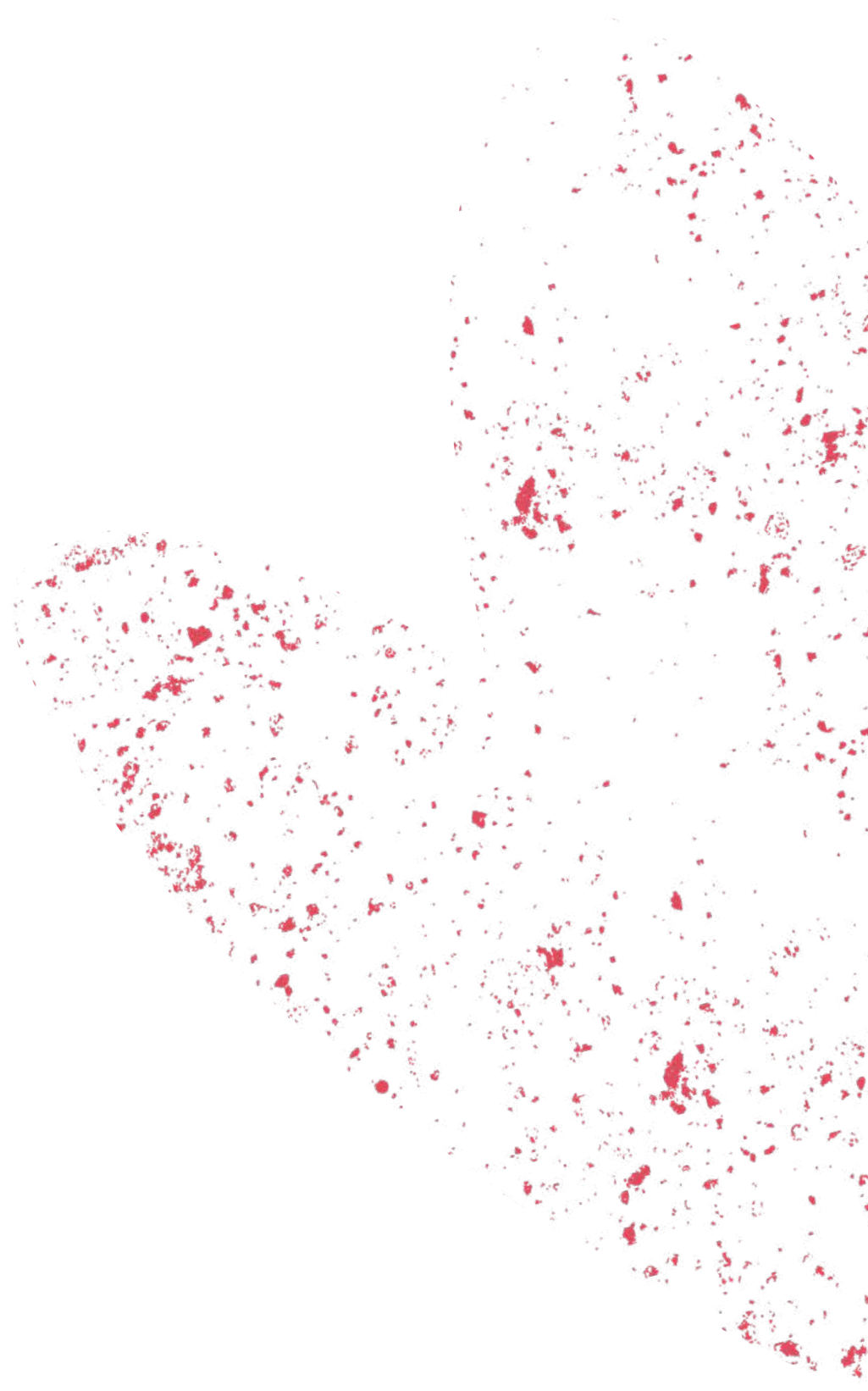
Being a feminist organisation means that Women's Aid recognises the links between all forms of oppression, abuse of and violence against women and the interconnection between forms of discrimination which women experience due to poverty, disability, immigration status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and educational disadvantage.

We acknowledge that while all women share similar experiences of discrimination, harassment, sexism, inequality and oppression on the basis of their sex and gender, not all women are equally or similarly disadvantaged nor have equal access to resources, power and privilege. Our feminism incorporates analysis and action that considers how other forms of systemic oppression and discrimination can intersect with and impact on women's experiences of sex, gender, sexuality, and their experiences of inequality, discrimination, harassment, violence and abuse.

Women's Aid has always been committed to the development of good practice in our work with women subjected to domestic abuse. We believe that documenting and recording women's experiences and gathering evidence and data from many sources is critical to our knowledge and understanding of the issue. We will continue to learn from women by always listening to their needs and developing responses that reflect the diversity of their experiences.

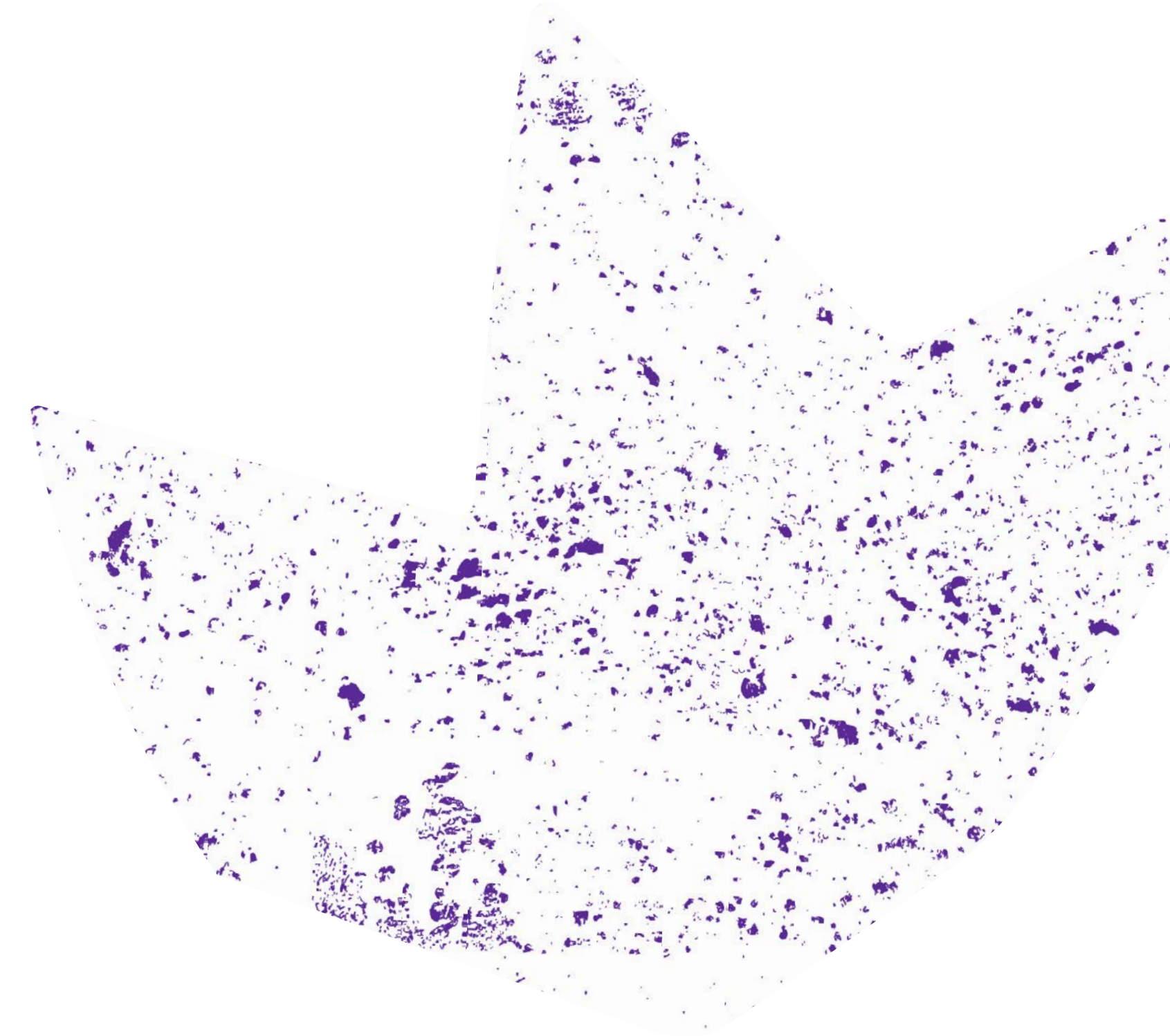
We value opportunities to work collaboratively and cooperatively with peer organisations, survivors and others to identify and transform systems of power and privilege that oppress and marginalise.

In order to be effective, our work to address violence against women must challenge all forms of discrimination that women experience. While our work remains focused on preventing and responding to violence experienced by women and their children, we support the work of others whose primary focus is addressing other forms of oppression, and we work collaboratively to address all violence against women. This includes working with men as allies to promote healthy and respectful relationships, to foster a positive masculinity for boys, and to challenge and prevent gender-based violence.



We will strive to embed inclusivity, diversity and accessibility across all of our work. We consider inclusivity and accessibility for diverse audiences in everything we do, internally and externally. This means ensuring that Women’s Aid is a diverse and inclusive workplace as well as working to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the training, capacity building and resources we provide to others. We acknowledge that Women’s Aid has work to do around diversity, inclusion and intersectionality, and that this work will be ongoing.

Continual learning, reflection and development in all aspects of our work is vital, and this new strategic plan provides us the framework to do so with positive impact over the coming three years.



Chairperson's Introduction

In this document, the Board of Women's Aid sets out its Strategic Plan for the three-year period 2022-2024, which I am delighted to present to you. This Plan provides a robust framework for Women's Aid to continue working towards its vision. The contents of the plan reflect the concerns and interests of key stakeholders. The process employed a wide and extensive consultation, with the staff and volunteers who support our activity every day, peer organisations in our sector, our funders, statutory authorities, donors and - most importantly of all - the women who have used our services. Taking this input and reflecting also on all aspects of our operating environment, we engaged in a deep reflection with many intense discussions, to arrive at this clear and strong articulation of our commitment to continue to develop and grow to maximise our positive impact.

The plan also builds on the heritage, reputation and core principles of Women's Aid. It sets out our Vision and Purpose and describes the values that guide Women's Aid as it delivers this strategic plan.

A detailed plan has been developed for operational use, and the Executive Summary of this plan is published on our website.

The plan is underpinned by our feminist founding principles and frames our strategy around one central strategic priority which is:

Creating Social Equality

With 2 core supporting priorities:

Building and Nurturing Effective Partnerships,

and

Continually Strengthening Capability & Expertise

Organised across each of these three strategic priorities, are a set of integrated goals. Focusing our collective efforts on delivering these goals will, in the view of the Board, provide the best opportunity to progress towards the long term vision of Women's Aid, over the next three years.



Ailbhe Smyth
Chairperson



Our first priority, *Creating Social Equality*, is at the heart of what we do. It is enabled by the activities identified under the other two priorities.

Capturing the outcomes and impact of work is important and one of our key goals. With this in mind, a key measure has been defined for each objective in the plan. Continually monitoring our success in achieving these measures will help us sustain the momentum required to deliver our ambitious plan.

During the strategic planning process, we have also taken the opportunity to clarify the organisational values of Women's Aid, as an evolution of our founding principles. These are the ideals and behaviours that reflect our culture, and which guide and sustain the organisation in every aspect of its work.

We know we cannot achieve success alone and must be a part of a cooperative community alongside our colleagues in civil society and community organisations, and with statutory partners and survivors. During this strategic period, we will work steadily with our partners, survivors, funders and peers across the sector, collaborating where our interests are aligned and working to bring about the fundamental social change that is expressed in our vision.

Over the length of this strategic period Women's Aid will work to set the agenda for social equality and positive change.

Reflecting our values, the Board also recognises the importance of supporting staff and volunteers to flourish personally and professionally, in return for their commitment to the organisation. The Strategic Plan sets clear objectives for the ongoing development of organisational systems and structures. The satisfaction and engagement at work of our team is one of the most important qualities that we have as an organisation. We are always mindful of the effort of staff and volunteers and wish to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to them for their passion and drive as we embark on the delivery of this important plan together.

My final words are for the women and children in Ireland, whose experience of abuse in the past, present and future are the reason Women's Aid exists. We commit ourselves to listening to, believing and supporting you and to playing our part to create a more equal world that is a safer and better place for you.



About Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse including coercive control, in Ireland since 1974.

We do this by:

- advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland

and

- providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services

Our Frontline Services

24hr National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 300

Women's Aid operates the 24hr National Freephone Domestic Violence Helpline in the Republic of Ireland. The Helpline provides a listening ear, emotional support and practical information to women subjected to violence and abuse from their current or former partners. The Helpline

also acts as a 'gateway' for direct referral to all other local specialist services across Ireland. It is the only free, national, domestic violence and abuse Helpline with specialised, trained Support Workers, fully accredited and quality assured by The Helplines Partnership.

The Language Line – Women's Aid Telephone Interpretation Service

The 24hr National Freephone Helpline has a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 170 languages for callers needing support in their own language. Interpreters are available on the Language Line from 8am–8pm, 7 days a week.

Instant Messaging Support Service (IMSS)

The Women's Aid IMSS is a free, confidential and secure service where women can seek support and advice from fully trained Helpline Support Workers through instant messaging. The service is open daily and can be accessed through womensaid.ie or toointoyou.ie. The service is more easily accessible to women who feel they are at risk of being overheard by their abuser.

Face-to-Face Services in the Greater Dublin Area

One-to-One Support Service

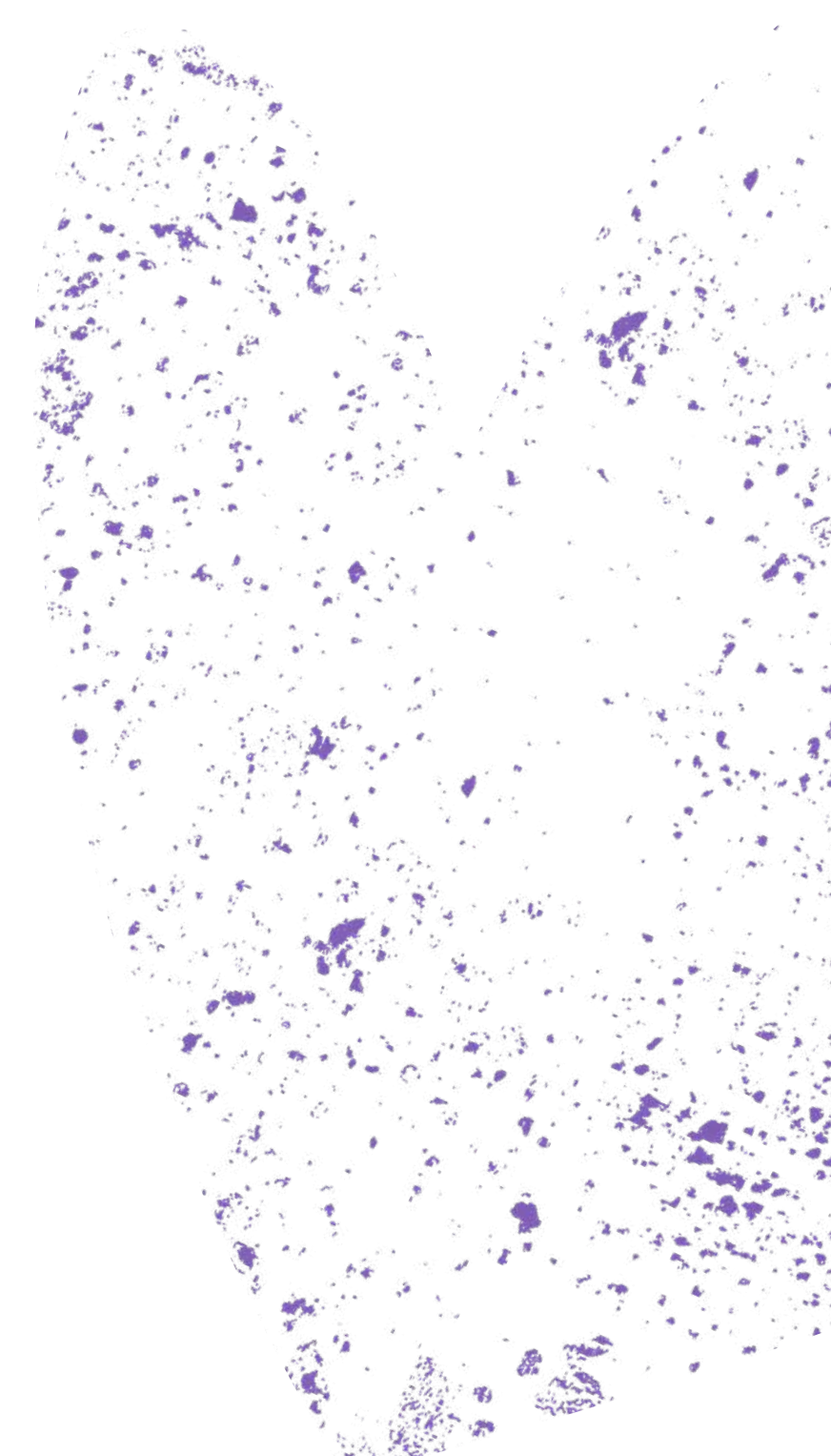
The Women’s Aid One-to-One Support Service provides in-depth information and support to women who have been subjected to domestic violence and abuse throughout Dublin City and County. This ongoing face-to-face and phone support can include court accompaniment, safety planning, advocacy and referral support to external organisations. Our advocacy and referral work includes accompaniment to the local Gardaí to make statements; assistance with legal aid applications; support with immigration status within the context of domestic violence and abuse; advocating to Housing Authorities for women who are no longer safe in their homes; and support in accessing local refuges. Court accompaniment includes emotional support before, during and after the court proceedings, clarifying legal terminology and exploring further options. We support women with applications and hearings in the context of domestic violence orders as well as access, custody, maintenance, divorce and separation cases where domestic violence and abuse is present.

Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service (D.A.I.S.) - A Drop-In Service for Women in Dolphin House Family Law Court²

Based in the Dolphin House Family Law Court in Dublin, the Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service (D.A.I.S.) is a free and confidential drop-in service for women who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse. The service is available Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm and provides support and information on legal options and safety planning, and links women in with domestic violence and abuse services for ongoing support. Women’s Aid runs this service in partnership with the Inchicore Outreach Centre.

High-Risk Support Project

The High-Risk Support Project provides a multi-agency response to women at a high-risk of ongoing violence, abuse and homicide from their ex-partners and ex-spouses. Women’s Aid works with An Garda Síochána and local domestic violence services to deliver a coordinated rapid response system for women and their families, which is generously supported by the Vodafone Foundation and the Department of Justice.



² formerly known as the Dolphin House Family Law Court Support and Referral Service

Women’s Aid Maternity Project

This is an innovative pilot project (2021-2024) which has the aim of enhancing maternity hospitals’ and units’ response to victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse through a jointly created, delivered and operated Domestic Violence and Abuse Training, Awareness and Referral Programme. The project is a partnership between, Women’s Aid and three Dublin Maternity hospitals and Cork University Hospital who will collaborate on delivery and evaluation of the key strands of the programme.

Women’s Aid Law Clinic

Our confidential and free legal information and assistance clinic supports women subjected to domestic violence and abuse who are representing themselves in domestic violence and family law proceedings. The clinic is run by volunteer lawyers from McCann Fitzgerald whose services are provided free of charge.

Working for Social Equality

Specialised Training

Women’s Aid’s Training and Development Department has a proven track record of designing and delivering specialist domestic violence and abuse training to local and national organisations throughout Ireland. We support organisations

in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, as well as corporate bodies, to enhance and improve responses to women who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse. All Women’s Aid training is informed and guided by our decades of experience directly supporting women and by models of best practice.

Public Awareness and Campaigns

Women’s Aid leads the way in raising awareness and providing information on domestic violence and abuse to victims and survivors, their families and friends, their communities and wider society. Our annual public awareness campaigns and communications activities are a vital way to highlight the prevalence, nature and impact of domestic violence and abuse, intimate relationship abuse and femicide.

Too Into You is a Women’s Aid campaign and resource for young women (aged 18-25) to learn about their intimate relationships and seek support and advice if they are suffering or fear they may be suffering intimate relationship abuse. Friends, classmates, colleagues, family members and professionals can also access information about intimate relationship abuse here. The campaign highlights the hidden reality of many young intimate relationships.

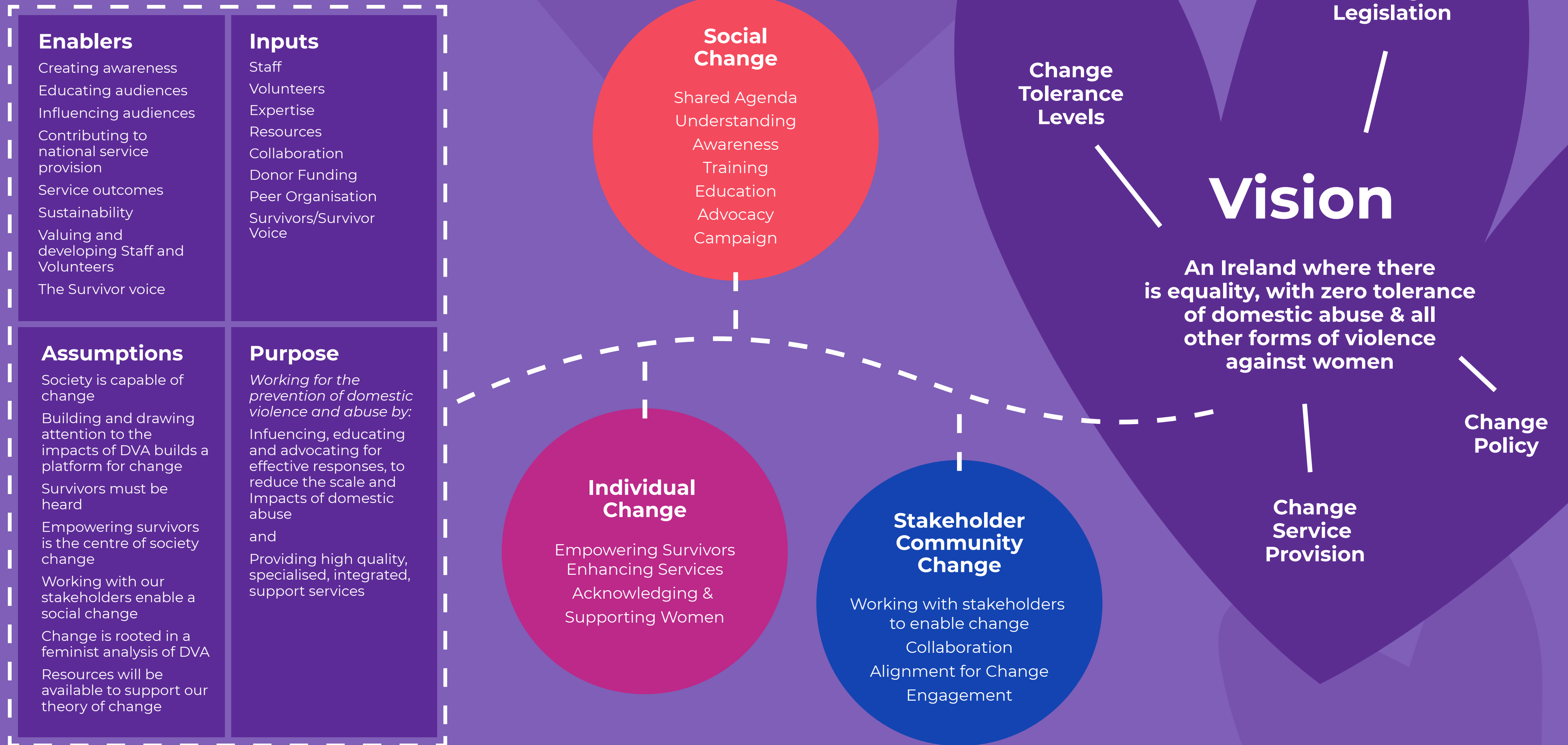
We also engage with the media to promote the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and our other support services. The Women's Voices Testimony Project encourages and facilitates victims and survivors to tell their stories in a safe way to improve awareness on domestic violence and abuse and reach women in similar situations.

Influencing Government and Policy

Women's Aid provides solution-based recommendations on improving preventions, legal responses, policies and protections to support women and children subjected to domestic violence and abuse, and we bring their concerns to a number of national and local fora. We make submissions and meet with government ministers, policymakers and members of the Oireachtas to discuss a range of issues and collaborate with other agencies and organisations to bring about social and political change.



Women's Aid Theory of Change



Our Vision

Women's Aid vision is an equal Ireland, with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.

Our Purpose

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse.

We do this by

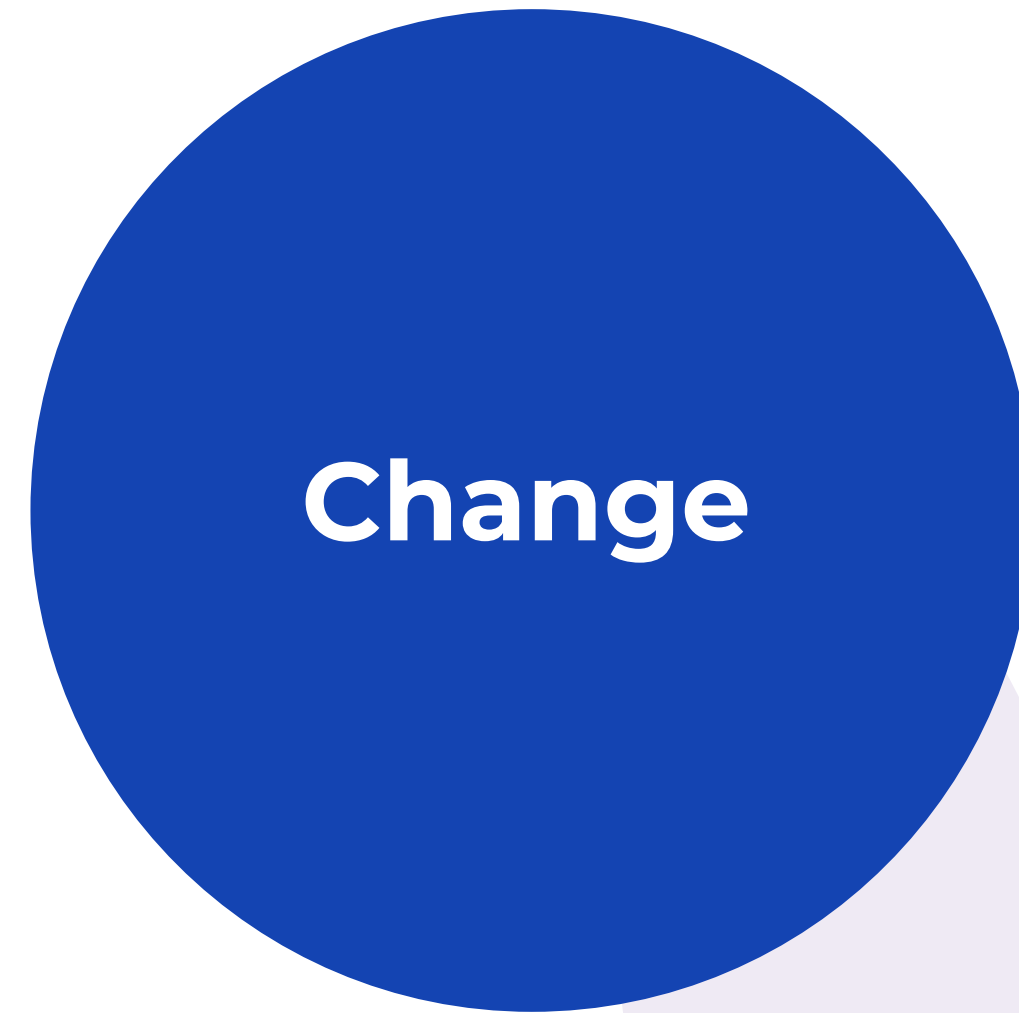
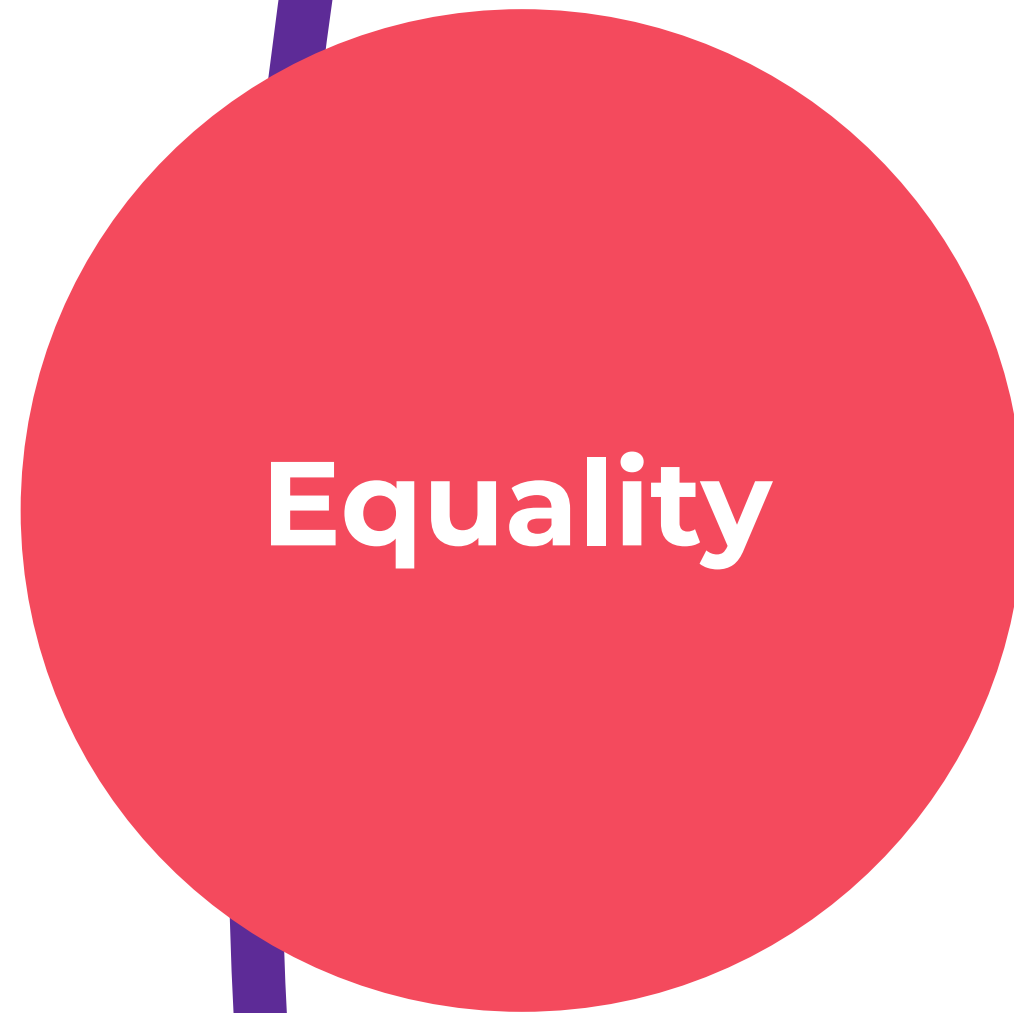
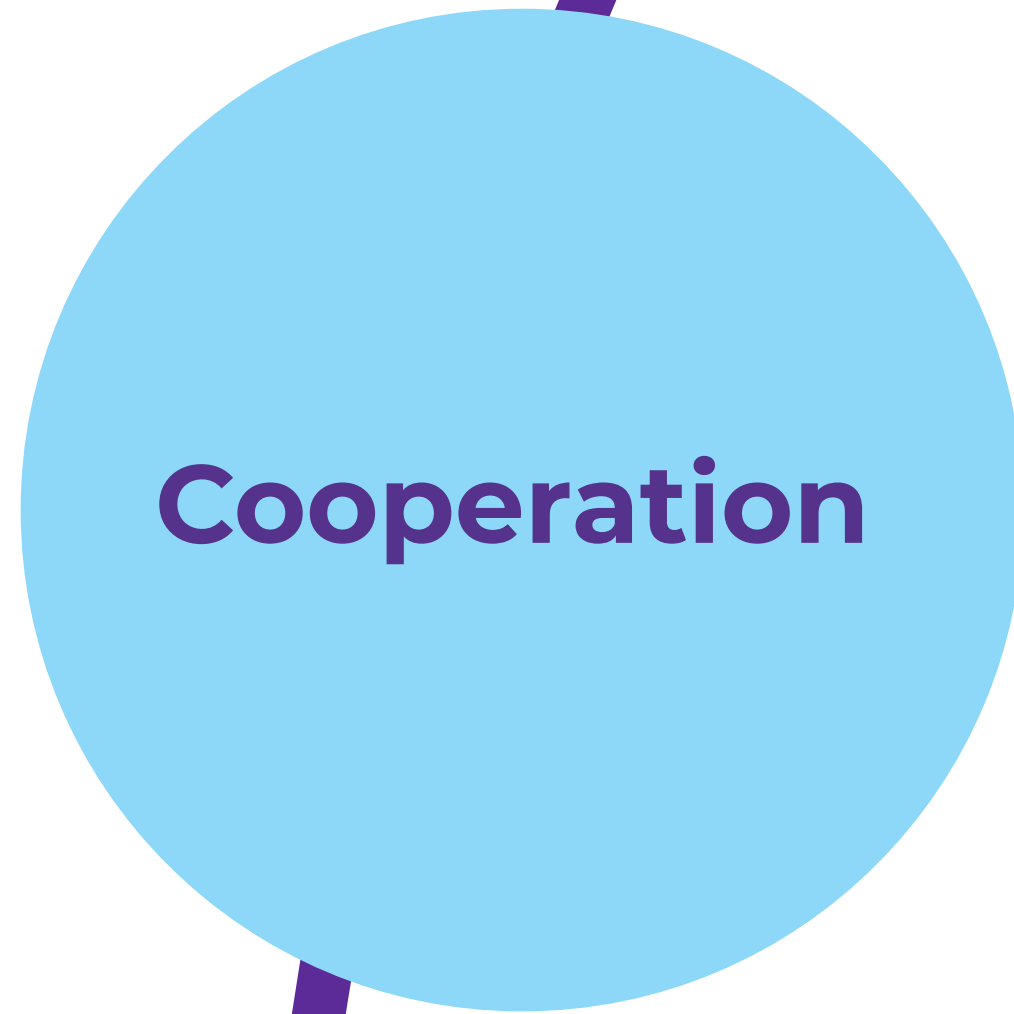
Advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland.

and

Providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services.

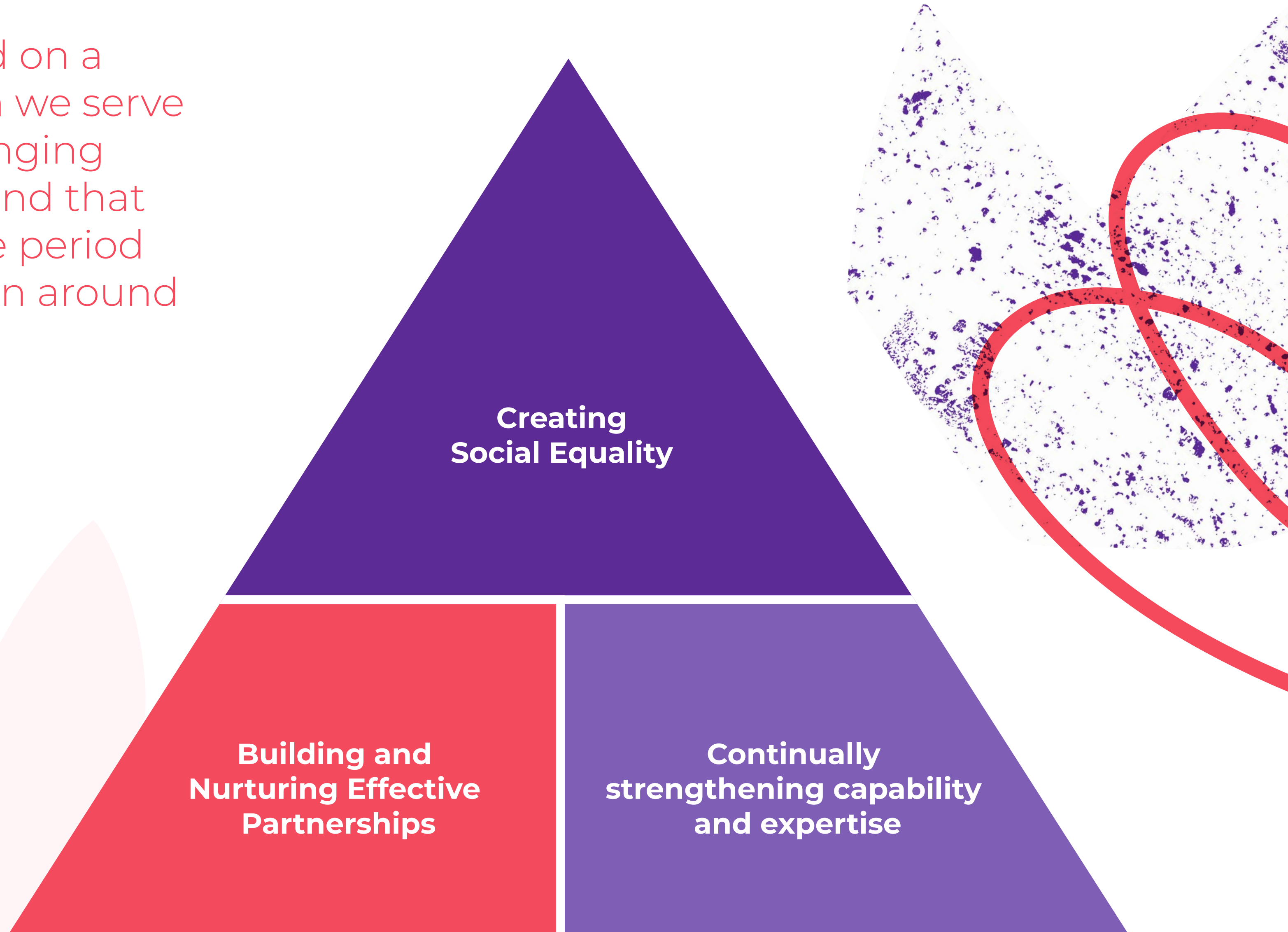


Women's Aid Values



Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities are based on a strong dedication to the women we serve and an unwavering focus on bringing about the social changes in Ireland that will deliver our vision. During the period 2021-24, we have framed our plan around 3 strategic priorities:



Strategic Priority 1

Creating Social Equality

We will drive real social change through a cohesive and coordinated approach.

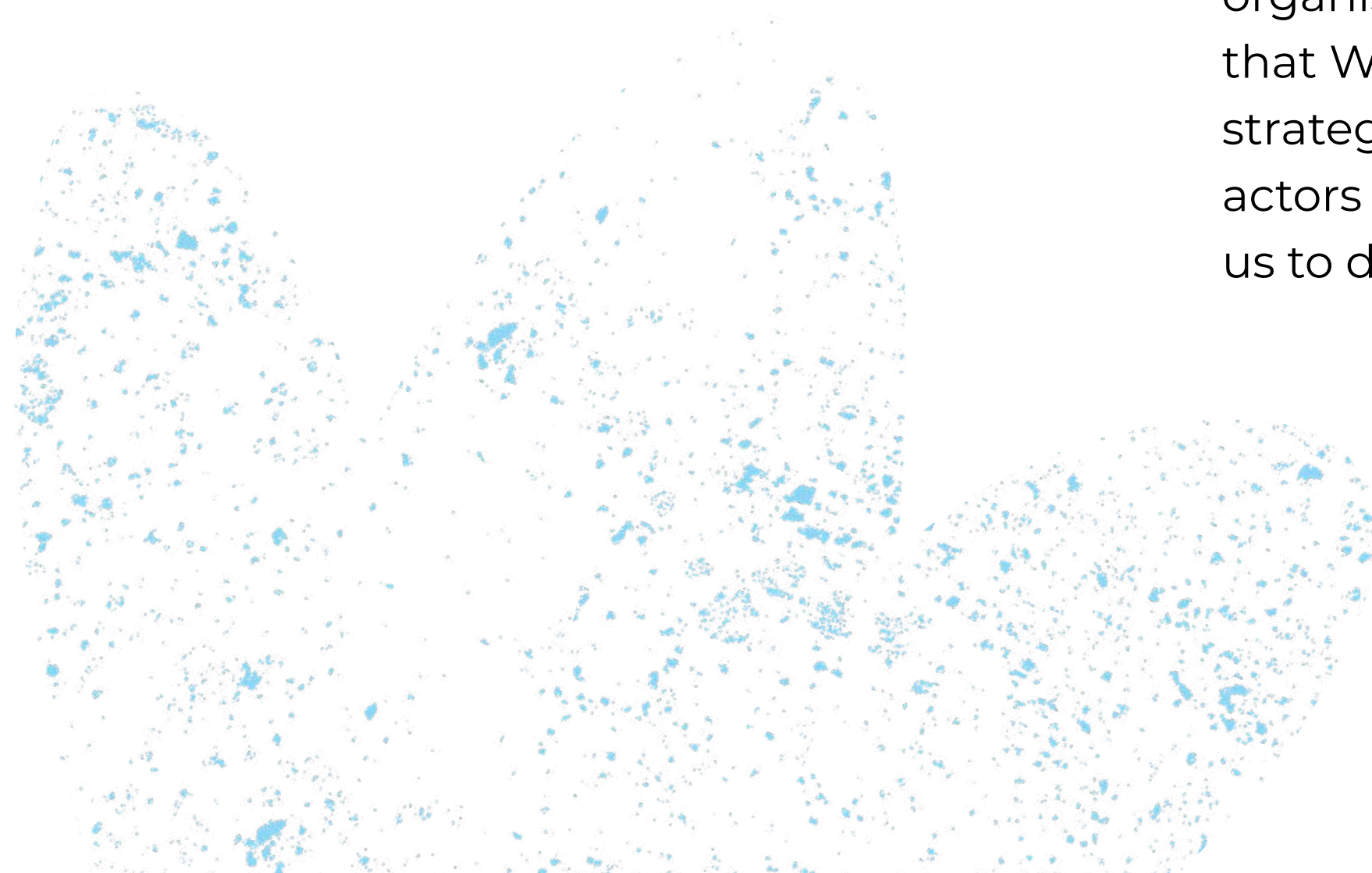
Over-arching Goal: Delivering a coordinated and coherent programme of work comprising direct services, training, education, advocacy, and awareness raising-work that is focused on prevention, support and driving real positive social change.

Strategic Priority 2

Building and Nurturing Effective Partnerships

Over-arching Goal: To continue actively developing cross-sector partnerships and strategic relationships; enabling Women's Aid to collaborate and to remain visible, active and contributing constructively to political, social and other forums responding to violence against women in all its forms.

Women's Aid values the trust of its funders and other key stakeholders. We recognise the value of mutual respect and collaborative partnerships with our funders and with peer organisations, supporters, donors and volunteers. Ensuring that Women's Aid is a trusted partner is a centrepiece of our strategy, that supports us to work effectively with other key actors in our sector. The actions set out below will support us to deepen and strengthen our key relationships.



Strategic Priority 3

Continually Strengthening Capability and Expertise

Over-arching Goal: Support the work of the organisation by ensuring that the information, resources, systems and structures required are in place.

During the next three years, Women’s Aid will focus on developing its organisational infrastructure. The activities under this priority will ensure that Women’s Aid has the information, skills and capabilities it requires to develop its service, achieve service excellence and continually evolve the range of services and activities required to deliver Women’s Aids goals.

We will do this by:

- Developing diverse, sustainable multi-annual income streams
- Ensuring that services maintain consistently high standards of excellence
- Prioritising the ongoing innovation of the service range, leveraging technologies and reflecting the diverse needs of women in Ireland who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse
- Ensuring external national data is collated and published by the State and other key external agencies, while growing our systematic approach to data gathering internally (in line with GDPR best practice) that supports the organisation to evaluate its performance, innovate services and influence policy
- Developing a suite of indicators to define and measure service excellence for each service
- Ensuring that the voice of service users is strongly represented in the data and information we collect



Strategic Outcomes

Over the course of the next three years, Women’s Aid will retain its focus on driving social change and equality through all its activities. We believe that we will achieve the best outcomes by delivering according to our model of work and by living by our values, that underpin the organisation.

The work we do to support survivors remain at the core of the organisation. In this strategic period, we expect to:

Develop and expand our frontline services

The key outcomes we will work towards include:

- Ensuring that the National 24hr Freephone Helpline remains available to women and that it provides a consistent and effective service that meets the specific needs of every woman with whom it engages
- Expand the Instant Messaging Support Service to 24/7 availability
- Delivering one-to-one casework support to women including court accompaniment services in Dublin
- Working to make our services as inclusive as possible, reaching out particularly to more vulnerable women at risk of domestic violence and abuse
- Developing expansion plans for key services, such as our Family Law Court Support Service at Dolphin House
- Innovating specialist services including a three-year pilot project with maternity hospitals and expanding our High-Risk Support Project, a rapid response initiative safeguarding women at risk
- Seeking to employ new technologies to reach and connect with survivors in innovative ways

We will also drive social change through a coordinated approach to:

- Advocating for the changes we believe can move Irish society towards zero tolerance of domestic violence and abuse
- Influencing the policy framework in which domestic violence and abuse are addressed
- Building prevention strategies through growing awareness of the causes and consequences of domestic violence and abuse
- Educating targeted audiences and wider society about the prevalence of domestic violence and abuse and about healthy intimate relationships
- Using our data and insights about the lived experience of survivors to campaign for effective responses that reduce the scale and impacts of domestic violence and abuse on women and children in Ireland

We will continue to strengthen the organisational infrastructure of Women's Aid to ensure that all aspects of our work meet high standards, are adequately resourced and maximise the opportunities to move towards our vision.

The key outcomes we will work towards in this area will include:

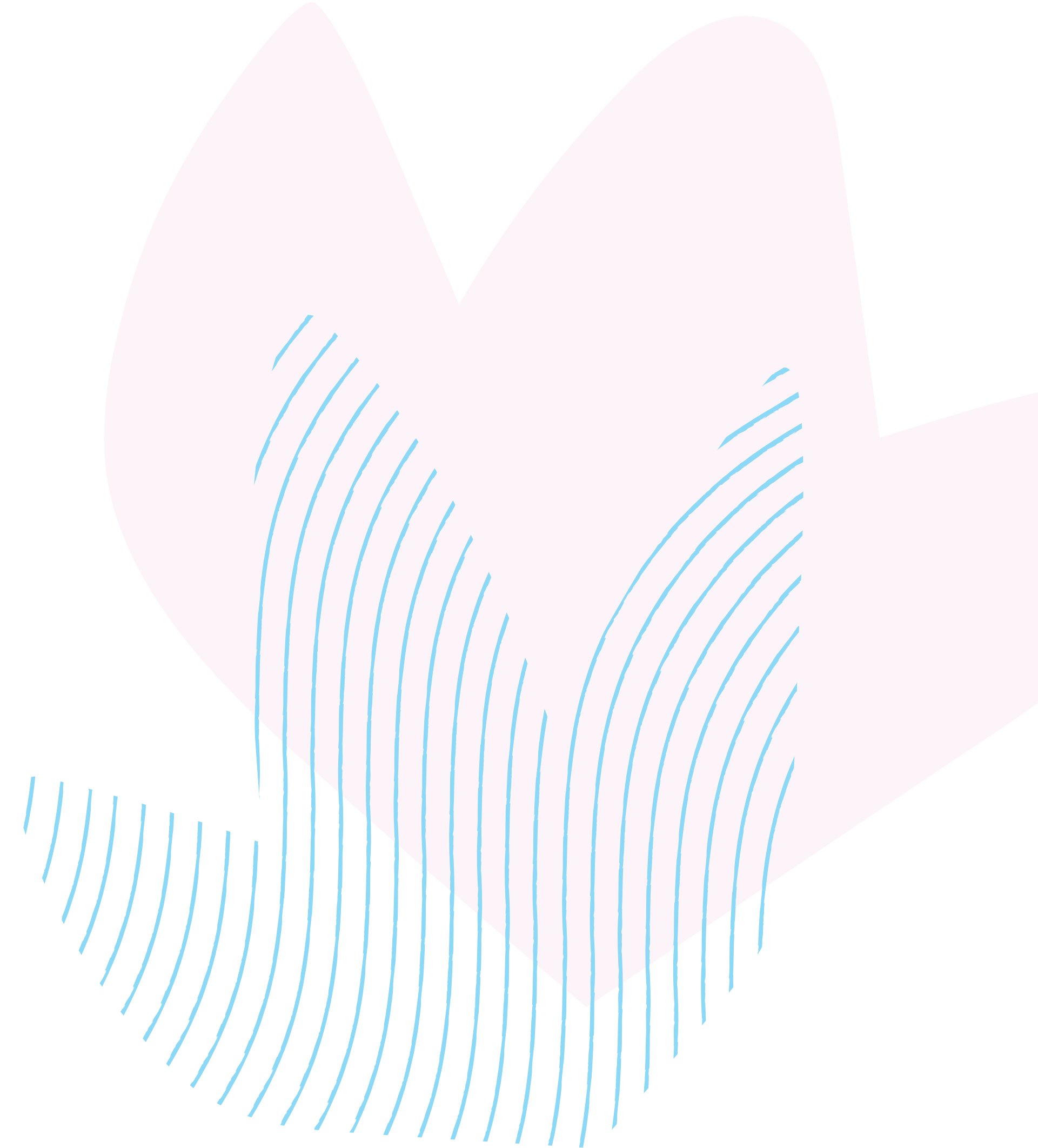
- The implementation of systems to enable consistent measuring and monitoring of the nature and impact of Women's Aid service delivery
- A strengthened focus on user feedback and independent evaluation in managing and developing our services
- A data/outcomes led approach to influencing and informing decision-making and policy
- An adequate resource plan for the organisation that is aligned to its strategy

- Advocacy, research and education programmes that reflect the true voice of survivors and that sustain a meaningful national dialogue about domestic violence and abuse in Ireland

We will work to ensure that Women’s Aid is recognised as a trusted partner to funders and agencies and other sector stakeholders.

Key outcomes we expect in this area include:

- Strengthened relationships across the community and voluntary sector
- A consistently high profile and presence for Women’s Aid in key, political, social and other forums responding to violence against women in all its forms
- A series of successful collaborative initiatives with partners, funders or peer organisation that leverage the respective skills, resources and expertise of all participant organisations
- A constructive role for Women’s Aid in maintaining and growing comprehensive service provision in the Greater Dublin Area and nationally



| Vision | Purpose | Our Values are: | Service Users and Stakeholders |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Women's Aid vision is an equal Ireland with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.</p> | <p>Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse.</p> <p>We do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Influencing, educating, and advocating for effective responses, to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland — Providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Courage — Cooperation — Inclusivity — Empowerment — Equality — Change | <p>Our Service Users Expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Consistently high standards of service excellence — Innovation in service delivery — Equal commitment to supporting all women — Survivor empowerment <p>Our Stakeholders Expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — A trusted partner — A pipeline of powerful data — Continuous service evaluation — Strong compliance and governance |

| Key themes | Strategic Enablers |
|--|--|
| <p>Creating Social Equality</p> <p>Develop and deliver a coordinated and coherent programme of work comprising direct services, training, education, advocacy, and awareness raising work that is focused on prevention, support and driving real positive social change.</p> <p>Building and Nurturing Effective Partnerships</p> <p>To continue actively developing cross-sector partnerships and strategic relationships; enabling Women’s Aid to collaborate and to remain visible, active and contributing constructively to political, social and other forums responding to violence against women in all its forms.</p> <p>Continually Strengthening Capability & Expertise</p> <p>Support the work of the organisation by ensuring that the resources, systems and structures required are in place. Build a systematic approach to data gathering resulting in an accurate data bank that informs internal decision making and that enables the organisation to evaluate its performance, innovate services and influence policy.</p> | <p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Evolving range of services — Ensuring that domestic violence and abuse remains prioritised on the national agenda — Delivering specialist frontline services to empower and support women — Incorporating survivor experience into social change activities. — Providing a range of training solutions aimed at supporting frontline professionals — Delivering a programme of targeted education and awareness raising initiatives <p>Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Developing a data strategy — Developing diverse, sustainable multi-annual income streams — Establishing a strategic advisory panel — Valuing and developing staff and volunteers — Supporting and monitoring employee and volunteer impact — Supporting the strategy with organisational capability — Building and supporting volunteer engagement — Ensuring fit between culture and strategy |

Conclusion

The Strategic Plan 2022-24 provides a robust framework for Women's Aid to continue working towards its vision. The contents of the plan reflect the concerns and interests of stakeholders. The plan also builds on the heritage and reputation of Women's Aid. It sets out the vision and purpose of Women's Aid and describes the values that guide organisation as it delivers this strategic plan.

The strategy focuses on ensuring that Women's Aid is positioned to leverage opportunities to advance its vision during the next three years. We will do this by strengthening our capabilities and the expertise that is at the core of our work. The programme of activities set out in our plan will support us to continue developing services to meet the increasingly diverse and often complex needs of women in Ireland who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse. This remains our greatest challenge.

In the coming years, Women's Aid will focus on data that allows us to demonstrate the impacts and consequences of domestic violence and abuse in Irish society. Gathering data about the experiences of survivors and the outcome of our services is a key component of our strategy. By focusing on

this area for the next two years, we can be more responsive to feedback about the performance of our services. We can also ensure the Women's Aid remains a strong, credible advocate, capable of influencing policy and fostering national attention on the issue of domestic violence and abuse in Ireland. We will bring the voice of women's lived experiences to the fore through our advocacy, research and education programmes and will seek to deliver real change in the way that the State and society respond to the issues of domestic violence and abuse.

The work of Women's Aid is supported in many ways. Building on that support as we work towards our vision is a very significant part of our strategic plan. Our goal is to be recognised as a trusted partner to our funders, the statutory agencies and peer sector organisations with whom we enjoy strong collaborative relationships. As these relationships flourish, we can work together to achieve so much more. Women's Aid has benefitted from the support of individual donors and corporate partners. Their continuing support has enabled us to address specific projects and initiatives. In doing so, they have significantly increased the impact of our work. In the coming years, we aim to work closely with



our supporters and donors, offering opportunities to work with us in meaningful and appropriate ways as we seek to deliver our goals.

The Board recognises the importance of supporting staff and volunteers to flourish personally and professionally, in return for their commitment to the organisation. The strategic plan sets clear objectives for the ongoing development of organisational systems and structures. The plan also prioritises career development for our staff team, many of whom have given dedicated service for long periods. Their satisfaction and engagement at work is an important priority, of which we are always mindful.

During this strategic period, we will work steadily with our partners, survivors, funders and peers across the sector; collaborating where our interests are aligned and working to bring about the fundamental social change that is expressed in our vision.



5 Wilton Place, Dublin 2, D02 RR27
Tel: 01-6788858
Email: info@womensaid.ie
womensaid.ie

24hr National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900
Registered charity number 6491
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