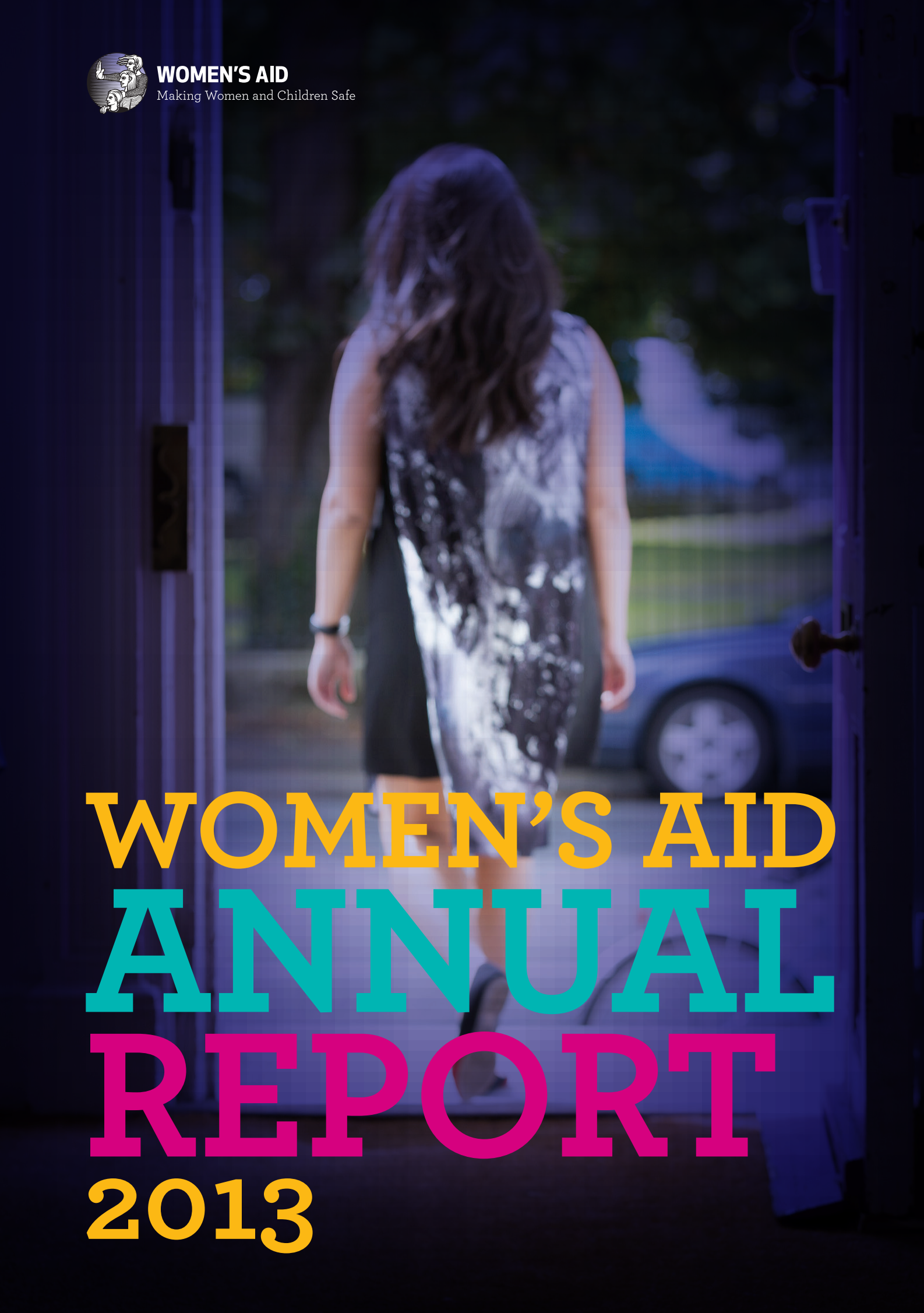
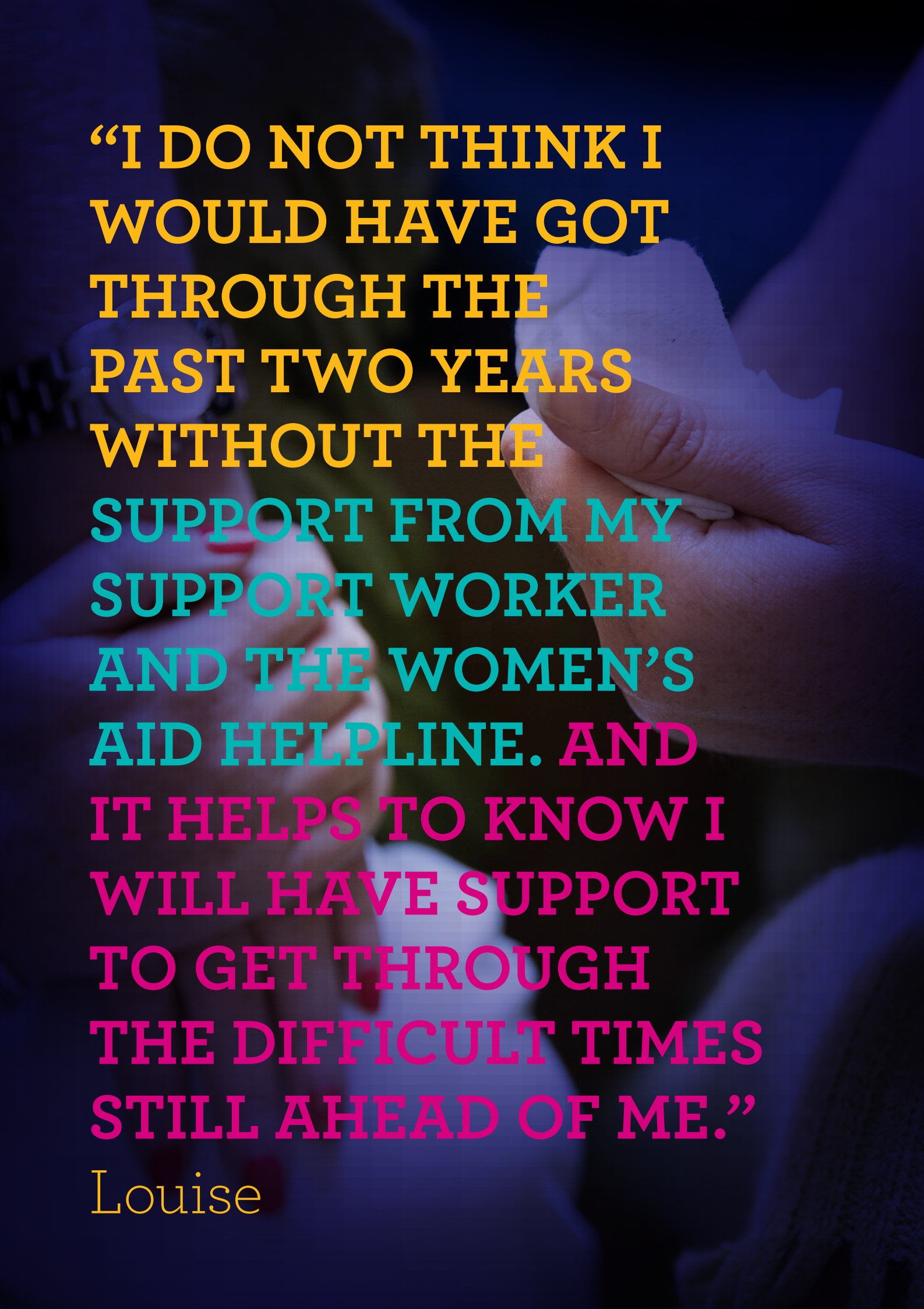

WOMEN'S AID
Making Women and Children Safe
WOMEN'S AID
ANNUAL
REPORT
2013

WOMEN'S AID
ANNUAL REPORT
2013



“I DO NOT THINK I WOULD HAVE GOT THROUGH THE PAST TWO YEARS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT FROM MY SUPPORT WORKER AND THE WOMEN’S AID HELPLINE. AND IT HELPS TO KNOW I WILL HAVE SUPPORT TO GET THROUGH THE DIFFICULT TIMES STILL AHEAD OF ME.”

Louise

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DIRECTOR'S REVIEW: 40 YEARS OF WOMEN'S AID



1974: "The wife had to leave the house with two of her children. She collected the other three children from school. The children were terrified to go home so she walked around until evening."[1]

2013: Regularly callers to our helpline tell us they have to sleep in their cars with their children as they are too terrified to go home and have nowhere safe they can go.

In 1974 a group of women led by Nuala Fennell set up Women's Aid and changed what was happening in Ireland for battered women and their children. Domestic violence was not spoken about in public before then, but letters to the papers began to appear from women who desperately needed help and protection. Many of them had to flee to England for safety as there were no refuges in Ireland. Neither was there any legislation to protect them and to allow them to remain safely in their own homes. We had no helplines, no support services and no court accompaniment.

On 1st March 1974 Nuala wrote that "The immediate need is for shelter and a refuge for such women and children." [2] How far have we come as a society since then?

At the time the focus was almost exclusively on physical violence. Now we know a lot more about the trauma and destruction caused by domestic violence, especially about psychological and sexual abuse, about the use of controlling behaviour and about the impact domestic violence can have on women and children. We have learned that "coercive control makes shadows of the most intelligent independent women".[3]

Women's Aid has been working to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974 and in those 40 years significant progress have been made. It is important to mark and reflect on those achievements. They have changed the lives of countless women and children, helping them to begin their journeys to safety and freedom. These achievements were real gains, providing support and help and they included:

1976: First domestic violence legislation was introduced for barring orders lasting three months.

1986: First custom-built refuge opened in Rathmines, Dublin.

1992: Setting up of Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline.

1995: First research into prevalence of domestic violence showing that almost one in five women in an intimate relationship experience violence.

Flowers, Chocolates and Multiple Bruising Zero Tolerance Public Awareness Campaign.

Women's Aid begins training Garda recruits on responding to domestic violence.

1 *Irish Times. Friday 1st March 1974. Letters to the Editor. P. 13.*
2 *Ibid.*
3 *Felicity Kennedy, Psychologist. Previously Manager of Bray Refuge, Manager of Women's Aid Support Services and Director of Women's Therapy Centre.*



Helen Norton, Margaret Martin and the staff of Women's Aid at the launch of the One in Five Women Balloon Action

2005: Code of Practice on Domestic Violence training delivered to community development projects and family resource centres all over Ireland.

Dolls House Ireland's first TV domestic violence public awareness campaign.

2011: *2in2u* public awareness campaign on violence in dating relationships.

Language line providing interpretation for 170 languages on Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline launched.

Successful pilot of Dolphin House Support and Referral Service.[4]

In those four decades, Ireland has seen significant social change in the areas of legislation, policing policy, medical and health care responses and resourcing to specialist domestic violence services. We have moved from being a country with no specialist support services to one with over 40 domestic violence services including 21 that provide refuge accommodation. This brings us up to about one third of the bed spaces recommended by the Council of Europe.

Since 1976, domestic violence legislation has been providing protection to countless women and children, allowing them to move from crisis and danger to independence and safety. Through the persistence of domestic violence activists, this legislation has been extended over time with the most recent being in August 2011 when it came to include couples with a child in common. Although dating couples remain still outside its protection, we hope this will

4 *http://www.womensaid.ie/about/history.html*

be addressed shortly and are encouraged by the Government commitment to the consolidation of domestic violence legislation.

We know the extent of domestic violence in Ireland in 2012 from the recently published European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) research which reported that:

- 14% of women have experienced physical violence by a partner (current or ex).
- 6% of women have experienced sexual violence by a partner (current or ex).
- 31% of women have experienced psychological violence by a partner (current or ex).[5]

The same survey found that in Europe 73% of women, who have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or a previous partner, indicated that their children were aware of the violence.[6] We know there is a clear link between child abuse and domestic violence and that the more severe the domestic violence the more severe the abuse of children in the same context will be.

Considerable work remains to be done to address post-separation issues such as custody and access. Most worryingly the FRA study shows that Ireland has the highest rate of all countries in Europe for not meeting women's needs when they sought assistance after the most serious incident of violence by a partner.

Most of the work to date has focused on crisis intervention and on helping women and a full suite of services are now established. We know what a safety pathway looks like and how effective it can be when it works. We also know that it requires several key stakeholders working together to maximise a woman's safety and these include:

- Specialist domestic violence worker who focuses on immediate safety, explores the risks, consequences and the possibility of escalated violence if and when she acts and accompanies her to court to secure legal protection if possible.
- Refuge accommodation where it is unsafe to remain at home until legal protection is secured.
- Roll out of a comprehensive training programme for all key stakeholders to address the lack of understanding of the dynamics and impact of domestic violence, to include an understanding of coercive control and post-separation violence and to address the issues of victim blaming, misinformation and minimisation.
- Good practice responses from social workers who support and advocate for her in protecting any children.
- Specialist judges who understand post-separation abuse and address custody and access issues with the same focus on safety as on the issuing of a protective order.
- Good quality responses by the Gardaí to breaches of orders and any further abuse.
- Significant effective sanction where abusive partners breach orders and commit further violence.
- Addressing the crisis in housing and recognising the needs of women and children made homeless by domestic violence.

5 *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights gender-based violence against women dataset 2012 available at http://fra.europa.ue/DVS/DVT/vaw.php*

6 *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). 2014. Violence against women. EU-wide survey. P. 134.*

Now that a safety pathway has been identified to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence a focus on implementation urgently needs to be prioritised. This will require a firm political will to ensure adequate resources so that safety and support pathways are available to all who need them.

In 2007 Cosc, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, was established. In 2010 the first National Strategy was launched and 2015 will see the launch of the second National Strategy. In 2013 Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, took over responsibility for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

The 40th anniversary of Women's Aid, Ireland's first domestic violence agency, provides a useful reflective space to consider what we have learned so far and how to maximise the long-term safety and well-being of all domestic violence victims. While we need to consider short-term risk reduction measures and good practice responses, we also need to consider the ongoing support required to restore confidence, freedom of movement and peace of mind to those affected by domestic violence post crisis-intervention.

We are all aware that hard thinking and difficult choices are required in this time of scarce resources. If it has taken 40 years to achieve one third of the required refuge spaces in Ireland, will it take another 80 years to achieve the other two thirds? Or would a re-focusing on the abuser be more effective?

Would a move away from the almost exclusive focus on the victim reduce our victim-blaming culture which at times manifests itself as "a battle with the system" for women as they try to escape domestic violence? Would it allow us, as a society, to partner more effectively with the woman as the non-abusive parent to protect her children and ensure their long-term well-being? Would it free up our thinking to consider how we might hold an abusive male partner[7] accountable for his actions through a range of sanctions that would act as an effective deterrent?

What would it take to build recognition that abusive male partners "are more skilful and more determined than most paedophiles"[8] ? Would a focus on building awareness of the grooming tactics[9] used by abusive partners among all stakeholders in the statutory services lead to greater safety and protection for the thousands of women in Ireland affected by partner violence identified in the aforementioned FRA study?

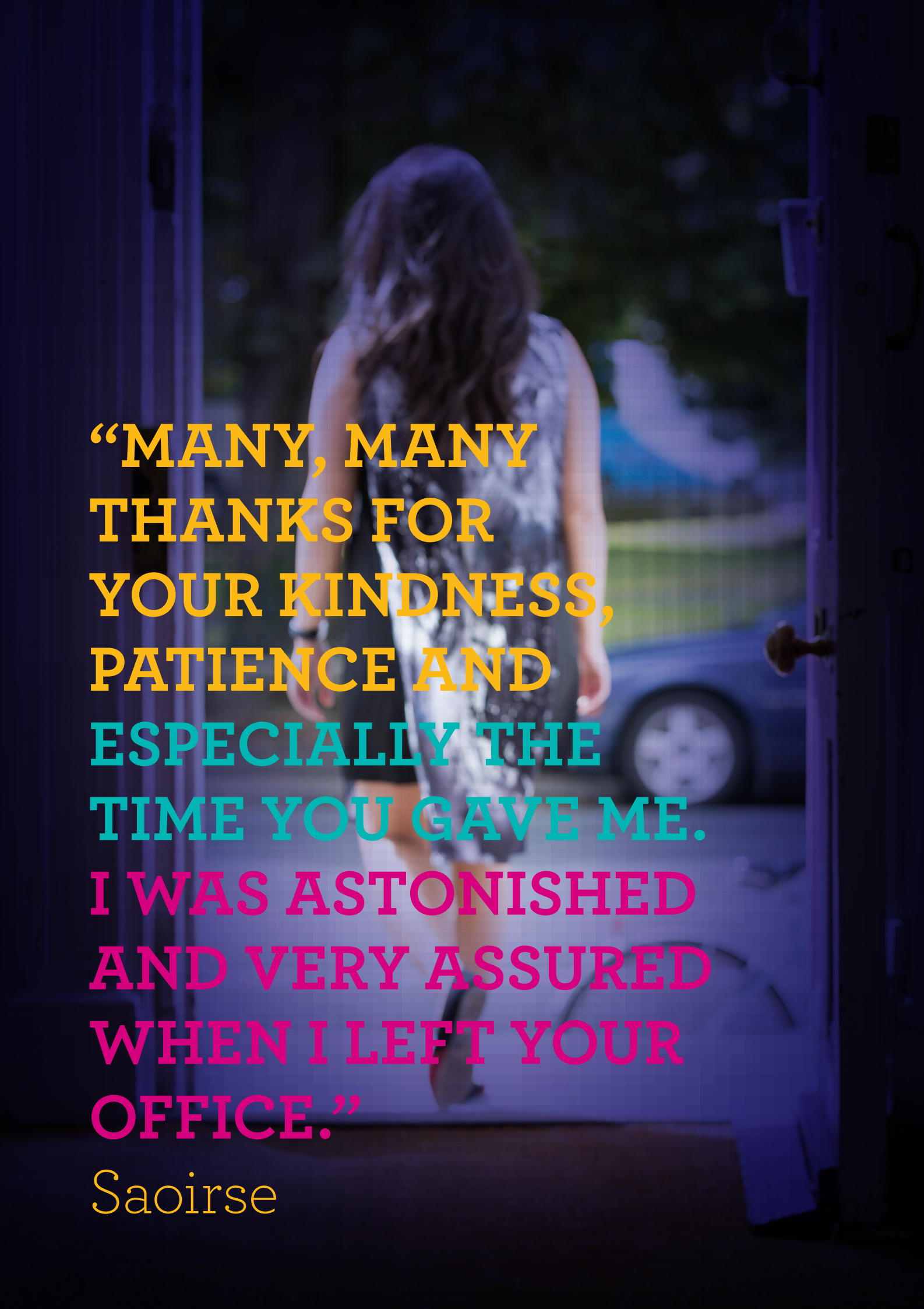
It seems to me that it is certainly worth thinking about and talking about.

Margaret Martin
Director of Women's Aid
July 2014

7 *In the five years ending in March 2010, more than 312,100 defendants were prosecuted for domestic violence in the UK. 93% of defendants were men and 85% of victims were women. [Violence against Women Crime Report 2009-2010, UK Crown Prosecution Service].*

8 *Don Hennessey. Former director of the National Domestic Violence Intervention Agency and author of How He Gets Into Her Head – the Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser. Atrium. 2012. Cork.*

9 *HSE Practice Guide on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence. HSE. 2012.*



"MANY, MANY THANKS FOR YOUR KINDNESS, PATIENCE AND ESPECIALLY THE TIME YOU GAVE ME. I WAS ASTONISHED AND VERY ASSURED WHEN I LEFT YOUR OFFICE."

Saoirse

ABOUT WOMEN'S AID

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

OUR DIRECT SERVICES FOR WOMEN

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

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

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

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

WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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

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

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

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

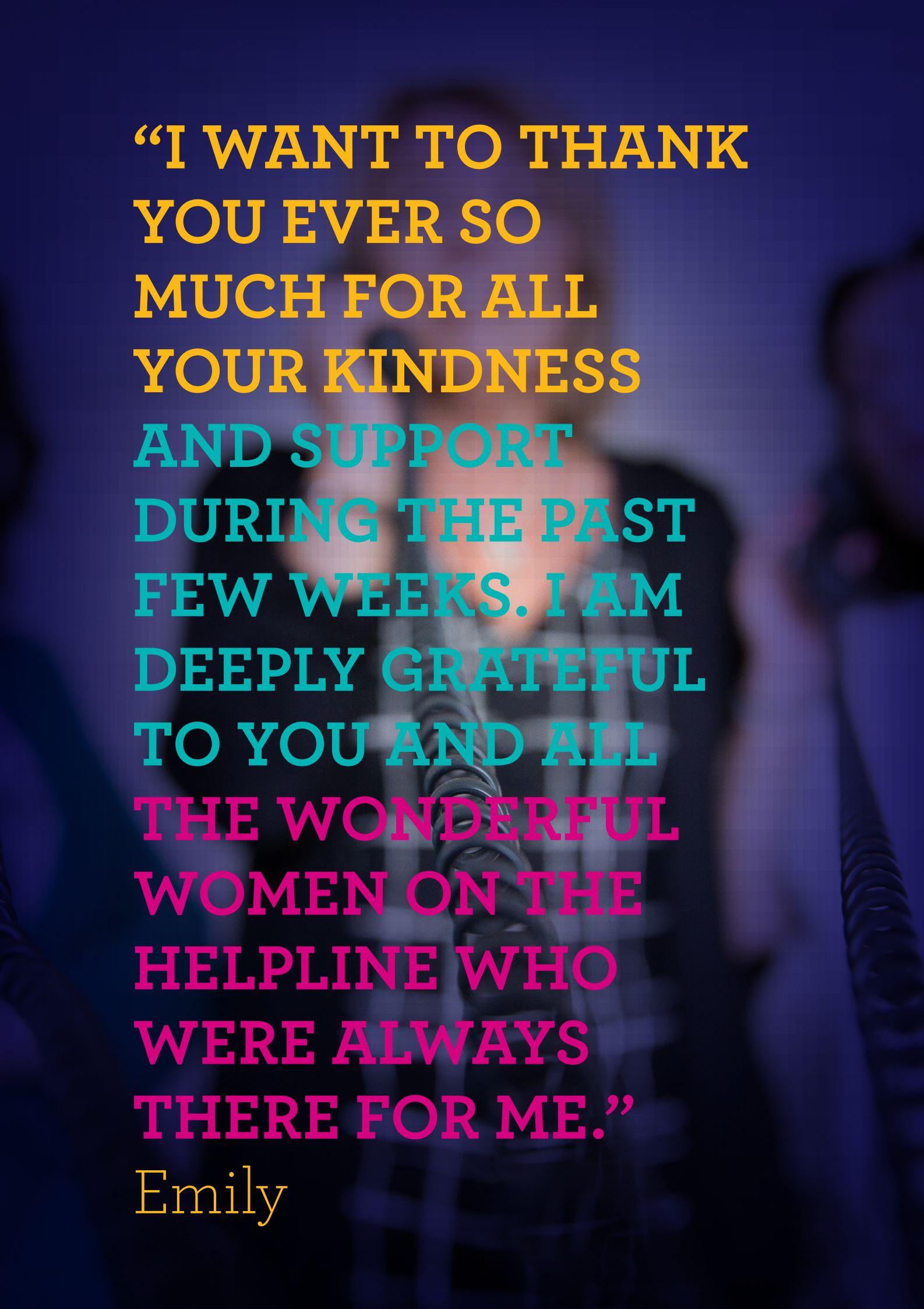
All of our work is made possible by a combination of statutory funding, philanthropic, regular and once-off donations, our charity shops and fundraising activities.

WOMEN'S AID DIRECT SERVICES IN 2013[10]

19,694 disclosures of abuse to our Direct Services[11]
17,254 calls answered by the National Freephone Helpline
528 One to One Support Visits
176 Court Accompaniments
346 One to One support sessions at the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service

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

11 *Women's Aid direct services are the National Freephone Helpline, One to One Support, Advocacy and Court Accompaniment Service and the Dolphin House Support and Referral Service. The Dolphin House Support and Referral Service is run in partnership between Women's Aid, Inchicore Outreach Centre and the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service.*



“I WANT TO THANK YOU EVER SO MUCH FOR ALL YOUR KINDNESS AND SUPPORT DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS. I AM DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO YOU AND ALL THE WONDERFUL WOMEN ON THE HELPLINE WHO WERE ALWAYS THERE FOR ME.”

Emily

PART 1:
THE WOMEN'S AID NATIONAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE

THE HELPLINE TEAM

In 2013, the Helpline was staffed by a full time Helpline Manager, a part-time volunteer support worker, four part-time Helpline workers, four panel staff and a team of 28 volunteers.

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

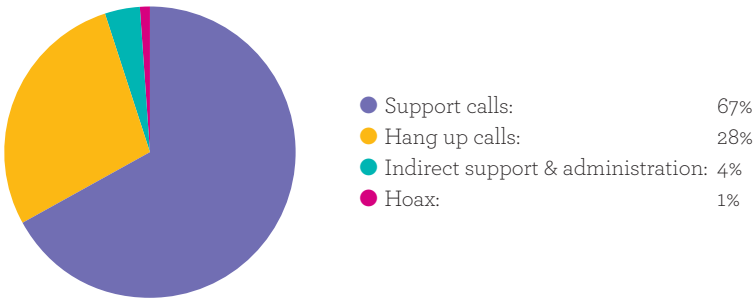
The National Freephone Helpline is open every day of the year (except Christmas day) from 10am to 10pm. The Helpline provides vital support and information to individual callers and serves as an access point to other Women's Aid Services and to support services and refuges nationwide. The National Helpline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

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

1.1. CALLS ANSWERED

In 2013, the **Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline answered 17, 254 calls** from women, family, friends, and professionals seeking support for experiences of domestic violence. During these calls, **17, 855 disclosures of abuse were made.**

Chart 1: Calls answered by the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline in 2013



67% of calls were support calls primarily from women experiencing emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse at the hands of an intimate male partner. Other support calls were from family and friends concerned about a loved one or from professionals working with women affected by domestic violence.

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

1,696 of these calls were silent support calls (10%). Often women are at first unable to speak about their experiences. Silent calls are valuable support spaces. Sometimes a silent call will progress to where a woman will speak about her experiences. In these calls, Women's Aid Helpline workers offer gentle and encouraging support.

Being unable to speak about the abuse accounts for many of the hang-up calls received. In 2013, we answered **4,834 hang up calls (28%)** where the caller immediately ended the call. Many women disclose that they have hung up a number of times before beginning to talk about the abuse. Speaking about the abuse can be a daunting prospect and it can frequently take a number of attempts to begin this process of engagement with support.

Indirect support and administration calls (4%) refers to the many calls that the Helpline receives from voluntary and statutory bodies looking for information or support on issues arising in their work in relation to domestic violence. The individuals using our service include members of An Garda Síochána, Social Workers, Local Support Services, Family Resource Centres, Local Community Development Companies, GPs and hospital staff. Other administration calls include women accessing our One to One Support Services via the National Freephone Helpline, enquiries about volunteering and requests for information about Women's Aid.

50% of callers were **first time callers** while **50% were repeat users** of the service. Calls to the Helpline vary in duration lasting from **60 seconds to 60 minutes or more** in length.

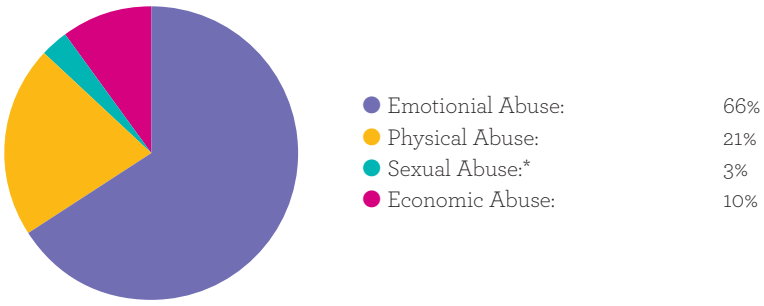
In addition to supporting women through our National Freephone Helpline, Women's Aid received an increasing number of emails from women. Some women find that this is their only safe way of communicating or contacting our service. **164 emails** from women experiencing abuse and concerned family and friends were responded to in 2013.

From time to time a Helpline call will come through to the Women's Aid reception phone number. The Helpline responded to 113 of these calls in 2013.

1.2 DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

In 2013, the Helpline listened to **17,855 disclosures of abuse.**

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



**This figure includes 201 reports of rape.*

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

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

Emotional abuse was disclosed on 11,756 occasions in 2013. This includes:

- Being controlled, manipulated and isolated from family and friends.
- Being threatened to burn the house down with occupants inside.
- Being constantly threatened that he is going to kill himself, kill her, the children and/or extended family.
- Being blamed for the abuse and being told that it's her fault.
- Being constantly told that she is a bad mother and that she is going mad.
- Being stalked, having to change contact details, family and friends being targeted and threatened.
- Being harassed by phone and texting after the relationship has ended.
- Perpetrator hiding the car keys, locking her in the house and preventing her from leaving.
- Being called names on a daily basis and threatened with physical and sexual assault.

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

A physical assault is a serious crime. In 2013, the Women's Aid Helpline heard of **3,711 incidents of physical assaults** against women by current or former boyfriends, husbands and partners. The many ways that an abuser finds to physically abuse their partner remains shocking to those of us who support women, and most shocking at times is that bare hands remain the most common, and potentially lethal, weapons.

Physical abuse disclosed in 2013 includes:

- Being left unconscious, hospitalised, seriously injured following physical attacks.
- Being drugged, assaulted and hospitalised.
- Being kicked down the stairs, choked and beaten requiring medical treatment.
- Being threatened with assault, having acid thrown at her face, having her face smashed in.
- Being beaten, bitten and spat at.
- Being punched, thrown, slapped and kicked to the point of bleeding and threatened with a knife or gun.
- Being thrown against a wall and screamed at in the face.
- Being locked in the house and/or car for hours.

Sexual abuse has always been a part of domestic violence and includes a range of different behaviours. There were **575 disclosures of sexual abuse** in 2013. **This figure includes 201 rapes.**

In 2013 sexual abuse disclosures include:

- Being sexually assaulted with objects which resulted in hospitalisation.
- Being drugged and raped while unconscious.
- Being raped and told that she wanted it.
- Being beaten up for refusing to have sex.
- Being raped and physically abused leading to miscarriage.
- Being forced to carry out humiliating sexual acts.

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

Financial abuse continues to be an issue for many women with 1,813 disclosures in 2013. This includes:

- Being denied access to vital medical care and intervention.
- Being left cashless after money stolen from wallet.
- Being left with no financial independence. Social Welfare and Child Benefit is controlled and monitored.
- Being made to stay at home to look after the children with no financial support.
- Being left without financial security. Money being gambled from joint accounts.

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

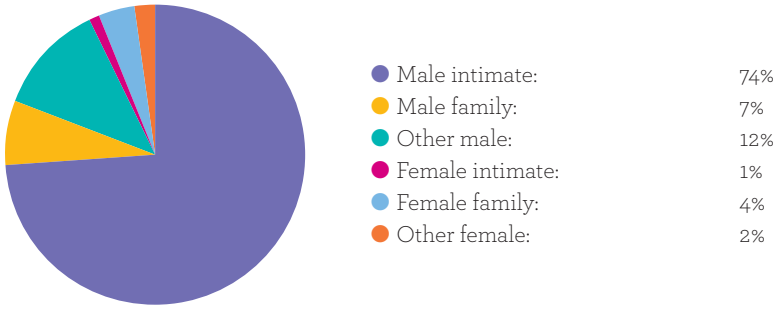
1.3 IMPACTS OF THE ABUSE

The impacts reported by women experiencing domestic violence are understandably significant, long term and wide-ranging. The impacts of abuse as disclosed to the Helpline in 2013 include:

- Feeling terrified. Afraid of seeking support from family members for fear of putting them at risk/ danger.
- Feeling traumatised, distressed and overwhelmed following assaults and hospitalisation.
- Feeling absolute terror, stress, fear and panic.
- Feeling isolated, depressed, put down and having low self-esteem. Feeling insecure and alone.
- Feeling self doubt, doubting mental health, experiences of physical illness and vulnerability
- Feeling distressed, alone and misunderstood.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH ABUSER

Chart 3: Relationship with abuser



The male intimate category (74 %) includes current or former husbands and partners and can be broken down as follows:

- Husband: 41%
- Ex-husband: 7%
- Partner: 16%
- Ex-partner: 10%

57% of abuse disclosed was perpetrated by a current husband or partner with marriage remaining the most common context for abuse. Abuse by a **former husband or partner** was disclosed by **17% of callers.**

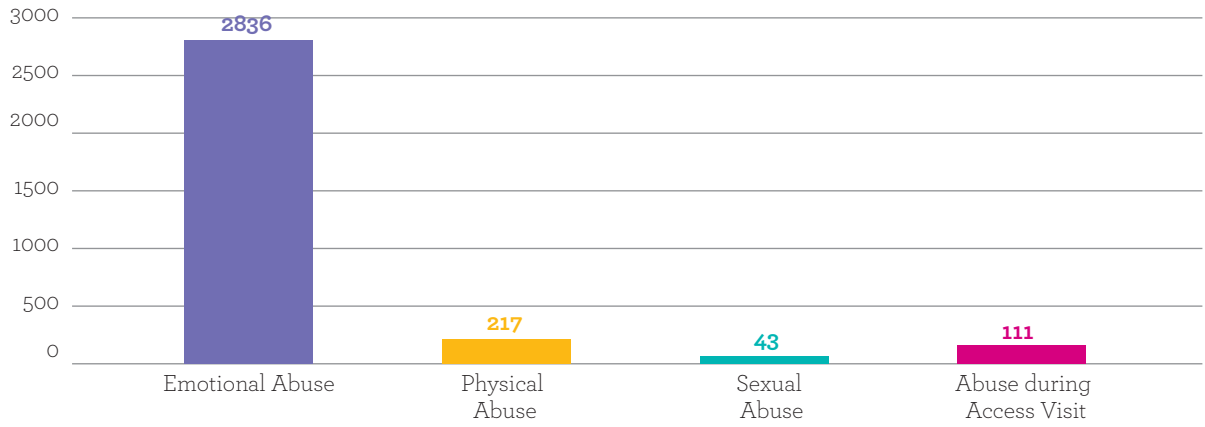
19% of callers disclosed abuse from a non-intimate male family member or another person.

1.5 ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Domestic violence continues to be a very common context in which children experience abuse, with the abuser of the mother being the abuser of the children. Chart 4 outlines disclosures of child abuse to the Helpline. In 2013, there were **3,207 disclosures of direct child abuse** to the Women's Aid Helpline.

This figure includes **2,836 disclosures of direct emotional abuse and 260 disclosures** where **children were physically or sexually abused** by the perpetrator of their mother's abuse. It also includes **111 disclosures** of **where children were being abused during access visits.**

Chart 4: Disclosures of direct child abuse



The abusive tactics used against children living in domestic violence situations disclosed to the National Freephone Helpline in 2013 include:

- Children experiencing physical abuse resulting in self harming.
- Abuser behaving inappropriately displaying sexualised behaviour towards children.
- Abuser threatens to kill the child/children.
- Children witnessing extreme verbal abuse towards their mother.
- Abuser inappropriately medicating to prevent the child waking up during the night.
- Children being exposed to abuse of their mother. Being shouted at, threatened and physically assaulted and at times seeing their mother being raped.

In addition in 1,204 calls it was disclosed that there were children in the relationship. Where they do not directly see the abuse occurring they may overhear the abusive incidents, or will see the aftermath of it such as bruises, broken bones, damaged furniture and belongings. At times, the perpetrator will deliberately target children as a way to hurt both them and their mother. Women's Aid agrees with the *Children First: National Guidelines on the Protection of Children in Ireland* which identifies the **exposure to domestic violence as a form of emotional abuse.**

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

1.5i Abuse during access arrangements

Many women will seek to end their abusive relationship when they become aware of risk to their children. However, for some women ending the relationship does not mean an end to their own abuse or that of their children. Women describe finding it more difficult to protect their children after a relationship ends due to ongoing abuse during unsupervised access visits. In **111 calls** it was disclosed that **children were being abused during access arrangements**. In a further **385 calls mothers disclosed** that **they themselves had been directly abused during access visits.**

Access visits can be used as an ongoing means to control the women's and children's lives and to continue to hold them in a state of fear and anxiety. Abuse in relation to access arrangements in 2013 includes:

- Children being forced to go on access visits with their father despite being terrified of him.
- Constant threats by abuser of being brought back to court for access.
- Being verbally abused and threatened while handing over the children for access.
- Being unable to go to work because children are not collected for access.
- Being threatened that she won't see the children again.
- Children having unsupervised access with sexual predators.

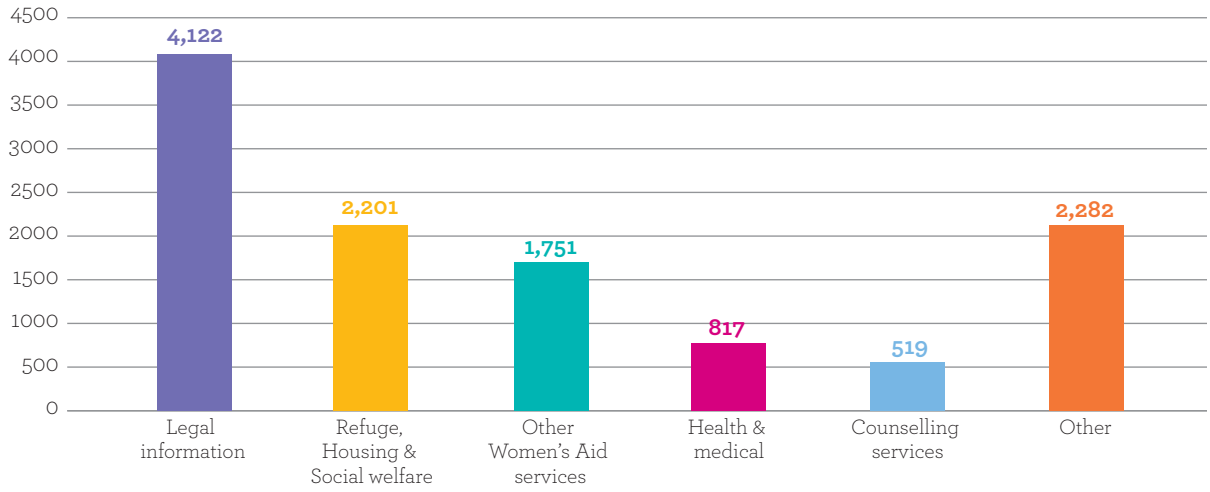
Where a woman has no concerns about the safety of her children she will very often do her utmost to facilitate time with their father. The majority of women using our services tell us of wanting to find ways to support ongoing relationships between children and their fathers. However, where there has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

1.6 SERVICES PROVIDED

The Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline is a listening and support service and it is also a valuable source of practical information and onward referral to appropriate services. As Chart 5 illustrates, services provided in 2013 include:

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

Chart 5: Services provided



As part of the information and support provided to women seeking emergency accommodation, the **Women's Aid Helpline made calls on behalf of women to local refuges throughout the country on 612 occasions in 2013**. The number of calls made on behalf of women to refuges has **almost doubled** on last year's figure of 325 – a striking increase.

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

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

In 2013, Women's Aid Helpline workers **returned calls on 60 occasions** to women who left a voice message with the **out-of-hours service.**

1.7 GENDER, LOCATION AND MINORITY CALLERS

In 2013, **98% of callers were female and 2% were male. 35% of callers** came from the Dublin area while **26% of callers** were outside Dublin. **39% of callers did not disclose a location.** In addition to these figures, there were **45 calls from outside the Republic of Ireland.**

532 callers to the Helpline were noted as **minority callers who often face additional barriers.** Of that total figure, **83% were migrant women, 13% were women with disabilities and 4% were Traveller women.**

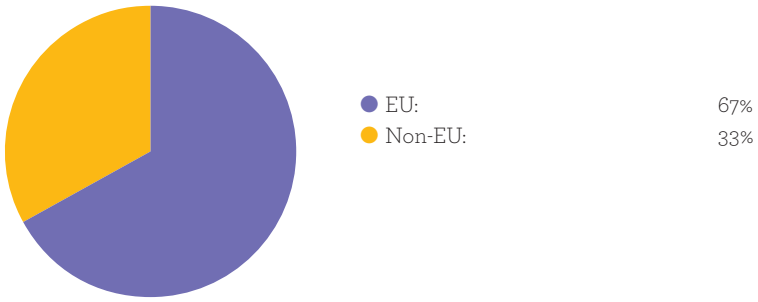
1.8 TELEPHONE INTERPRETATION SERVICE 2013

Women's Aid aims to be available to all women who need us and in 2013 we continued our Telephone Interpretation Service which allows us to support women in over 170 languages. In 2013, **88 calls were facilitated in 19 languages** with women for whom English was not a fluent language using a number of different interpreters through this service. Some of these calls were initiated by professionals (Gardaí, Refuge service and GPs) in their quest to support the woman presenting to them.

The Women's Aid Telephone Interpretation Service is providing an essential service to women, whose first language is not English and who are experiencing domestic violence. Victims of domestic violence very often experience isolation from family, friends and the community and having limited access/support from services in the local community, because of the language barrier, this can further isolate women.

Using the Interpreter service via the Helpline is a very simple process and usually takes a couple of minutes before we engage an interpreter, for the requested language, to facilitate a conversation between the caller and the Helpline support worker. We aim to continue, with the support of our funders and our committed staff and volunteer team, to increase the accessibility of our service.

Chart 6: Telephone Interpretation Service calls per language



67% of callers who used the Telephone Interpretation Service spoke a range of EU languages including Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Slovak. Polish speakers were the biggest group but are also the largest minority in the country at 2.7% of the population. The non-EU languages included Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Dari, Farsi, Georgian, Kurdish, Mandarin, Russian, Somali, Thai and Yoruba. The Women's Aid **Telephone Interpretation Service** can be accessed via the **National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900** and is available from **10am - 10pm, seven days a week.** It is a **confidential service** and is **free of charge to the caller.**

PART 2:
THE WOMEN'S AID ONE TO ONE SUPPORT, ADVOCACY AND COURT ACCOMPANIMENT SERVICES

Note: There is no relationship between the information collected by the Helpline and by the One to One Support Services and they are compiled separately. All of Women's Aid services are confidential. In the one-to-one services we are able to record when women continue to use the services and may therefore get more detailed information about their situations. We gather this information for the purpose of highlighting what the women we are meeting and their children are experiencing, and to support our work to improve responses overall for women and children experiencing domestic violence. Information is not sought and is noted in an anonymous way only when the woman tells us. This means that some of the numbers do not add up to the total number of women we supported in 2013.

THE SUPPORT SERVICES TEAM

The Support Services staff includes one part-time manager, two full-time and two part-time support workers and one part-time administrator.

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

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

- Ballymun
- Coolock
- Dublin City Centre North
- Dublin City Centre South
- Dun Laoghaire
- Swords

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

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

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

2.1 OUR WORK WITH WOMEN

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

We know that perpetrators of domestic violence use many abusive and controlling tactics designed to assert power and control over women. This is intentional and as a result, women feel trapped and undermined and their confidence is eroded. Many women have been told and believe that they are responsible for the abuse and may minimise the abuser's behaviour.

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

Women's Aid support workers, as well as having an understanding of what the women are experiencing, have expert knowledge of the options available and provide emotional support to restore the women's self-confidence and to empower them to take steps to try to escape the abuse.

We provide practical support and explore options while helping the woman to maximise her and her children's safety. We also provide ongoing telephone support. We support women for as long as they need.

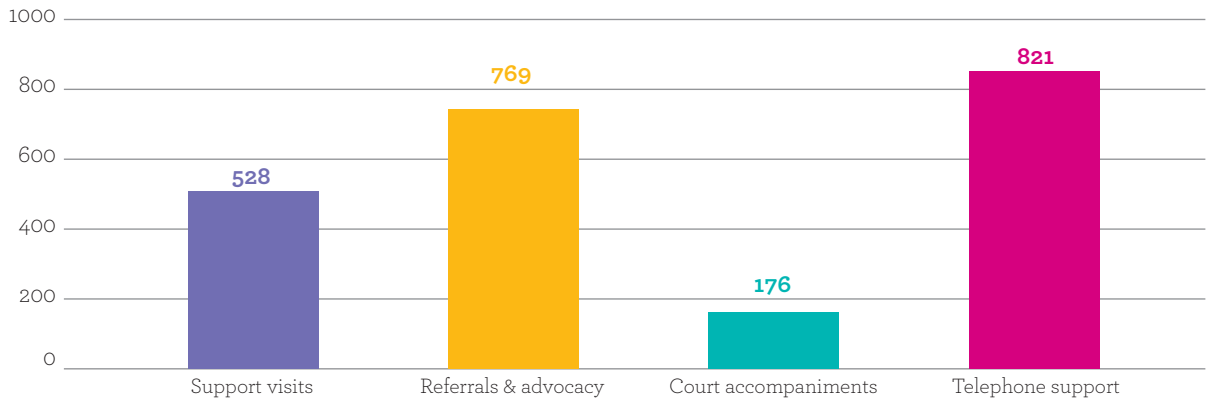
Women who are trying to leave an abusive partner need a range of options including somewhere safe to live, access to independent income, safe child contact arrangements and access to good legal representation.

Women's Aid helps women to access these options and may advocate on their behalf when needed and with the women's consent. Support workers will help women going through the legal system to gather information and prepare for court. Support workers will also accompany women to court and other appointments.

2.2 SUPPORT PROVIDED

Chart 7 shows a breakdown of the support provided to women in 2013. In 2013 our support workers had **528 support visits with 327 women.** We **advocated and made referrals** to other agencies on **769 occasions** and we accompanied **102 women to court on 176 occasions**. Further **telephone support was provided on 821 occasions.**

Chart 7: Support provided



A majority of women (260) used the services for the first time in 2013. **67 women continued to use the service from previous years.** Women's Aid is committed to see as many new women who require our help as possible each year and to be available to all women who wish to use our services. The level of support women need varies; for some women, we have one or two contacts, while for others support can extend over many years.

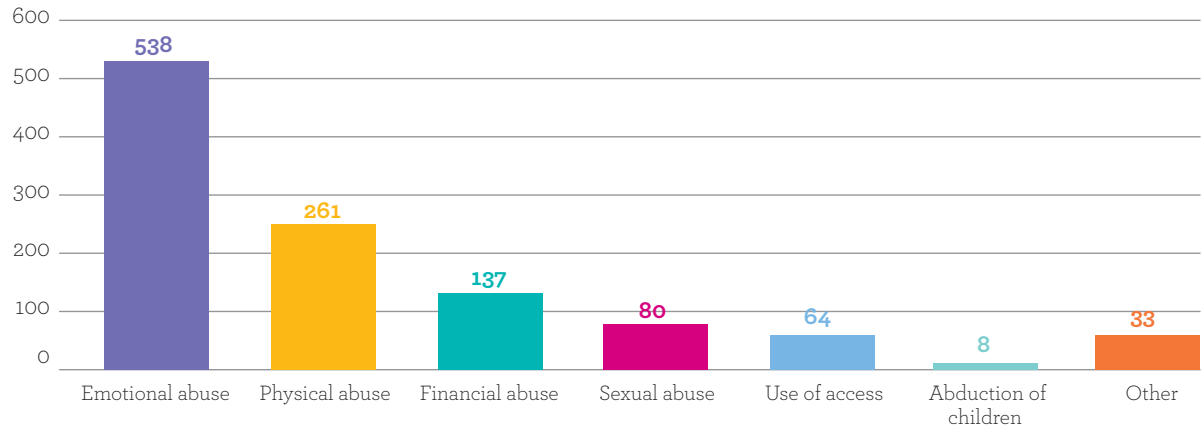
The women we support are diverse and come from all walks of life. **Domestic violence can affect any woman, at any age and from any background.** In 2013, we met with women aged between 18 and 80-years-old who were experiencing abuse lasting anything between one and over 50 years in duration. A woman's situation can affect the options that are available to her. For example, some women have disabilities and face difficulty securing safe, alternative accommodation because of accessibility issues; some younger women experiencing dating abuse are ineligible for protection under the Domestic Violence Act because they have never lived with their boyfriends; while others face additional barriers because they are migrant women.

30% of the new women we saw in 2013 were migrant women. The additional barriers faced by migrant women affected by domestic violence include the impact of the lack of independent residency status, ineligibility for social protection and limited access to emergency accommodation. Women may also face pressures and have a reduced number of options because of their cultural or religious backgrounds. For migrant women with particularly complicated cases Women's Aid works alongside migrant rights organisations such as the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Women's Aid is also an active member of a domestic violence migrant women's rights coalition with representatives from national domestic violence and migrant services looking to improve policies for migrant women experiencing domestic violence.

2.3 DISCLOSURES OF ABUSE

The forms and extent of the abuse that women are disclosing to us continue to be disturbing, cruel and dangerous for them and their children. Chart 8 outlines the **1,121 disclosures of abuse by women in 2013 during support visits** (note it does not reflect disclosures of abuse made during phone conversations). The numbers of disclosures by far exceed the number of women because every woman is experiencing overlapping forms of abuse. This reflects the pattern of coercive control and the intentional behaviour of the abuser as he seeks to gain power and control in order to have his needs met.

Chart 8: Disclosures of abuse



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

As the chart above shows, the majority of **disclosures are of emotional abuse (538 disclosures)**. Women tell us that emotional abuse is the most damaging and can be worse than physical abuse. When there is no actual physical and sexual violence there is the threat and fear of it. Abusers let their victims know what they could be capable of. These threats are detailed, brutal and very frightening.

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

Emotional abuse can involve threats of physical and sexual abuse and threats to kill the woman, the children or members of the woman's family. In 2013, we heard **46 disclosures of death threats to women.** Many more women tell us that they believe that their abuser is capable of seriously harming them and killing them.

In **35 cases** women have told Women's Aid that they are being **stalked by their abuser.**

The number of reports of actual **physical assaults is worryingly high** with **261 incidents disclosed in 2013.** This is **261 serious crimes** committed against women. This figure includes **33 assaults** against **pregnant women** and **22 cases** where women were **assaulted with weapons.** We hear from women assaulted during pregnancy that they suffered miscarriages because of the abuse.

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

There were **137 disclosures of financial abuse** in 2013 including where women's access to money is totally controlled to restrict her freedom and where maintenance is withheld in cases where the relationship has ended.

The **80 disclosures of sexual abuse** include **25 disclosures of rape.**

In **64 cases** women disclosed that they were **abused during access arrangements.**

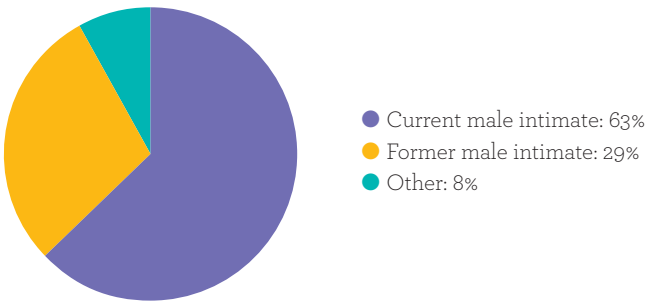
The **effects of the abuse on the women** we meet cannot be understated and should not be minimised or downplayed. Women are controlled and treated as unequal human beings. They are put down to the extent that they don't have any confidence in themselves or in their own abilities. Women are trapped with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

2.4 RELATIONSHIP WITH ABUSER

Chart 9 shows the women's relationship with their abuser. An analysis of records for 283 women shows that 63% are current male intimates, 29% are former male intimates. 8% are in other relationships.

The significant percentage (29%) of women being abused by a former partner highlights the fact that the end of the relationship does not necessarily mean an end to the abuse. In fact, leaving an abusive relationship is known to be the most dangerous time for a woman. Support services need to support women as they are preparing to leave and to plan and manage their own and their children's safety until the abuse ends.

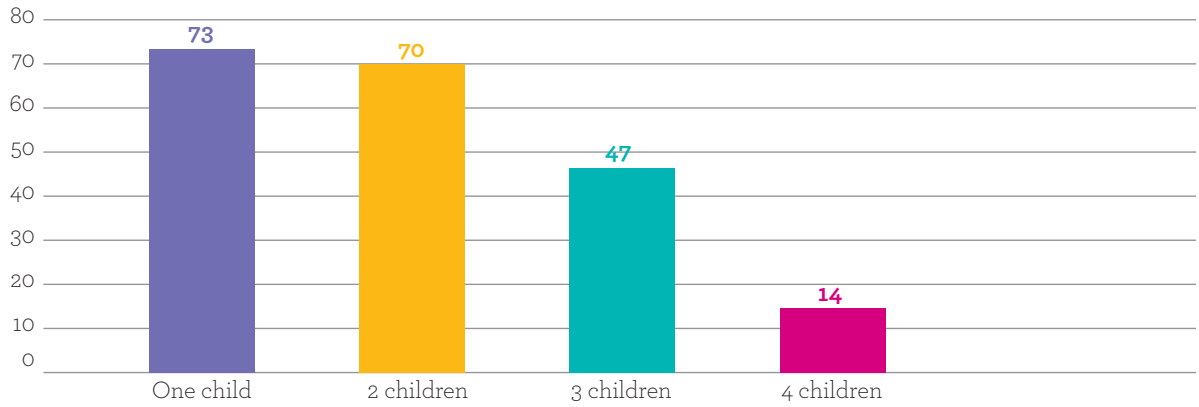
Chart 9: Relationship with abuser



2.5 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN

Chart 10 illustrates that among the women we worked with for the first time in 2013 the majority had children and so at least 410 children were affected by domestic violence.

Chart 10: Number of new women with children



As outlined in Section 1.5 of this report, **domestic violence is a very common context in which children experience abuse.** Where a woman has children Women's Aid works in line with Children First 2011, and international best practise that recognises that the best form of child protection is to work with the non-abusive parent, mainly their mother. We work to support the mother in her ongoing efforts to protect and care for her children. Although we do not work directly with children, when we work with women who have children, a lot of our work is focused on the children's needs, in particular their safety and on how to support the mother as she cares for them.

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

Many of the women we support are concerned that access arrangements ordered by the court are placing their children at risk. Women have disclosed that children have been directly abused and neglected during access visits and that the abuser is directly taking advantage of this contact with the children in order to abuse them. Many abusive men also withhold maintenance payments as a way of further abusing and controlling such women and children.

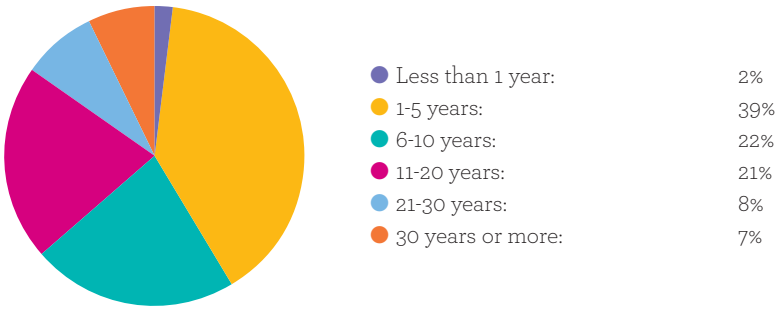
We support women going through the court system for as long as they need it. For child custody and access matters, the process can be long and drawn out and in many cases does not result in safe outcomes for women and children.

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

2.6 DURATION OF ABUSE

Chart 11 shows the duration of abuse disclosed by women in 2013. Of interest is the fact that the majority of women contacted Women's Aid **during the first five years** of an abusive relationship, a welcome development on previous years which shows that women are approaching services sooner for support. It remains the case that many women live with abuse for significantly longer periods of time with **15 % of women experiencing abuse for 21 years or more.**

Chart 11: Duration of abuse



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

Women's Aid believes that it is vital that good and effective supports are available to women when they begin to address their situation. These include good legal protection, the practical and emotional support of their family and friends, the availability of state services, safe housing, child care arrangements that protect the women and the children, and support from organisations like Women's Aid.

2.7 ADVOCACY AND REFERRALS TO OTHER AGENCIES

Women's Aid Support Services **advocated and made referrals** to other agencies on behalf of women on **769 occasions** in 2013 either by phone or letter. Please note this is in addition to standard referrals made on behalf of women – for example when a phone call takes place with a social worker to discuss making a referral on the standard referral form, and when a cover letter is added to a housing application. These agencies are outlined in Table 1. Due to the complexity of some women's situations and the nature of the service they are trying to access, support workers will directly advocate for women. In some instances women will not have an automatic right to the service.

Table 1: Numbers of referrals and advocacy to other agencies

Agency	Referrals	Advocacy
Courts	96	12
Legal Aid	114	14
Solicitor	69	17
Gardaí	39	15
Housing & Local Authorities	46	61
Social & Community Welfare	26	22
Counselling	14	1
Residency & Immigration	18	33
Refuge	24	10
Medical	4	3
Social worker	16	27
Other	30	58

REFERRALS ADVOCACY

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

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

2.8 WOMEN'S AID COURT ACCOMPANIMENT

In 2013 Women's Aid support workers went to court **176 times with 102 women.**

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

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

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

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

2.9 NATURE OF COURT APPLICATIONS

In 2013, the vast majority of cases where Women's Aid accompanied women to court either dealt with **protection from abuse** (civil orders under the Domestic Violence Act, 1996) or **child related issues** such as **maintenance, access and custody.** We also supported women going through **separation and divorce** proceedings in the **context of domestic violence.** Table 2 outlines the number of court applications during which Women's Aid provided support.

Table 2: Nature of court applications

Woman applicant		Woman respondent	
Child related orders	56	Child related orders	57
Domestic Violence orders	84	Domestic Violence orders	15
Divorce & Separation	15	Divorce & Separation	1

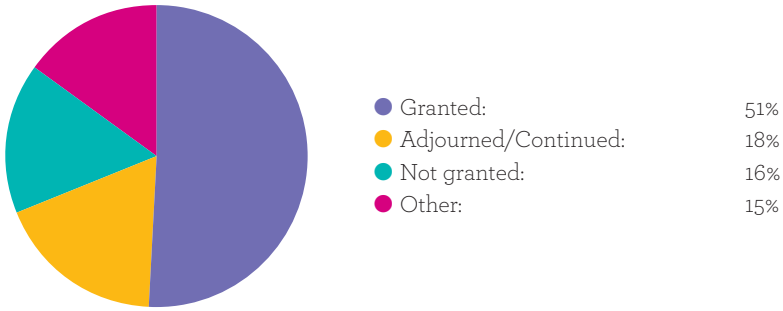
The number of court applications (228) exceeds the amount of court accompaniments as a number of applications and issues can be listed for the same hearing. For example, a woman may be in court to apply for a barring order and maintenance order. Also, some matters may take more than one court appearance before being resolved. In our experience child care matters are rarely resolved in one hearing and can go on for months, sometimes years.

While the majority of court accompaniments relate to Family Law proceedings, Women's Aid support workers also attended court with women involved in **criminal law cases against their abuser on seven occasions in 2013. Despite the reporting of many crimes and breaches of domestic violence orders, this sadly reflects** the low attrition rates in domestic violence cases.

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

Chart 12 outlines the outcomes of the women's applications for orders under the Domestic Violence Act. In 2013 84 domestic violence order applications were made by women we accompanied to court. The outcome for 8 of these is unknown. Of the 76 where the outcome is known 51% were granted, 18% were adjourned or continued and 16% were not granted or struck out. Fifteen percent of applications were withdrawn or had another outcome.

Chart 12: Outcomes of applications for Orders



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

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

2.11 DOLPHIN HOUSE SUPPORT AND REFERRAL SERVICE

In 2013, Women's Aid continued to operate the Support and Referral Service in Dolphin House, Dublin's Family Law District court, in partnership with the Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service and the Inchicore Outreach Centre, and supported by the Courts Service.

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

The numbers of women availing of this service continued to increase in 2013, with the services supporting 381 women throughout the year. **314 women were supported on 346 occasions** in face-to-face sessions. The service also provided **further telephone support on 67 occasions.**

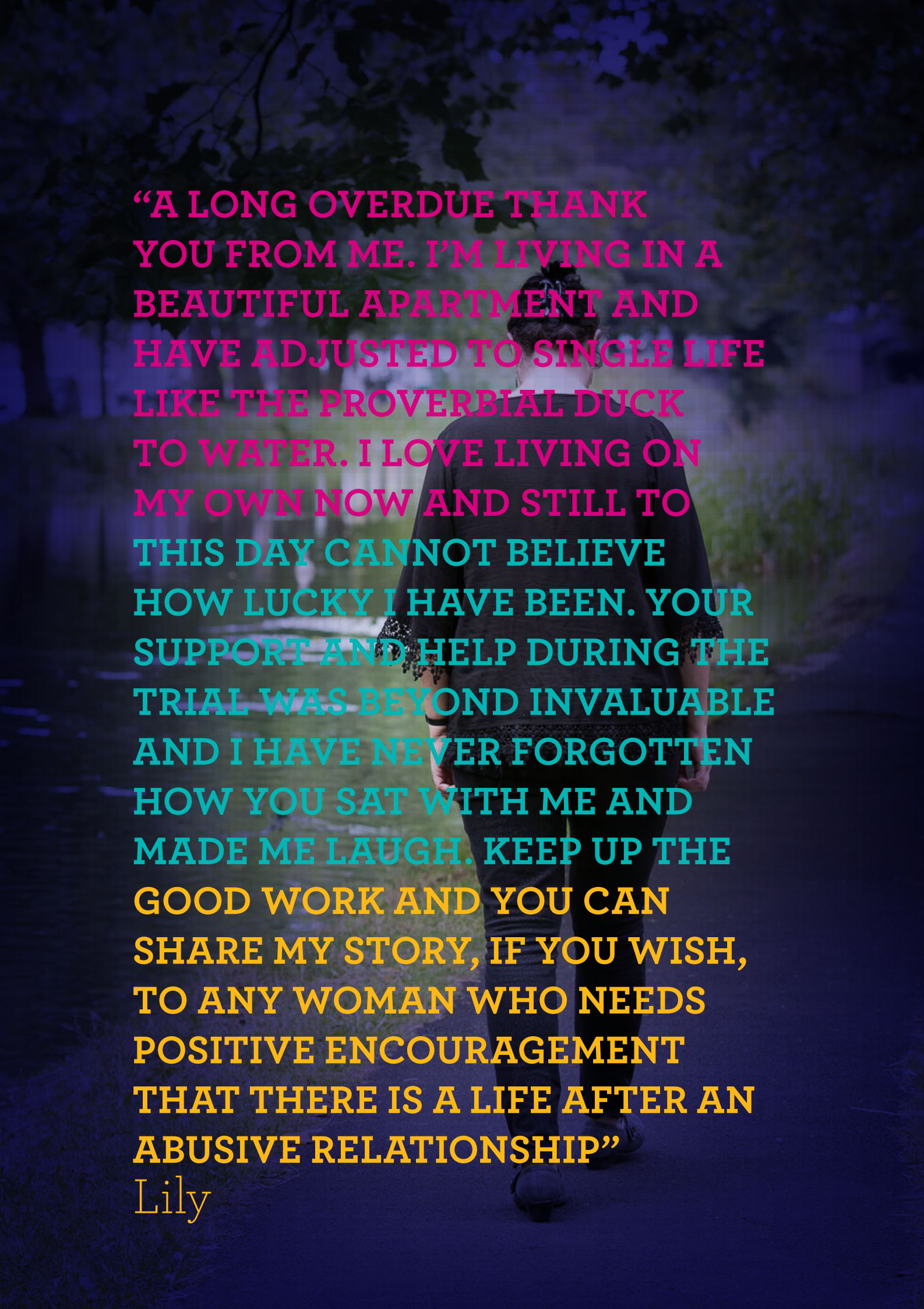
During the **346 sessions women disclosed 718 incidents of abuse.** This is made up of 338 incidences of emotional abuse, 238 physical, 39 sexual and 103 financial. In a marked difference from the disclosures of abuse outlined previously **75% of women were experiencing physical abuse** as well as other over-lapping forms of abuse. This suggests that women may feel that they need evidence of physical abuse when accessing the legal system for protection from domestic violence.

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

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

295 women used the service before court, 30 women used the service before and after court and 19 used the service after a court appearance.

The Dolphin House Family Law Court Support and Referral Service is available on the 4th Floor, Dolphin House, East Essex Street, Dublin 2 and is available Monday to Friday from 9.30am – 1.30pm. This is a drop-in service – there is no appointment necessary.



“A LONG OVERDUE THANK YOU FROM ME. I’M LIVING IN A BEAUTIFUL APARTMENT AND HAVE ADJUSTED TO SINGLE LIFE LIKE THE PROVERBIAL DUCK TO WATER. I LOVE LIVING ON MY OWN NOW AND STILL TO THIS DAY CANNOT BELIEVE HOW LUCKY I HAVE BEEN. YOUR SUPPORT AND HELP DURING THE TRIAL WAS BEYOND INVALUABLE AND I HAVE NEVER FORGOTTEN HOW YOU SAT WITH ME AND MADE ME LAUGH. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK AND YOU CAN SHARE MY STORY, IF YOU WISH, TO ANY WOMAN WHO NEEDS POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT THAT THERE IS A LIFE AFTER AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP”

Lily

PART 3:
WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND SOCIAL CHANGE



Margaret Martin Director of Women's Aid.

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

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

3.1 SUPPORTING POSITIVE GOVERNMENT ACTION

Women's Aid works with the government to provide solution-based recommendations on improving legal responses and protection for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

In 2013 our recommendations for amending domestic violence legislation focused on three main areas:

- Further improvement of eligibility under the Domestic Violence Act, including the need for introduction of emergency barring orders when courts are not sitting.
- Interfacing of child protection and domestic violence, especially in the context of separation and family law.
- Stalking (including digitally-assisted stalking) in intimate relationship.

Women's Aid briefed Cosc, TDs, Senators and other stakeholders on these recommendations. Following one briefing, a motion on domestic violence was proposed in the Seanad and the issue of emergency barring orders was raised by a number of Senators.

These recommendations formed the core of our submission to the Justice Committee's inquiry into domestic and sexual violence this year. Women's Aid and other support and advocacy organisations presented submissions at the Justice Committee public hearings on domestic and sexual violence in February 2014. We remain committed to giving a voice to the women we support as this process continues towards new domestic violence legislation.

3.2 COLLABORATING FOR JUSTICE

As a member of the Domestic Violence Coalition, Women's Aid continues to work to address barriers to safety and support faced by migrant women experiencing domestic violence, including lack of independent immigration status and the Habitual Residency Condition.

Women's Aid works with Barnardos, Treoir, Marriage Equality and One Family to highlight issues in relation to the upcoming Children and Family Relationships Bill, updating a set of common principles for reforming Family Law in June 2013. Representing this group, we briefed the Department of Social Protection policy team on potential risks in relation to birth registration issues for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Women's Aid is a member of the Turn Off the Red Light Coalition which seeks to introduce legislation on prostitution based on the Swedish model of protecting the person in prostitution while holding the clients accountable. As part of this campaign, Women's Aid presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice a review of prostitution laws in February 2013.

As a member of the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI), Women's Aid submitted a motion to the AGM for the NWCI to campaign for Ireland's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The resulting NWCI e-action campaign urged people to contact their local representative to show their support for Ireland's ratification of the Convention and coincided with Ireland's Presidency of the EU. The campaign received wide support from elected representatives and ratification is currently under consideration by the Government. Women's Aid co-launched a new NWCI report *Violence against Women: An Issue of Gender* in December as part of the *16 Days of Action* campaign.

Women's Aid also continued to be represented on policy at national and international level, including at the National Steering Committee on Violence against Women (NSC), the Legal Issues Subcommittee of the NSC, the Public Awareness Subcommittees of the NSC, the Irish Observatory on Violence against Women, the Legal Aid Board External Consultative Panel, the Family Law Court Service Users Panel and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE).

3.3 RAISING AWARENESS AND PROVIDING HOPE

Women's Aid knows how important it is to raise awareness of domestic violence and promote our vital services to women experiencing domestic violence and to the wider community. Our annual **national public awareness campaigns promote services available to women experiencing abuse, and speak to their friends and family members and the general public.**

The *16 Days of Action* campaign, run from 25th November to 10th December, has become a period of awareness-raising in Ireland. At least 140 organisations took part in the campaign to raise awareness of violence against women and services available with over 100 groups participating in our annual **One in Five Women National Balloon Action.**

Our online campaign saw our daily *16 Facts for 16 Days* infographics and our online awareness-raising video reach thousands of people. The Women's Aid 16 Days blog continued to connect local organisations, highlight local



Margaret Martin, Director of Women's Aid launches the 2in2u public awareness campaign for young women with Aoife Campbell and Emma Jayne Geraghty from the Y Factor Project. 2013.

action and link participants in with the wider national and international campaign.

Our **2in2u campaign on dating abuse** is designed to show the hidden reality for many young women who are experiencing abuse, control and violence at the hands of their boyfriends and specifically targets younger women in the hope of preventing a new generation experiencing domestic violence. This radio, digital and poster advertising campaign directs women to a Relationship Health Check quiz at www.2in2u.ie which has been answered by 36,113 people and which features examples of healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviour. Women's Aid was also delighted to make a presentation on the 2in2u campaign to the EU Crime Prevention Network during 2013.

Our **Don't Be Afraid national public awareness campaign** promotes the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900 as a valuable resource for women experiencing domestic violence throughout the Republic of Ireland through radio and digital advertising. The campaign particularly reaches out to women who may not have spoken to anyone, not even friends or family, about what is happening to them with the message: "We're ready to listen even if you're not yet ready to speak". This campaign message also highlighted the reality of domestic abuse to the general public, emphasising how difficult it is for women living in fear, constantly criticised and threatened, to access support and safety. This campaign also targeted key professionals who support women affected by domestic violence and public places where women seek help and support.

3.4 PROVIDING A LIFELINE, ONLINE AT www.womensaid.ie

Traffic to the Women's Aid website www.womensaid.ie continues to grow year-on-year with **94,408 visitors in 2013.** The website provides vital information to women experiencing domestic violence as well as to the general public. Our ability to connect using our social media platforms is also growing, allowing us to engage with new audiences and to promote our services widely online.

3.5 NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT

Women's Aid aims to be a centre of excellence for the training and development of professional and organisational responses to women and children experiencing domestic violence. **We provide a national programme of specialised training and support to a variety of participants and organisations from the community, voluntary and statutory sectors.**

Our vision is that any woman experiencing domestic violence will receive a high calibre response from a whole range of agencies so that she can easily and promptly access support, safety and protection for herself and her children. Throughout 2013 we delivered training nationwide to health and social care professionals, childcare providers, local employment service staff, family resource centre staff, colleges and others.

We were delighted to continue our very successful training to **HSE health and social care professionals** throughout 2013. Our HSE training is in line with the high level goals of the HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. We continued to receive a high level of interest throughout 2013 from HSE professionals including social workers, doctors, clinical psychologists, day hospital staff, child and adult mental health service team members, forensic psychiatry staff, counsellors, mental health nurses, occupational therapists, addiction counsellors and family therapists.

We were also happy to see a new group of volunteers complete the **Women's Aid National Free Phone Helpline Volunteer Training** and become part of the Helpline team of volunteers.

As Specialist Support Agency on domestic violence to the Family Support Agency, in 2013 we provided support to **106 Family Resource Centres (FRC)** throughout the country and we trained staff from 32 Family Resource Centres in Kells, Carrick-on-Shannon, Kerry, Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny, Carlow and Tipperary.

Women's Aid engaged in discussions with the Family Support Agency regarding how best we could support FRCs with their task of prevention, early intervention and support for families. FRC staff were particularly interested in exploring the practice implications for FRCs regarding their child protection responsibilities in Tusla in addition to delivering post-separation support where domestic violence is a feature. We developed our training input to FRCs throughout 2013 to take account of the changing landscape; thus, while the training continued to have the FRCs Code of Practice as its basis, we began to place **greater emphasis on best practice in child and women protection in the context of domestic violence.**

Women's Aid has been the Specialist Support Agency on Violence against Women to the **Local Community Development Programme** (LCDP) since 1998. We provide ongoing support, training, information and practical resources to groups within the LCDP so that they can develop effective local community responses to violence against women and their children. 2013 was a productive year for Women's Aid regarding work delivery to the LCDP.

It is recognised that domestic violence is a complex and difficult area to work within; it requires a high level of awareness and competence to recognise, respond and refer appropriately. In addition, staff are required to understand their obligations under *Children First: The National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* where domestic violence is a feature. It is intended that Women's Aid training, awareness-raising and support will help groups under the LCDP to do just that.

The Women's Aid training and development department are frequently asked to deliver other services and training and in 2013 these included the Benefit University Tour, which saw Women's Aid partner with the cosmetic company Benefit in a visit to universities countrywide to highlight the issue of dating abuse as experienced by young women. We provided training to members of the women's committee of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, to staff of the Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght, Dublin and provided input to UCD and TCD midwifery students and UCD social work students.

PART 4:
THANK YOU



Fundraisers, Ruth O'Dea and Laura Kavanagh take on the Flora Women's Mini Marathon in aid of Women's Aid.

4.1 THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HELP WOMEN'S AID

Women's Aid is indebted to all our volunteers, supporters, funders and donors who make our work possible. In 2013 we continued to face many challenges, particularly financial ones. We remain amazed by the generosity we receive from all our supporters. Without financial and fundraising support and the giving of time and expertise, we would not be able to provide the support to women as outlined in this report.

Our Helpline and Charity Shop volunteers

Women's Aid receives huge volunteer support each year. Our National Freephone Helpline 1800 314 900 is supported by 28 committed volunteers who provide the callers to our Helpline with a listening ear and supportive space to talk about the abuse they are suffering. Our trained volunteers are essential to the operation of our National Helpline and enable us stay open 12 hours a day, every day of the year except Christmas Day. Our dedicated team of Helpline Volunteers gave a total of 3,743 hours of their time supporting women on the Helpline.

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

To each and every volunteer we THANK YOU for your dedication and belief in the work of Women's Aid.

Our Charity Shops

Our two charity shops in Aungier Street and Dundrum in Dublin continue to contribute to the work of the organisation. The range and quality of items donated continues to surpass our expectations. Both shops receive great quality vintage and designer items which results in two very well-stocked shops.

Our Dundrum Village Charity Shop, which opened its doors in 2012, has established a strong following in Dundrum Village. Both of our shops have held successful Designer Days, Nights and Weeks in 2013, when our most loyal and supportive shoppers have been given the chance to obtain the best goods at the best prices. A

big thank you to Monica and the babies from Ultrasound in Blackrock, as well as the team at Craft Cleaners, Baggot Street for their continued donations.

Regular and once-off donations

Our regular donors continue to contribute to the success of our services. We also receive once-off donations and legacies. This support remains the lifeblood of our organisation. Without it we would not be able to survive.

Avon Speak Out Against Domestic Violence programme

We would like to express our gratitude to the Avon Foundation who, for the past five years has partnered Women's Aid as part of the Avon Speak Out Against Domestic Violence programme. This partnership came to an end in 2013 when Avon closed its operations in Ireland and elsewhere in a major consolidation of its global operations. Avon has provided a great legacy for all the women who will continue to need our services through supporting a variety of projects during their time in Ireland.

Fabulous fundraisers

Team Women's Aid blazed a trail in the Flora Women's Mini Marathon. Our team were the fastest, the fittest and had the best t-shirts! We also benefitted from the fundraising activities of Paddy Power, the super fit gym and yoga instructors in Rock Fitness Dundrum and The Elbow Room in Brunswick Street. Not forgetting a big thank you to Shauna at Headhair Therapy in Dalkey for her very funny "Tell a Joke" night, as well as the once-off donations from individuals who prefer to remain anonymous.

Women's Aid would also like to send an absolutely huge thank you to Benefit Cosmetics for mobilising their tour bus around the many different college campuses in Ireland to raise money for Women's Aid while providing fun services such as complimentary makeovers and eyebrow shaping. Like all charities, we have suffered significant funding cuts over the past number of years. We are indebted to those who take time to organise events and take initiatives to help raise much needed funds for Women's Aid.

OUR FUNDERS

Women's Aid would like to thank our funders who recognise and continue to support the delivery of our services. We receive funding from the Health Service Executive, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, the Family Support Agency, the Commission for the Support of the Victims of Crime and Cosc: The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence. We also receive funding from The Vodafone Foundation and the Avon Speak Out against Domestic Violence Programme. In 2013 Avon funded the refurbishment of our support rooms to make them more comfortable for our service users and to maximise confidentiality through some sound- proofing work.

And finally...

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

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

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

4.2 HOW YOU CAN HELP US MAKE WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE

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

How to donate

Online: Visit www.womensaid.ie/donate to make an immediate and secure donation.

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

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

Your legacy: When the time is right for you to include a gift in your will, please remember us. Once you have looked after your loved ones, any gift however large or small would make a real and lasting difference to the lives of women and children experiencing domestic violence. Please contact us on 01 678 8858 or email info@womensaid.ie to discuss your options for leaving a legacy to Women's Aid.

Fundraise: Organise your own event or take on a sponsored challenge and see how you can individually make a difference for women experiencing domestic violence. If you are planning fundraising activities, Women's Aid will help you along the way. Contact Women's Aid on 01 678 8858 for more information or visit www.womensaid.ie/support.

Visit and Donate to the Women's Aid Charity Shops: Call in and shop at The Dundrum Village Charity Shop or the Aungier Street Charity Shop and pick up some high-end bargains. You can also donate good quality secondhand and unwanted items including ladies, gents and children's clothing, unwanted gifts, jewellery, CDs, DVDs, books and recent magazines. Call in at 39 Aungier Street, Dublin 2 (01 475 9927) or 14 Main Street, Dundrum, Dublin 14 (01 296 0284).

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

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

Find us at Facebook.com/womensaid.ie and Twitter.com/@womens_aid and sign up for our E-zine at www.womensaid.ie



The Benefit Loves Women's Aid Uni Tour 2013 which placed the emphasis on healthy dating relationships and dating abuse whilst providing fun services such as free makeovers and eyebrow shaping.



The Women's Aid shop in Dundrum village, Dublin.

PART 5:
A TRIBUTE TO MARY ALLEN



Mary Allen, Chairwoman of Women's Aid from 2010 to 2013.

Mary joined the Women's Aid fledgling training team after her time as senior medical social worker and deputy head of department at St James's Hospital. She brought with her the firm belief that individuals within a system can make a very real difference to women abused by an intimate partner. Mary helped us to develop training to improve the responses of the social care and health professionals who are so often the first point of contact for women on their journey to safety. Her legacy in relation to training is deeply embedded, with Mary's influence still visible on Women's Aid's training on best practice in woman and child protection in the context of domestic violence.

Mary's endless curiosity to understand domestic violence and her appetite to build a knowledge base with which to improve practice did not stop there. In 2012 I had the honour of launching Mary's book *Supporting Women's Transitions from Abuse to Safety* in which she gathered together a wealth of knowledge on the dark but secret side of intimate relationships. Her genuine regard for the ten women she interviewed, for their strength, their courage, their resilience and their endless ingenuity in protecting their children and themselves shines through.

As a committed feminist Mary did not bow to the growing pressure to take a gender-blind approach. Instead she showed how equality and social justice is at the heart of how we build safe routes out of abusive relationships. By recognising a mother's strengths (so often the non-abusive parent), by really listening to them, by working with them at their pace and by illustrating that abused women are not weak, stupid or defective but instead are crucial actors in their own journey from abuse to safety Mary's research brought important insights into these destructive relationships.

She illustrated that nine of the ten women she wrote about had met their partner when they were in their teens or early 20's, that nine out of ten of them had a child or children by their partner (there were 30 children involved) and that the average length of the relationship was 17 years. For some of the women they spent half their life in an abusive relationship and often the abuse they experienced was extreme and life-threatening and

included emotional abuse which Mary described as a "deeper and more central form of abuse".

Mary Allen challenged us not to see women who are abused by an intimate partner as passive victims, but to recognise the variety of women's resistance to the violence and the control exerted by their abusive partners whether through avoidance, verbal confrontation or physical resistance. Mary's voice is needed even more now with the development of the Child and Family Agency – her warning to avoid being overwhelmed by a narrow focus on women and children's safety, to understand that safety is not a "once-off" achievement and that leaving an abusive relationship is a complex and lengthy process. Mary described the purpose of her book as trying to end the unhelpful and uncritical professional interventions that may further stigmatise and even endanger, abused women.

Since Mary Allen's death in July 2013 I am struck by how much we in Women's Aid share a sense of loss for a deeply intelligent and independent woman who was warm, gentle, caring and in possession of a wicked sense of humour. I hope that in honouring her memory each of us will be emboldened by Mary's message in our various roles within the shifting domestic violence landscape we face, so that like her, we too can make a difference.

Margaret Martin
Director of Women's Aid
July 2014

PART 6:
FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2013

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

Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 31st December 2013

	2013	2012
	€	€
Income	1,501,134	1,559,243
Overheads	(1,482,231)	(1,563,067)
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	18,903	(3,824)
Bequest income	46,647	-
Interest receivable	11,644	15,554
Surplus after other income	77,194	11,730

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2013

	2013	2012
	€	€
Fixed assets		
Tangible Assets	711,537	748,741
Current assets		
Debtors	14,340	12,895
Cash at bank/Building fund	1,209,497	1,107,048
	1,223,837	1,119,943
Creditors and provisions (amount falling due within one year)	(495,317)	(505,821)
Net Current Assets	728,520	614,122
Net Assets	1,440,057	1,362,863
Represented by:		
income and expenditure account	1,440,057	1,362,863
	1,440,057	1,362,863

Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 31st December 2013

	2013	2012
	€	€
Reconciliation of operating (deficit)/ surplus to net cash inflow from operating activities		
Operating (deficit)/surplus	18,903	(3,824)
Depreciation	37,204	20,621
Bequest income	46,647	-
(Increase) / Decrease in debtors	(1,445)	771,813
(Decrease) / Increase in creditors	(10,504)	29,210
Net cash flow from operating activities	90,805	817,820
Interest received	11,644	15,554
Capital expenditure	-	(749,599)
Increase in cash in the year	102,449	83,775

Ursula Regan, Chairperson

Margaret Martin, Director

7th May 2014

Extract from the Auditors Report to the Members

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

In our opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31st December 2013, and of its surplus, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland, for the year ended, and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Acts 1963 to 2013. We have obtained all the information and explanations considered necessary for the purposes of our audit. In our opinion proper books of account have been kept by the company. The financial statements are in agreement with the books of account.

Damien Kealy for and on behalf of
LHM Casey McGrath

Chartered Certified Accountants

7th May 2014


“I JUST WANTED TO SAY A BIG THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING. GOD KNOWS WHERE I’D BE TODAY IF I HADN’T MET YOU. YOU HELPED ME THROUGH THE TOUGHEST TIME OF MY LIFE AND I’LL NEVER FORGET THAT. THANKS AGAIN”
Kate