



LAW SOCIETY PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Centre of Excellence for
Professional Education and Training



Identifying domestic violence in clients

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THE BAR of
NORTHERN
IRELAND



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Women's Aid Ruth O'Dea, Manager– Training & Development 23 March 2018



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Mission Statement

Women's Aid has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974.

We do this by:

- Making women and children safer
- Supporting women
- Working for justice and social change
- Providing hope

What We Do

- Direct Support for women experiencing abuse
- Communications and Public Awareness Campaigns
- Policy and Research
- Training and Development

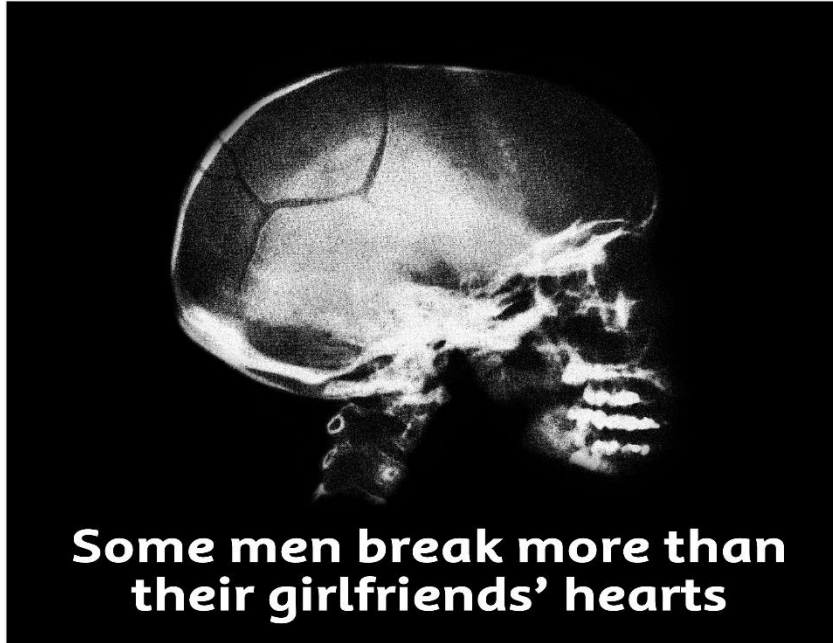
What is domestic violence?

- Domestic violence is where one person uses abuse to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship. It can be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or financial abuse. In the majority of cases it is perpetrated by men and experienced by women. Any woman can be affected and it can happen in any home.

Domestic Violence – Definition

- “....the use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, in close adult relationships. [...]It can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation & the telephone.”

Taskforce on Violence Against Women, Office of the Tánaiste, 1997



**Domestic violence affects
1 in 5 Irish women**



1800 341900

WOMEN'S AID NATIONAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE

www.womensaid.ie



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Prevalence - Ireland

- 1995: National research commissioned by Women's Aid showed that 18% (about 1 in 5) of the women surveyed have been abused by a current or former partner.
- 2014: EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Violence Against Women survey (data re. intimate relationships: **Irish** figures) reported,
 - 15% of women have experienced physical violence (=227,495 women)
 - 6% of women have experienced sexual violence
 - 31% of women have experienced psychological abuseby a current or former partner.

Emotional Abuse

- In 2016, women who accessed Women's Aid services described:
 - Being stalked, both physically and online
 - Being isolated from family and friends.
 - Being put down constantly
 - Having death threats made against them and their children
 - Being called names on a daily basis and threatened with physical and sexual assault.

Physical abuse

- In 2016, women who accessed Women's Aid services described:
 - Being hit and beaten with weapons and everyday objects
 - Being stabbed and cut with knives
 - Being strangled, including to the point of losing consciousness
 - Being beaten, strangled and kicked while pregnant

Sexual abuse

- In 2016, there were 695 disclosures of sexual abuse including 316 reports of rape. Disclosures included:
 - Being raped, beaten during sex and coerced into sex
 - Being raped and physically abused leading to miscarriage
 - Being denied access to family planning
 - Having sexually explicit images and videos made without their consent and sometimes being shared online

Financial abuse

- In 2016, women who accessed Women's Aid services described:
 - Being denied access to family income for heating, food and clothing for the children.
 - Having salaries/social welfare payments controlled
 - Being left with huge debt in her name
 - Abuser withholding maintenance and lying about his income to the Courts.

Femicide- Ireland

- From 1996-2017, 216 women have died violently in Ireland. 137 of these women (63%) were killed in their own homes.
- In the 171 resolved cases, 95 women (56%) were killed by their partner or ex-partner.
- In total, of the resolved cases, 150 (88%) women were killed by a man known to them.

(Women's Aid Femicide Watch, 2017)

What is the intent behind the abuse? What does the perpetrator gain?

- POWER AND CONTROL

Power & Control wheel



Double level of intentionality

‘an act directed towards one individual is at the same time intended to affect another/others.’ Liz Kelly, London Metropolitan University

- Children as direct targets for abuse
- Shared experiences of women and children
- Common coping strategies
- Women & children as collective victims

Post separation

- Perpetrator has diminished power & control post separation
- Possible escalation of violence post separation as a response
- Increased reliance on tactic of using the children and financial abuse to re-gain power and control
- Risk factors for women & children in this context

Barriers to disclosure

- For a woman
- For a worker
- How do I ask someone if they are being abused?
- What do I do if someone tells me they are being abused?

Principles of Taking a Disclosure

1. Listen
2. Be non-judgemental
3. Communicate belief
4. Validate the decision to disclose
5. Emphasise the unacceptability of violence
6. Emphasise confidentiality
7. Offer appropriate referrals for support

Sources: *Domestic Violence: A Guide For General Practice* (2008). Irish College of General Practitioners

Gender-based Violence: A Resource Document (2009), The Women's Health Council

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National Freephone Helpline

- Free and confidential support – 1800 341 900
- Gateway to support services nationally
- Open 24 hours a day, every day of the year
- Open to women experiencing abuse, family and friends, and professionals
- Texting service for Deaf / hard of hearing women
- Language Line in 170+ languages

WA one to one support service

- Face to face appointments for women
- Operated on an outreach basis in 6 locations in Dublin. Support workers can also meet women in other locations.
- Court accompaniment
- Support & Referral Service, Dolphin House, Dublin

Other DV services

- 40 frontline DV services nationally
- Provide refuge, helpline, one to one support, court accompaniment, children's services, awareness raising activities & training
- More information on www.womensaid.ie and www.safeireland.ie

Training on domestic violence

- Important for all service providers who meet women throughout their work, e.g. Gardaí, health care professionals, community workers, lawyers.
- Women's Aid training provides;
- 1 day training - 3 Rs – recognise, respond, refer
- 2 day training – *Best Practice in Woman & Child Protection in the context of domestic violence*
- Skills workshop on managing disclosures



WOMEN'S AID

Making Women and Children Safe

National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900

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