

An Longfort  
Longford



An Iarmhí  
Westmeath



# Longford Westmeath

## DOMESTIC ABUSE RESOURCE PACK



**DOMESTIC ABUSE IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS**

## Acknowledgements

This Domestic Abuse Resource Pack is the product of multiple interagency partners working together to highlight awareness of domestic abuse.

In the first instance, Longford Westmeath CYPSC wish to thank and acknowledge the Roscommon CYPSC and services whose original work on the County Roscommon Domestic Abuse Resource Pack provides the template for this document. We would also like to thank Clare Local Area Network (CLAN), Donegal CYPSC, Louth CYPSC and Meath CYPSC who also allowed us access to their versions of this toolkit in the development of the Longford/Westmeath Domestic Abuse Resource Pack.

A huge thank you, to the Longford Westmeath CYPSC Domestic Abuse Local Area Network, and the Prevention Partnership and Family Support CYPSC Subgroup who oversaw this initiative as well as a special thank you to the Longford Westmeath Domestic Abuse Working Group who led the project.

The Longford Westmeath CYPSC Domestic Abuse Working Group comprises of the following organisations:

- Esker House Women's Refuge and Support Service
- Longford Women's Link
- Westmeath Support Service Against Domestic Abuse
- Women's Community Projects (WCP) Mullingar
- Athlone Midland Rape Crisis Centre
- An Garda Síochána
- TUSLA

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## Table of Contents

Introduction to the Longford/Westmeath Domestic Abuse Resource Pack.....	5
Domestic Abuse Statistics.....	6
Longford/Westmeath Statistics.....	7
What is Domestic Violence?.....	9
Coercive Control.....	10
A Hidden Harm and Vicious Cycle.....	11
Types of Abuse.....	12
Domestic Violence Terms and Phrases.....	13
Effects of Domestic Abuse.....	14
Recognising Abuse in Interpersonal Relationships.....	15
Am I an Abusive Person?.....	16
Why Stay?.....	17
Urban vs Rural.....	18
Honour Based Violence.....	20
Power and Control Wheel.....	21
Post Separation Abuse Wheel.....	22
What Happens After a Referral/Concern?.....	23
How Can Professionals Help?.....	23
Domestic Violence Leave.....	27
Domestic Violence Rent Supplement.....	27
<b>Online Resources</b>	
Longford Westmeath Domestic Abuse Multilingual Leaflets.....	28
Insight Exchange.....	29
Bright Sky app.....	29
Too Into You.....	30
Barnardos.....	30
<b>Local Support Services</b>	
Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services.....	31
Esker House Women's Refuge and Support Service.....	31
Westmeath Support Service Against Domestic Abuse.....	33
Longford Women's Link Domestic Violence Service.....	35
Athlone (Midlands) Rape Crisis Centre.....	36
Women's Community Projects (WCP) Mullingar.....	36
<b>Other Supports In Longford &amp; Westmeath</b>	
An Garda Siochana.....	37
Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU).....	37
Tusla Child and Family Agency.....	38



<b>Local Legal Information and Advice</b>	
Longford/Westmeath Court Service .....	39
Citizens Information Centres (CIC) in Longford/Westmeath.....	39
Legal Aid Board .....	39
<b>National Support and Information</b>	
Women's Aid .....	40
Safe Ireland.....	40
AkiDwA .....	41
Men's Aid.....	41
Men's Development Network Male Advice Line.....	42
Additional Resources .....	42
Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) Agency .....	43
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1:</b>	
Tusla Child and Family Agency – Child Protection and Domestic Abuse .....	44
<b>Appendix 2:</b>	
Legal Protection for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control.....	45
Emergency Barring Order (short term).....	45
Interim Barring Order (short term) .....	46
A Barring Order (longer term).....	47
Protection Order (short term) .....	48
A Safety Order (longer term) .....	48
Coercive Control.....	49
Key Provisions .....	50
 Notes Pages.....	 51



## Introducing Longford/Westmeath Domestic Abuse Resource Pack

Domestic Abuse is an issue affecting thousands of people each year in Ireland. While undefined in Irish legislation, Domestic Abuse is understood to refer to a pattern of physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse of one person against another who is a family member or is or has been an intimate partner, regardless of gender or sexuality<sup>1</sup>.

Due to under reporting, the full scope of domestic abuse is largely unknown. However, national and regional statistics demonstrate that the issue of domestic abuse is serious, pervasive and complex. While Covid-19 presented service providers with major obstacles, it also provoked research which resulted in comprehensive statistics. According to Safe Ireland, there was an average of 2,018 women and 550 children accessing domestic violence services in Ireland between September and December 2020<sup>2</sup>.

The impact of Covid-19, both locally and nationally, has highlighted the significant need of services and supports for victims of domestic abuse.

A multiagency approach is vital in ensuring that domestic violence is recognised. As a result, professionals and practitioners across sectors play a pivotal role. Abuse is more likely to be disclosed to a frontline or healthcare professional than to a domestic abuse service<sup>3</sup>.

It is within this context that Longford Westmeath CYPSC interagency partners have collaborated to develop this Domestic Abuse Resource Pack. The goal is to create awareness of domestic abuse, support professional and front-line practitioners to identify domestic abuse and respond by highlighting a clear pathway when the need for support is required.

This Domestic Abuse Resource Pack has been developed as a resource for professionals working within statutory, community and voluntary services that offer advice, information, intervention, support and advocacy for women, men, children, perpetrators and victims. It is a toolkit for professionals in the area of Longford/Westmeath who support people experiencing any form of domestic abuse.

<sup>1</sup> An Garda Síochána (2017). Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy. Pg. 3

<sup>2</sup> Safe Ireland (2020). Tracking the Shadow Pandemic – Lockdown 2

<sup>3</sup> Safe Ireland (2020). Information for Professionals.

[www.safeireland.ie/get-help/safety-information/information-for-professionals/](http://www.safeireland.ie/get-help/safety-information/information-for-professionals/)



## Domestic Abuse Statistics

### NATIONAL STATISTICS

**1 in 4 Women**

who have been in a relationship have experienced domestic abuse



**1 in 16 Men**

have experienced domestic abuse



**1 in 3 Children**

have experienced domestic violence or abuse.



Women's Aid, "Annual Impact Report 2021"

Savi Report (2002) <https://www.drcc.ie/policy-advocacy/research-statistics/savi-report-2002/> Web. Accessed 31 August 2022.

## Longford/Westmeath Statistics

<b>ESKER HOUSE WOMENS REFUGE AND SUPPORT SERVICE</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
No. of helpline calls	482	438
Refuge requests	229	238
No. of support sessions provided	1856	1234
No. of women support in support service (non-residential)	109	101
No. of children and young people receiving specialised support for DV (established August 2020)	7	28
No. of support sessions provided to children and young people	-	215

<b>LONGFORD WOMENS LINK</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Service Users	410	450
Court Accompaniment	226	254
One-to-One Support Sessions	543	841
Telephone Support	2167	2619
Direct Supports to children	395	412
Advocacy Interventions	248	763

<b>WESTMEATH SUPPORT SERVICE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Service Users	265	250
Face-to-Face Support Sessions	610	572
Telephone Support Sessions	1819	1716
Court Accompaniment	204	194

<b>WOMENS COMMUNITY PROJECTS / MULLINGAR COUNSELLING SERVICE</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Face to Face Counselling Sessions	64	36
Telephone Counselling Sessions	339	328
Online Counselling Sessions	47	29



<b>LONGFORD / WESTMEATH SATU</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Attendances	101	120

<b>ATHLONE (MIDLANDS) RAPE CRISIS CENTRE</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
Service Users	95	116
Face-to-Face Support Counselling	1151	1120

<b>LONGFORD / WESTMEATH (DISTRICT NINE) COURT SERVICE</b>	
<b>Activity</b>	<b>2021</b>
Domestic Violence Order Hearings in Longford	165
Domestic Violence Order Hearings in Athlone	130
Domestic Violence Order Hearings in Mullingar	240
Total for District 9	535



## What is Domestic Violence?

**“Domestic Violence is where one person uses abuse to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship”**

There are various terms that are used to describe abuse perpetrated by one person onto another (or others)<sup>6</sup>.

Domestic Abuse, Domestic Violence, Family Violence, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are all terms used interchangeably by support and advocacy services that can mean the same thing<sup>7</sup>.

They encompass the persistent pattern of physical, emotional, mental, economic and sexual abuse.

**Domestic Violence** refers to the *use of physical or emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, in close adult relationships*<sup>8</sup>. As defined by the HSE and Tusla Child and Family Agency it can also involve emotional abuse such as the destruction of property, isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support, threats to others including children; stalking, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation, the telephone, internet and social media<sup>9</sup>.

**Sexual Violence** is any sexual act that is forced against someone's will", such as rape, or sexual assault<sup>10</sup>.

**Gender Based Violence** against women is a term used to describe "other violent behaviours perpetrated against women, because of the role expectations for women within the given society or culture". These may include Female Genital Mutilation, forced marriages, honour-based violence, or forced abortion.

Enacted in 2019, the Domestic Violence Act 2018 has provided for a new criminal offence of coercive control:

6 An Garda Síochána (2017). Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy. Pg. 3

7 Women's Aid "Recognising Domestic Violence" [www.womensaid.ie/help/domesticviolence.html](http://www.womensaid.ie/help/domesticviolence.html)

8 Office of the Tánaiste (1997). Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women. pg. 10

9 HSE (2010) Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence

National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

[www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Pages/WP09000010](http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Pages/WP09000010)

10 Tusla Child and Family Agency. Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

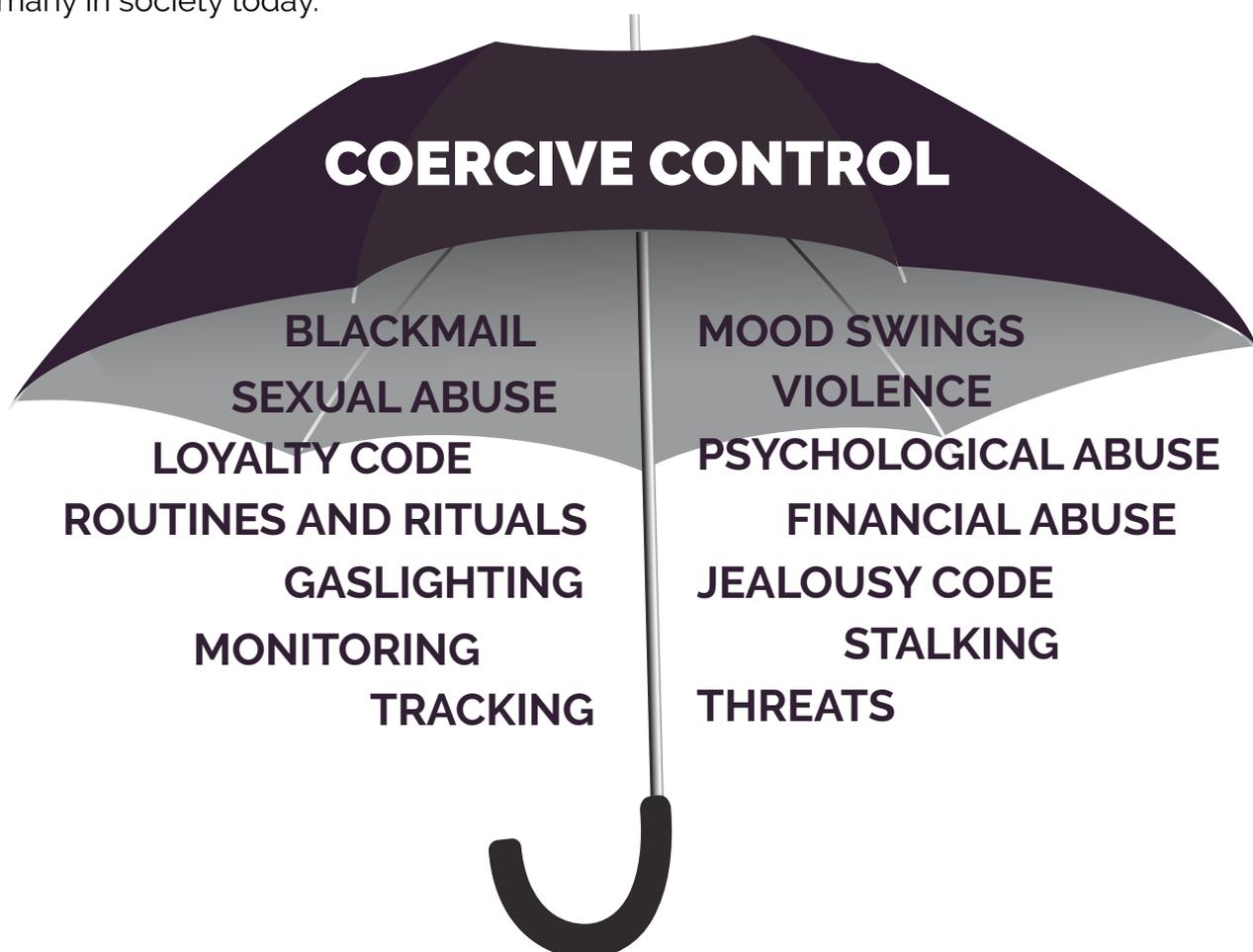
[www.tusla.ie/services/domestic-sexual-gender-based-violence/dsgbv/what-is-gender-based-violence/](http://www.tusla.ie/services/domestic-sexual-gender-based-violence/dsgbv/what-is-gender-based-violence/)



## Coercive Control

**Coercive Control** is a persistent pattern of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour including all or some forms of domestic abuse (emotional, physical, financial, sexual including threats) by a boyfriend/girlfriend, partner, husband/wife or ex-partner. This can result in fear of violence, or serious alarm or distress that has a substantial adverse impact on the victim's usual day-to-day activities<sup>12</sup>.

These definitions and the legal framework of the Domestic Violence Act 2018, highlight the complexity of domestic violence and the broad scope and nature of an issue affecting many in society today.



Coercive Control is considered to be the most significant high risk marker for serious harm and potential homicide (JMS).

**“People who are witness to controlling behaviours don't always know the importance of what they have seen. We are programmed to look for violence but control is invisible.”**

**Jane Monckton Smith**

**The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020<sup>13</sup>** also known as **"Coco's Law"** was enacted on 9th February 2021 and it amends the law relating to Harassment to provide for offences relating to the recording, distribution or publication of intimate images and to provide for the anonymity of victims of those offences; to provide for an offence involving the distribution, publication or sending of threatening or grossly offensive communication. This act criminalises so-called "revenge porn".

### **A Hidden Harm and Vicious Cycle**

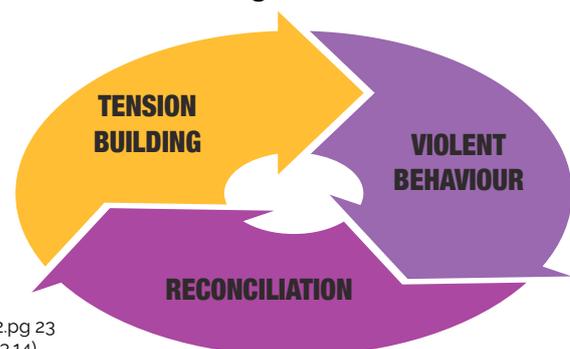
Domestic abuse or domestic violence can happen to anyone. It permeates across socio-economic status, age, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and gender. While women tend to experience higher rates of domestic violence than men, men are more likely to under-report. This under-reporting of domestic violence by both men and women compounds the experience to undermine self-confidence, self-worth and independence. It also has a double impact to our lack of statistics on the number of children impacted by domestic violence.

The impact of domestic abuse is felt by individuals and families with sometimes severe consequences for their emotional, financial, physical and social wellbeing. Children living in abusive environments can be impacted both directly and indirectly with an increased risk of emotional trauma and behavioural problems later in life<sup>14</sup>. The link between domestic violence and child physical abuse, estimated at between 30% to 66%<sup>15</sup> is a further reason to ensure that children are recognised as victims in their own right.

The nature of domestic abuse dictates a vicious cycle through which a victim may be subjected to a range of abusive behaviours so the perpetrator can gain and ensure power and control over the other person.

### **Domestic abuse tends to follow three phases:**

Once abuse has begun, it not only continues, but over time tends to increase in both frequency and severity. As the abuse continues, the three-phase cycle begins to deteriorate. The tension-building phase becomes shorter and more intense, the violent/battering incidents become more frequent and severe, and the reconciliation periods become shorter and less intense. This results in a victim becoming more vulnerable over time<sup>16</sup>.



12 Irish Statute Book (2019). Domestic Violence Act 2018. Sec 39.

13 Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020

14 Tusla Child and Family Agency (2017). Child Protection and Welfare Handbook 2.pg 23

15 Ibid 16 An Garda Síochána (2017). Domestic Abuse Intervention Policy (Sec 3.14)



## Examples of Abuse: (but can vary)

### PHYSICAL

- Biting
- Punching
- Kicking
- Pulling hair
- Pushing
- Burning
- Using weapons (knives, etc)
- Using items as weapons (phone, cups, etc)
- Rape

### SEXUAL

- Sexual assault - forcing unwanted/ unsafe/degrading sexual activity
- Sexual harassment - Grooming/ forced sterilisation/forced pregnancy
- Sexual exploitation - Forcing victim to partake in pornographic film-making/ forcing victim to watch pornography
- Rape/no consent
- Rejecting sex and intimacy

### FINANCIAL/SOCIAL

- Withholding money/social welfare/credit card
- Stealing from or defrauding a partner of money or assets
- Preventing partner from working/ choosing an occupation
- Limiting access to transport
- Social media monitoring
- Locking doors
- Social isolation

### EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Threatening/intimidation
- Destroying personal property
- Shouting/screaming/name calling
- Stalking/harassment
- Monitoring
- Embarassing/mockin in public
- Criticizing/diminishing goals
- Excessive possessiveness
- Gaslighting
- Threatening suicide/self-harm to victim

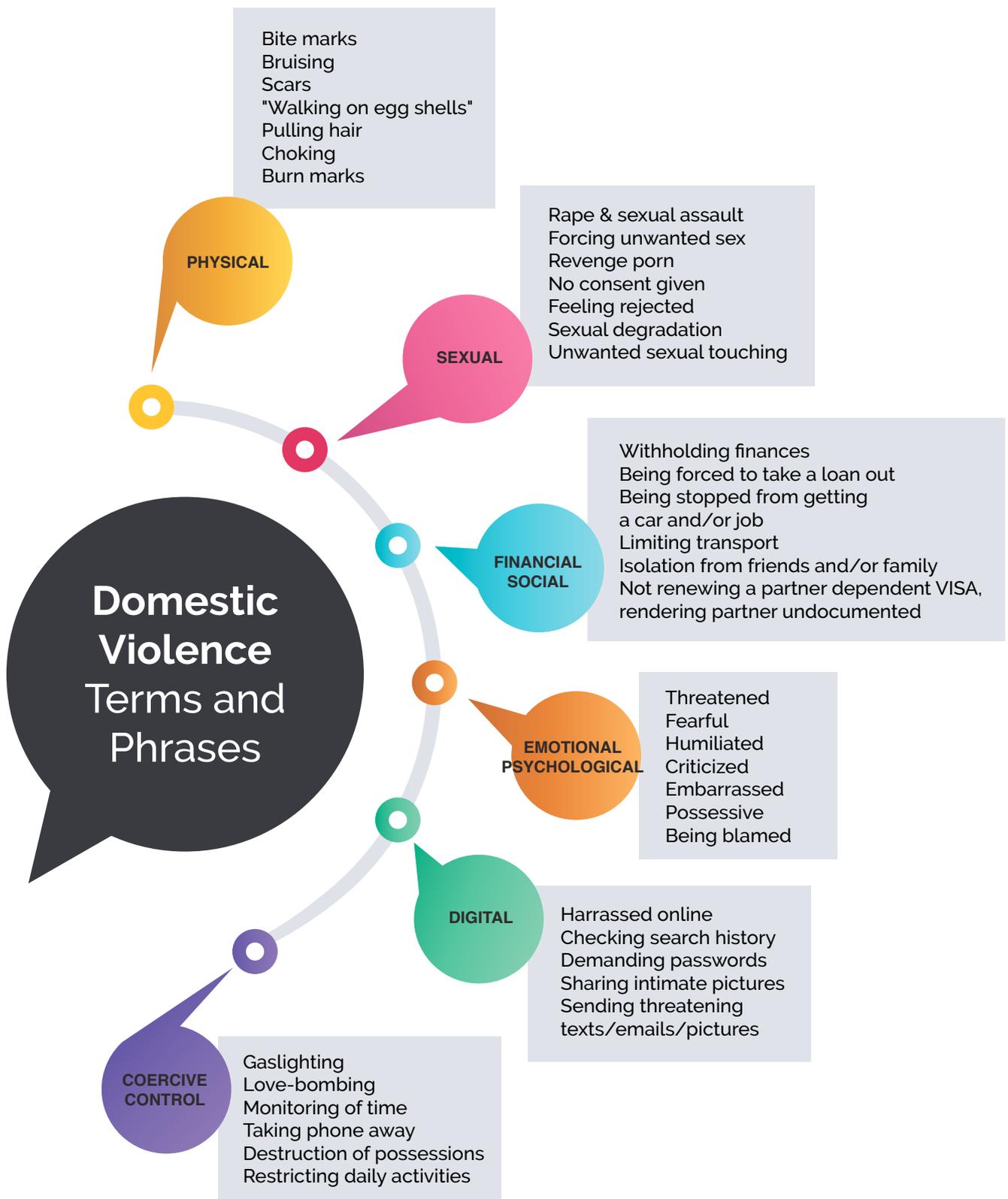
### DIGITAL

- Sharing/threatening to share intimate/private pictures online
- Harassment by sending insulting/threatening text messages
- Making fake social media profiles
- Monitoring online activity
- Checking internet search history
- Using technology to track whereabouts
- Demanding passwords

### COERCIVE CONTROL

- Isolation from friends and family
- Deprivation of basic needs, such as food
- Monitoring the person's time
- Monitoring the person via online communication tools or spyware
- Controlling where a person goes, who they see, what they wear, when they sleep
- Depriving of access to support services, such as medical services
- Repeatedly putting a person down, such as saying they are worthless
- Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising the person
- Controlling their finances
- Making threats or intimidating the person
- Using children - undermining parenting/ threats to children/harming the children
- Blaming the victim for how the abuser feels

# Domestic Violence Terms and Phrases <sup>17 18</sup>



17 Clare Domestic Abuse Resource Pack (2020)  
 18 Roscommon Domestic Abuse Resource Pack (2020)

## Effects of Domestic Abuse <sup>19</sup>

### Women



- Panic attacks
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Fear/Anxiety
- Suicidal ideation/attempted suicide
- Exhaustion/lack of motivation
- Low self-esteem/self-doubt/depression
- Social isolation
- Loss of employment/debt/homelessness/poverty
- Reproductive health issues - *i.e. Unwanted pregnancy/miscarriage/contraceptive issues*
- Substance abuse/misuse
- Physical injury
- Effect on mother/child bond/inability to care for self/children

### Men



- Panic attacks
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Fear/Anxiety
- Suicidal ideation/attempted suicide
- Exhaustion/lack of motivation
- Low self-esteem/self-doubt/depression
- Social isolation
- Loss of employment/debt/homelessness/poverty
- Substance abuse/misuse
- Physical injury

### Children



- Bed wetting/nightmares/flashbacks
- Stress-related illness (skin conditions etc)
- Eating difficulties
- Attachment issues
- School refusal
- Low self-esteem/depression
- Fear/Anxiety
- Isolation amongst peers
- Self-harm
- Suicide
- Anger issues/emotional regulation issues
- Substance use/misuse



### Family Relationships

- Resentment
- Homelessness
- Isolation
- Intergenerational cycle
- Mental health issues
- Scapegoating
- Perpetrator may have negative impact on relationship with victim & children
- Perpetrator may have negative impact on professionals/community
- Helplessness
- Fear



## Recognising Abuse in Interpersonal Relationships

### Warning Signs That Indicate A Potential Abusive Relationship

- A person who has a sense of entitlement that their needs are more important than everyone else's
- A person who needs to have power and control in the relationship
- Power and control of children
- A person who blames their partner for any issues that occur in the relationship
- A person that blames any other person (example interfering sister/mother-in-law, or situation like their childhood experience as an excuse.
- A person who doesn't take any responsibility
- A person who cannot be challenged
- A person who is disrespectful in general
- A person who lacks empathy
- A person who is unavailable when their partner needs support
- A person who undermines their partners ideas, or opinions.
- A person that doesn't respect or acknowledge your values and beliefs
- Doesn't regard you as equal in the relationship
- Undermines your parenting decisions
- Takes the lead on decision making

### Am I In An Abusive Relationship? <sup>20</sup> [www.toointoyou.ie](http://www.toointoyou.ie)

- They constantly put you down and make you feel bad about yourself
- They often make you feel guilty
- They are jealous of your family, friends, colleagues even your own children
- You feel like it's your responsibility to fix everything
- You may have changed your image, style, hair colour to please them
- You worry about setting them off and feel like you have to watch what you say
- You feel anxious or unwell when you know you're going to see them
- They text and call you constantly and may even have other family/friends feeding back your whereabouts
- You have lost confidence in yourself and have low self esteem
- For every decision you make do you think "What will he say or think?"
- Are you told you are crazy or have mental health issues or told you need to take tablets
- Repeatedly told you're stupid, what do you know?
- Are you told you're the abuser?

Please see support services and contacts pages.

20 Spunout (Updated 2018). <https://spunout.ie/sex-relationships/relationships/toxic-relationships>



## Am I An Abusive Person?<sup>21</sup>

### Behaviours

- Have I scared someone with my behaviour?
- Have I taken advantage of or exploited the trust of another person?
- Have I repeatedly bullied or belittled someone either in private or in front of others?
- Have I attempted to control the behaviours or social interactions of another person?
- Have I repeatedly monitored the behaviour or whereabouts of another person?
- Have I repeatedly broken promises to change my behaviour?

### Thoughts

- Do I think that I cannot control my own behaviour?
- Do I deny or minimise the seriousness of my behaviour?
- Do I think that an individual disrespects me when they don't act the way that I want them to?
- Do I think other people or substances (drugs, alcohol, medication etc.) are to blame for my own behaviour?
- Do I think that hurting myself or others is the best/only course of action?
- Do I think that having personally experienced violence or abuse that I can do the same to others or that this excuses my behaviour?
- Do I have very strict views on how people should act or behave?

### Feelings

- Do I feel more relaxed or get a 'high' after I have been angry, abusive or violent?
- Do I feel unable to cope with unpleasant thoughts or feelings?
- Do I feel more in control after I have put someone down or physically hurt them?
- Do I feel disrespected when someone does not do what I ask?
- Do I feel excessively jealous if someone is speaking to or spending time with others?

### What can I do?

If you are worried about your behaviour, thoughts or feelings, seek help.

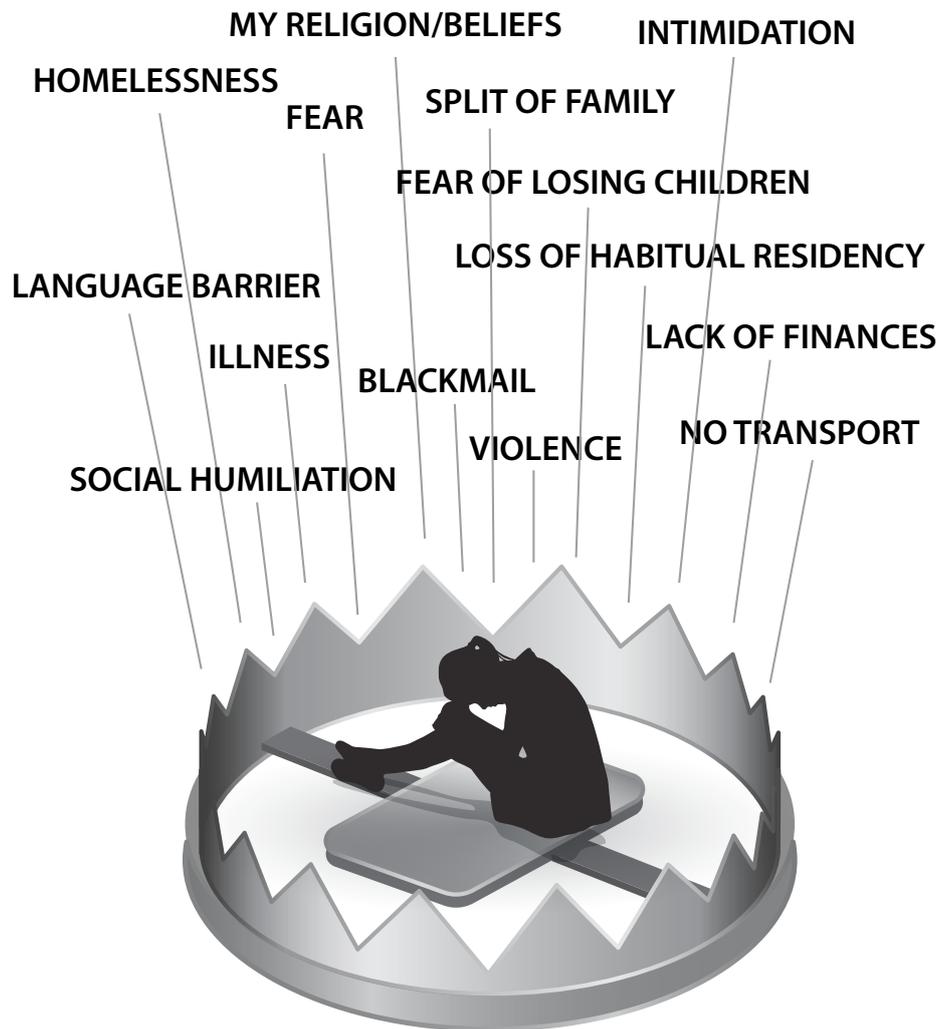
- The first step is admitting to yourself that you have been abusive towards your partner, family or friends.
- Changing your behaviour will be a challenging process. Seek help from a counsellor to work through your feelings and learn how to change your behaviour.  
You cannot go through it alone.
- Know that it is never acceptable to be abusive towards another person.  
You must make the choice to end your behaviour.
- Remember that no one else is ever to blame for your own abusive behaviour.
- Understand the different types of abuse, such as physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

Spunout (Updated 2018). <https://spunout.ie/life/abuse/am-i-an-abusive-person>



## Why Stay?

It's not why doesn't she leave it's why is it in her best interest to stay



**✗ MYTH OR ✓ FACT**

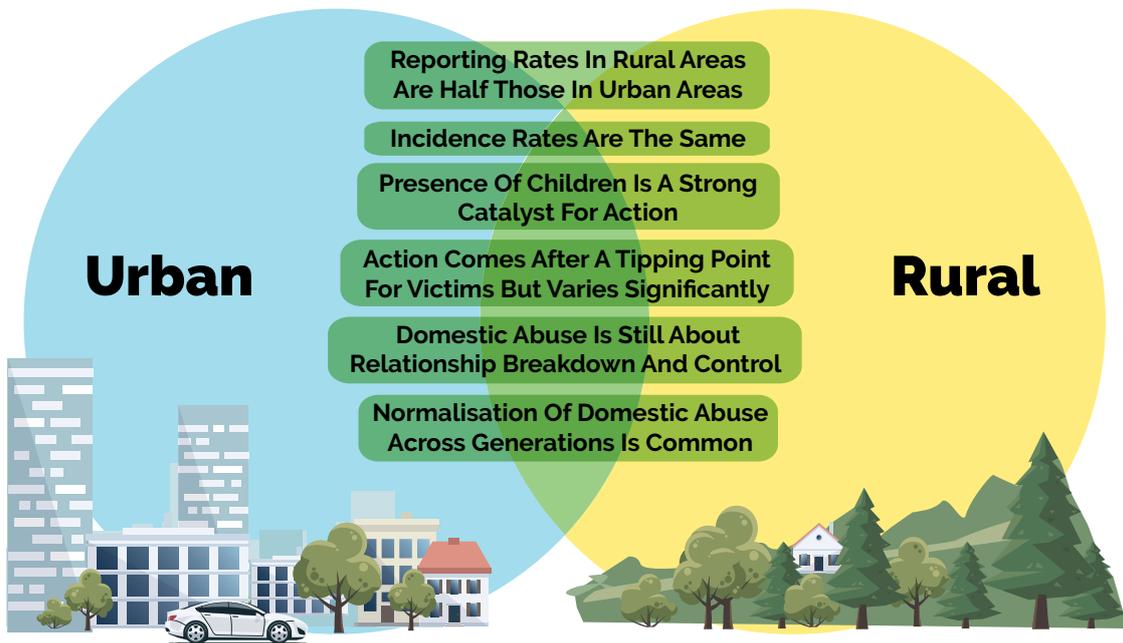
- Mental Health Is To Blame For Domestic Abuse **✗ MYTH**
- Alcohol Or Substance Abuse Is To Blame For Domestic Abuse **✗ MYTH**
- Poverty Causes Domestic Abuse **✗ MYTH**
- Homelessness Causes Domestic Abuse **✗ MYTH**
- Domestic Violence and Abuse Is Once Off **✗ MYTH**
- Children Are Not Effected By Domestic Abuse **✗ MYTH**
- Domestic Abuse Is Only Physical **✗ MYTH**
- Abuse Stops When The Victim Leaves Or Ends Relationship **✗ MYTH**

## Urban Vs Rural

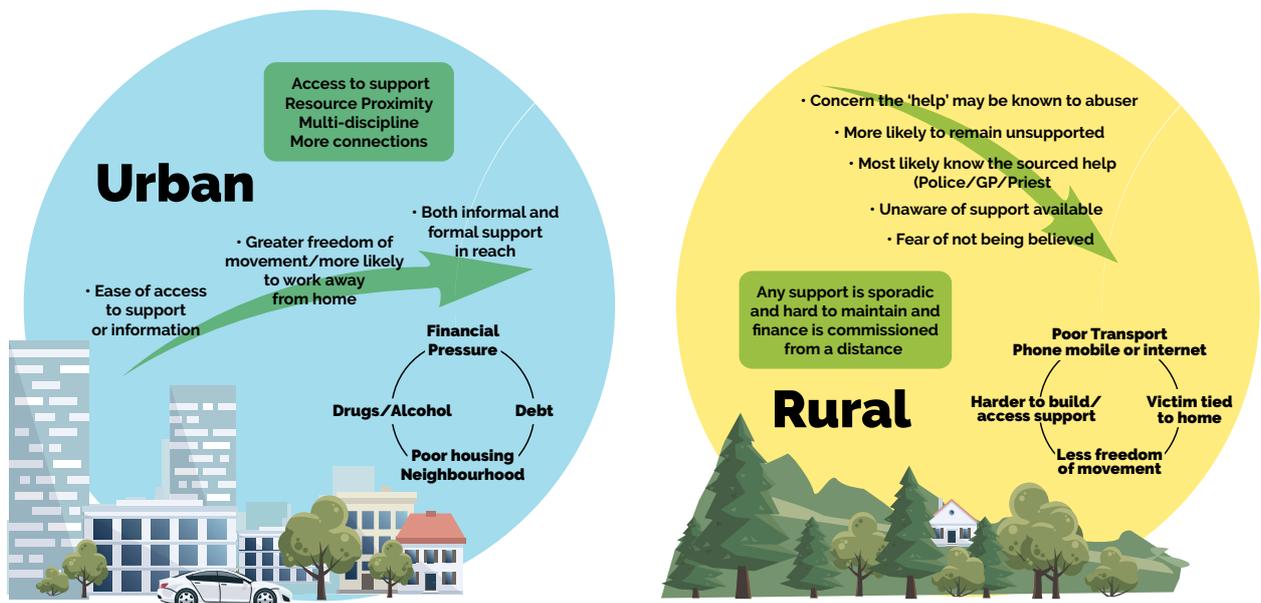
The literature review<sup>1</sup> suggests that educational attainment and awareness levels around abuse and what constitutes abuse appears to be higher in urban areas. For rural areas, the scale of the barriers faced is significantly greater than for urban victims.

In rural areas a range of additional impacts stemming from geographic, cultural and social differences and isolation have an impact which makes reporting abuse a much harder thing to do for rural victims, therefore superimposing themselves to the extent they may delay or inhibit reporting altogether.

### What rural and urban domestic victims have in common:



### Some differences rural and urban domestic victims have:



<sup>1</sup>www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net NCRN report 2019



# Rural



## Honour Based Violence

Honour Based Abuse can take many forms, including child marriage, virginity testing, enforced abortion, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, as well as physical, sexual and economic abuse and coercive control. Honour Based Abuse is perceived as a 'cultural', 'traditional' or 'religious' problem. It can affect people of all ages, but often begins early in the family home.

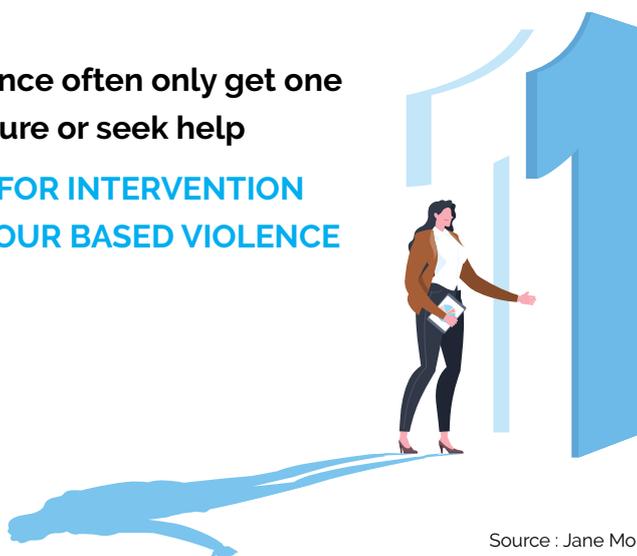
It can lead to a deeply embedded form of coercive control, built on expectations about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Control is often established without overt violence against the victim. For example, family members may threaten to kill themselves or ostracise the victim.

Perpetrators are often partners, ex-partners, or family members. Most victims experience abuse from multiple perpetrators, including parents and siblings.

- Strong beliefs on gender and gender roles
- Triggers come very early in the relationship due to community beliefs/values
- Consequences far quicker due to marginalised groups.
- Conspirators are usually victims own family and friends from the community
- Expectations on how women live, clothes they wear, friends they have, where they go and marriage can all be classed as a justifications for abuse if compliance and honour is not upheld.
- Honour within the relationship can be enforced through a community and/or family
- All rules are directed at women, not men

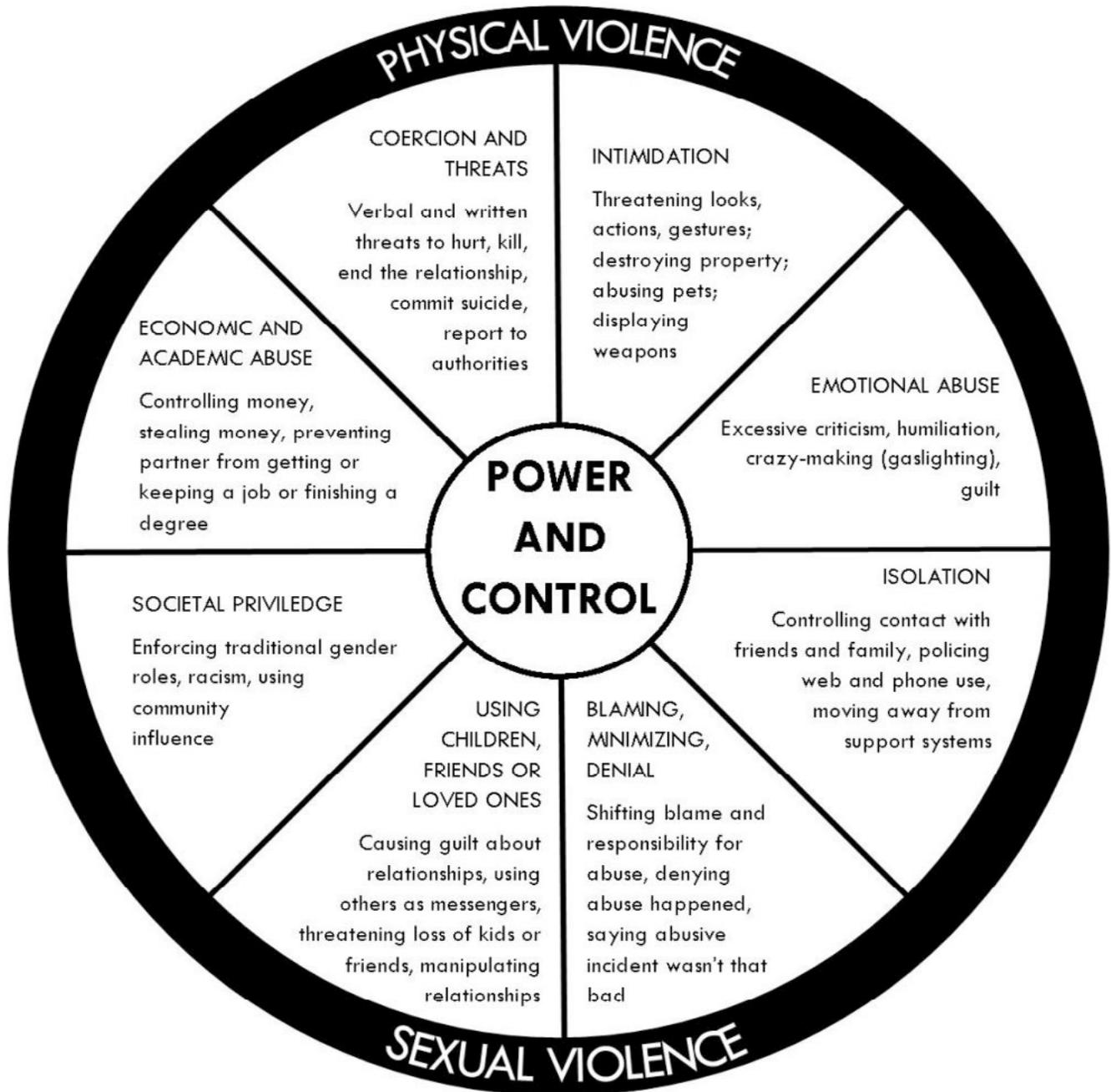
**Victims of honour based violence often only get one opportunity to make a disclosure or seek help**

**ONE CHANCE OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERVENTION  
WHEN RESPONDING TO HONOUR BASED VIOLENCE**



Source : Jane Monckton Smith

## Power and Control Wheel



<https://www.theduluthmodel.org/>

# Post Separation Abuse Wheel



2021 Copyright: One Mom's Battle

## What Happens After a Referral/Concern?

### **An Garda Síochána:**

If you are experiencing domestic abuse you may feel isolated and alone. You may not know who to trust or who you can confide in. It can be daunting contacting the Gardaí but if you are in danger we want you to call 999. When you call 999, a Garda in uniform will arrive at your location in a marked patrol car. They will ensure that you are not in immediate danger.

When you are safe, you will have the time to discuss with the Garda exactly why you called. If you are not in immediate danger and you require advice and assistance, you can visit your local Garda Station.

There you will be met by a uniformed Garda. You can ask to speak with the Garda in private. They may sit down with you and ask you a number of questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. An Garda Síochána just need to find out as much information as possible to ensure that you are safe and that you stay safe.

When Gardaí attend an incident of reported domestic abuse they will introduce themselves and speak to those involved separately and ascertain what occurred. They will get details of those involved and the relationship between them.

Where there is a domestic abuse order in place and that order has been breached, the Gardaí will arrest the perpetrator. If there is no domestic abuse order in place and the Gardaí have grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed and they have a power of arrest, they will utilise that power of arrest.

Gardaí will investigate all offences that have occurred and will take a statement of complaint from the injured party as well as gathering all available evidence for their investigation. Gardaí will supply details of relevant support services and will conduct a call back within 7 days, in person or by 'other means (By phone or email) agreed with the victim. The Garda will make further call backs if appropriate within one month and three months after the incident/initial call.



### **Tusla Social Worker:**

Sometimes, when there are children and young people living in a home and there are concerns that Domestic Abuse might be occurring, a referral is sent to the Tusla Social Work Team

The role of the Social Worker is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child and young person living in the home. A lot of parents have a fear that if social workers become involved, the only result is that their children will be taken into care. This only happens in severe situations when it is absolutely necessary to ensure the physical and emotional safety of children.

If children are received into care, reunification takes place when it is safe to do so. Social workers will work together with a family to come up with the best plan or plans to keep the child and young person safe. This will often involve family members or friends who can be contacted either by a parent or the children (if they are old enough) to talk about any worries they might have and making arrangements for a place of safety if an incident happens.

This will also involve working with the perpetrator to help them to identify what triggers the behaviour and what they can do to prevent them from engaging in abusive behaviours. Social workers also provide families with support in accessing necessary services, including counselling, domestic violence support services and legal services.



## How Can Professionals Help?

### The Three Rs for Professionals

All services and professionals/practitioners working with children and families need to be able to **Recognise** the signs of Domestic Abuse; **Respond** accordingly, and **Refer** where necessary. Remember that trusted professionals in a person's life may be the first person they reach out to. It is essential that we are able to respond in the best way as well as knowing local resources for referral. Professionals need to make themselves aware of their agency's policies and procedures regarding Domestic Abuse and avail of training.

Organisations can make their work environment a safe space for a victim of Domestic Abuse to talk about their experiences:

- Display posters, brochures and information on local, regional and national Domestic Abuse services
- Put information into toilets so that victims can discreetly pick it up
- Provide training to staff regarding Domestic Abuse service provision and training on how to respond to a disclosure of Domestic Abuse.

### Recognise

- Person might be afraid of their partner
- There may be talk about the person's temper, anger or possessiveness
- There may be bruising or injury with the excuse of an accident
- The victim may have history of alcohol use or substance misuse
- They may be accompanied by the partner
- Have erratic attendance at work, college appointments etc.
- Seem controlled and stopped from seeing family and friends
- Keep in mind the impact on children who may also be living in the situation.

### Respond

Victims of Domestic Abuse may not disclose information about their experience unless directly asked. When a person discloses that he/she has experienced Domestic Abuse this indicates the trust and value placed in the professional/person for help and advice.

### Refer where necessary

- Confidence is key
- Listen and be supportive but not judgemental
- Assure the person no-one deserves to be abused despite what the perpetrator says
- Remind the person that being violent is against the law



- Provide accurate local information on services available and how to access them
- Respect their decisions and let them know you are there to support them
- Document the conversation as part of your professional system
- The most dangerous time for a victim of Domestic Abuse is when he/she is just about to leave
- The victim is the best placed to assess their own risk

### **Referring to Domestic, Sexual, Gender Based Violence Support Services:**

Support Services are completely confidential and free. Services provide Support and information to persons experiencing abuse and also to professionals and concerned family members. Anyone can refer themselves to the services or referrals can be made by professionals with the consent of the person being referred.

### **Frequently asked Questions about DSGBV services:**

#### ***Is Your Service Only For People Who Have Left Their Partner?***

No. Many people stay in a relationship with an abusive partner for lots of reasons. Services are non-judgemental.

Services offer support whether the person experiencing abuse chooses to leave the relationship or stay.

#### ***I've Already Left My Partner; Can I Still Use Your Service?***

Yes. Women who have left their partner often feel more unsafe and vulnerable than before. Support is available to you to keep safe and to rebuild your life.

#### ***What Can I Expect From Your Service?***

- We believe you. We will listen to you and treat you with respect.
- We will not try to make you leave your partner.
- We will support you whether you stay or leave the relationship.
- We will work with you to identify the risks to your safety and help you to find ways to keep yourself safe by developing a safety plan with you.
- It is important that the choices you make are your own because you know better than anyone what will keep you safe.
- We can help you find safe ways to leave the relationship if that is what you choose to do.
- We can help you to access safe emergency accommodation in a domestic violence refuge if needed.
- We will help and support you to access your rights and entitlements.



## **Domestic Violence Leave if you are employed**

Domestic Leave was introduced in 2023 as part of the Work Life Balance Act 2023. Victims of domestic violence are entitled to take five days' leave on full pay. This leave is important so that victims of domestic abuse are able to take leave without worrying about losing income, or being put at more risk.

## **Domestic Violence Rent Supplement**

A protocol to assist victims of domestic violence has been established between the Department of Social Protection and Tusla. Under this protocol, if you are a victim of domestic violence you will be able to apply for Rent Supplement on referral by Tusla or by Tusla-funded service providers. Local Referring agencies in the Longford Westmeath area include Longford Women's Link Domestic Violence Service, Esker House Women's Refuge and Support Service, Women's Community Projects (WCP) Mullingar and Westmeath Support Services Against Domestic Abuse

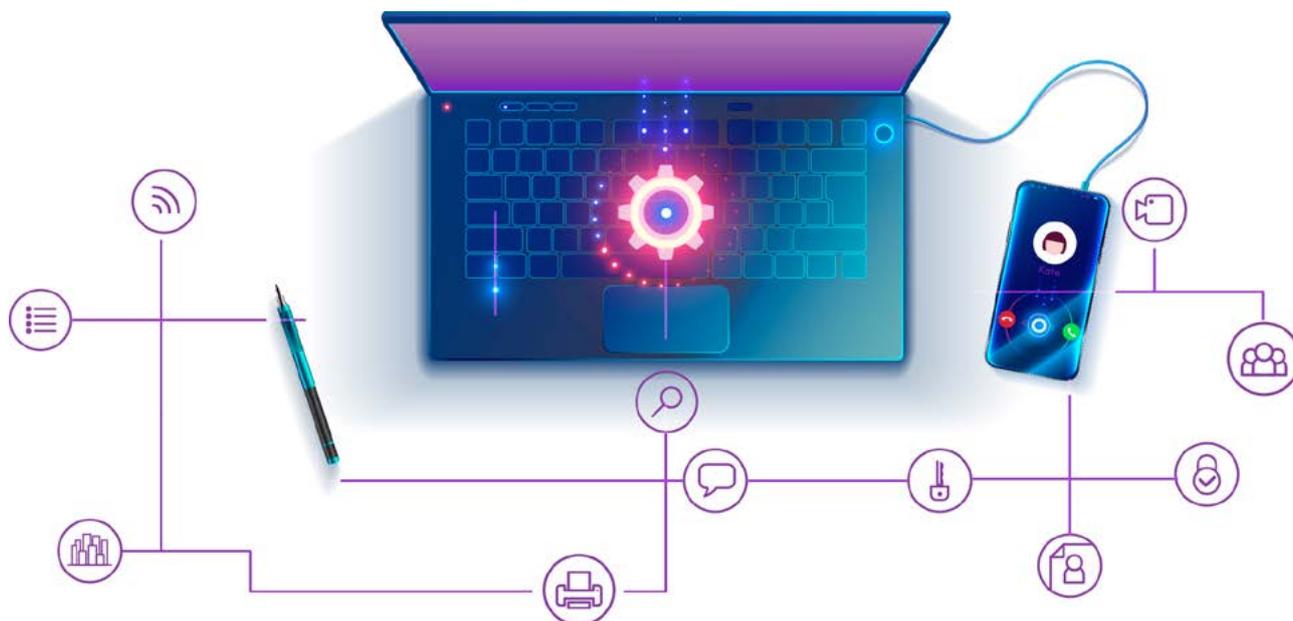
Where an application is made, Rent Supplement will be provided for an initial three months and will not require a means test. You will only be required to pay a minimum contribution towards your rent, regardless of your means, for this period.

After the first three months have passed, you may be provided with a further three month extension of Rent Supplement; however, this will be subject to the usual means assessment and eligibility criteria of the Scheme.

If you have a long term housing need beyond this six month period, you will need to apply to your local housing authority for social housing support as soon as possible. If eligible, you will be able to avail of a local authority sponsored housing solution, including Housing Assistance Payment Scheme. Rent support is provided under this Protocol allowing you to resolve your immediate housing difficulties, and where necessary providing you the time to engage with your local authority.



## Online Resources



## Longford Westmeath Domestic Abuse Multilingual Leaflets



Longford Westmeath Domestic Abuse Local Area Network, under the auspices of Longford Westmeath CYPSC have developed a suite of multilingual Domestic Abuse information leaflets for both Counties Longford and Westmeath. Copies of the leaflets are available in local Domestic Abuse services and in local Garda stations in the Longford and Westmeath garda district areas. PDF's of the leaflets have also been uploaded to the LW CYPSC webpage and are available to download.

<https://www.cypsc.ie//domestic-sexual-gender-based-violence-information-and-resources.3464.html>

## Follow My Lead – Insight Exchange



Follow my lead is a resource that speaks from the voices of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexualised violence who need the professionals and their social networks to be more prepared to respond in ways that uphold their dignity and build on safety. Follow My Lead is an awareness raising resource about domestic and family violence for responders. [www.insightexchange.net](http://www.insightexchange.net)

## Bright Sky App<sup>2</sup>



Bright Sky Ireland, created in partnership with the UK-based domestic abuse charity Hestia, along with Women's Aid Ireland and An Garda Síochána, enables users to locate their nearest support centre by searching their area, Eircode or current location. The app is also designed to be used by specialist and non-specialist practitioners and other employers, and for anyone looking for information about issues around Domestic Abuse such as online safety, stalking and harassment and sexual consent.

Bright Sky Ireland provides a questionnaire in order for users to assess the safety of their relationship, whilst also enabling them to search their area, Eircode or current location in order to locate their nearest support service. The app's digital journal feature is designed to allow users to securely log incidents of domestic abuse using the text, audio, photo or video functions, without any of the content being saved on the device. This evidence can then be given to Gardai and can be used to help secure prosecutions.

Other features of the app include information on different types of abuse, sexual violence, stalking and harassment, as well as insight on the types of support available, how to help a loved one if you think they might be in an abusive relationship and a section with guidance on things to consider if you are thinking about leaving an abusive relationship. *Bright Sky Ireland is available to download on the App Store for iOS and Google Play for Android.*

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.hestia.org/news/bright-sky-ireland-launched-to-support-people-affected-by-domestic-abuse>



## Too Into You <sup>24</sup>



Too Into You is a source of information for young women run by Women's Aid. The website allows users to take a relationship health check quiz to discover the signs of dating abuse, gives the reader a guide to safety orders in dating relationships and check out tips for keeping yourself and your friends safe. The website also features real-life stories, on how to protect yourself online and legal advice. *They have an online chat service that is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7pm – 10pm. Or you can call their 24hr Freephone Helpline 1800341900. [www.toointoyou.ie](http://www.toointoyou.ie)*

## Empower Kids



The Empower Kids Project, is a multi-agency collaboration with services from around Ireland – and have included the voice of over 50 children to date who have lived with domestic violence and abuse to create resources for professionals.  
[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.toointoyou.ie/>



## Local Support Services

### Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services

Below is a listing of local Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Services and Supports that are available in Longford and Westmeath.

#### ESKER HOUSE WOMEN'S REFUGE AND SUPPORT SERVICE

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

**Athlone**      **24 Hour Helpline: 090 6474122**  
**E: [info@eskerhouse.ie](mailto:info@eskerhouse.ie)**

Esker House Women's Refuge and Domestic Abuse Support Service provides temporary safe accommodation for women and their children and support and information for women experiencing domestic abuse.

Esker House Domestic Abuse Support Service offers help and support in the following ways:

- Emergency Refuge Accommodation
- Counselling
- Outreach Services
- Support & Information
- Advocacy
- 24 Hour Helpline
- Court Accompaniment

Esker House Domestic Abuse Support Services is located in Athlone. They provide a suite of services to women and children who are experiencing, or have in the past experienced, domestic abuse. The service is free and confidential.

#### **24 Hour Helpline:**

This service provides support and information to in relation to all forms of domestic abuse. Women effected by DVA can call directly and receive support, information or a referral to one of the services in Esker House. A friend or family member can call for information or support. Professional can also call for information and advice. >>

### **Support Service:**

The support service works with women in the community, in the Athlone and surrounding areas and also in south Roscommon.

This service offers emotional and practical support women to create safety plans and assess their situation. The service provides information and advocacy in relation to social welfare, housing, legal, financial rights, entitlements and options. Support in relation to children and parenting is also offered.

The service provides one on one support and also group programme Own My Life.

The support service also provides information and awareness events and training to the community.

### **Refuge:**

The refuge service provides emergency short term accommodation to women and children experiencing DVA. While in refuge the woman is offered emotional and practical support women to create safety plans and assess their situation. The service provides information and advocacy in relation to social welfare, housing, legal, financial rights, entitlements and options. Support in relation to children and parenting is also offered. Support workers will support the woman to explore move on options and advocate to relevant services as necessary.

### **Court and Legal Advocacy Service:**

This specialised service offers support and advocacy in all aspects of legal remedies for DVA, including:

- Information of Domestic Violence court orders, assessment on the criteria for an order, safety planning in relation to the process of applying for and use of DV orders.
- Referral and advocacy to legal aid and Legal representation
- Support and accompaniment for court
- Support after court
- Advocacy and referral to Gardai if needed

### **Child and Young Person Support Service:**

This service is a specialised support service to children and young people who have been impacted by DVA. The programme is bespoke to every child to support them through their own experience of DVA trauma, focusing on exploring their sense of safety, exploring and managing feeling's and relationships.

## WESTMEATH SUPPORT SERVICE AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE

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

**Mullingar T: 044 9333868 / 087 294 0058**

**E: [info@wssada.ie](mailto:info@wssada.ie)**

Westmeath Support Service Against Domestic Abuse (WSSADA) supports women and their families overcome violence and abuse by an intimate partner and lead lives of their choosing. WSSADA supports include:

- Telephone Support
- One-to-One Support
- Outreach Service
- Referral Service
- Legal Advocacy and Accompaniment
- Court Accompaniment
- Sessional Therapy

WSSADA is located in Mullingar. They are a dedicated voluntary service providing services to women who are experiencing, or have experienced, domestic abuse. The service is free and confidential service and operates from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

### **Telephone Support:**

The telephone support operates from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday. Women who call the service can receive direct confidential and non-judgemental information and support or a referral to other internal services. Professionals and stakeholders can also call for information or to make referrals.

### **One-to-One Support:**

One-to-One Support is provided to women in Mullingar and the wider North Westmeath area. It provides women with the opportunity to consider all their options through one-to-one appointments with an advocacy support worker. The service provides information in relation to legal, financial, housing, social welfare rights, entitlements and options as required.

### **Outreach Service:**

WSSADA provides support and advocacy service to rural areas if service users cannot access the service in Mullingar.

### **Referral Service:**

The advocacy and support workers engage with several stakeholders in the Westmeath region to ensure best outcomes for women who use WSSADA's service. Referrals are made to other services appropriate to service user's needs and accompany to those services if required.

### **Legal Advocacy and Court Accompaniment**

WSSADA provides support and advocacy in all aspects of legal remedies for domestic violence, separation, maintenance and access including:

- Provide information of Domestic Violence court orders and making an assessment on the thresholds for an order, advice in relation to applying for and use of domestic violence orders
- Referral to legal representation
- Accompaniment to legal professionals when necessary
- Advocate on service users' behalf when required and promote self-advocacy
- Prepare and ensure service users have all relevant and paperwork ahead of attending court
- Attend court with service users
- Provide support before, during and after court proceedings
- Clarify difficult legal terminology
- Advocacy and referral to Gardai when necessary.

### **Sessional Therapy**

WSSADA provides additional emotional support in the form of therapy. It is therapy tailor-made for individual service users who experience domestic abuse to address their specific needs.

## LONGFORD WOMEN'S LINK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE

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

**Longford T: 043 3341511**

**E: [info@lwl.ie](mailto:info@lwl.ie)**

Longford Women's link Domestic Violence Service provides supports to women and children experiencing domestic violence in Co. Longford. They are a team of trained specialists in the areas of domestic violence, coercive control and engaging with the criminal justice system.

They use a gendered analysis and victim's rights-based approach in supporting clients to manage the violence and control, supports include :

- 1-1 Practical Support
- Crisis interventions
- Risk Assessments
- Provide a Clear understanding and Analysis of Domestic Violence.
- Unique Safety Planning for Women and Children
- Emotional Support
- Outreach Service for anyone who can't attend the centre.
- Helpline Support
- Prepare Court Application Orders (Protection Orders, Interim Barring Orders, Safety Orders, Barring Orders, Breaches)
- Court Accompaniment
- Referrals to Legal Professionals
- Translation Service
- Garda Station Accompaniment
- Special Interview Accompaniment
- Accompaniment to legal professionals
- Admin on woman's behalf to Gardaí/ Legal aid board/ Solicitors / Courts
- Special Domestic Violence Counselling Service
- Referrals to services within Longford Women's Link
- Educational Workshops with in the Local community
- Domestic Violence Support Groups
- Multi Translated Domestic Violence Support Information leaflet  
Russian - Polish- Latvian - Arabic - Czech - Slovakian - Portuguese

**LWLDVS is a free and confidential service and operates  
from 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.**



## **ATHLONE (MIDLANDS) RAPE CRISIS CENTRE**

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

**Athlone**

**Freephone: 1800 306600**

**T: 090 64 73862 (Business calls)**

**E: [info@amrcc.ie](mailto:info@amrcc.ie)**

Athlone (Midland) Rape Crisis Centre (AMRCC) supports anyone who has suffered from sexual abuse or violence. This service is provided by professionally accredited psychotherapists. AMRCC supports include:

- Confidential Telephone Counselling
- Face-to-Face Counselling
- Adolescent Counselling
- Court Accompaniment
- Outreach Service
- Education Service

**AMRCC is a free and confidential service.**

## **Women's Community Projects (WCP) Mullingar.**

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

**Mullingar**

**T: 086-2655066**

**E: [counselling@wcpmullingar.ie](mailto:counselling@wcpmullingar.ie)**

Mullingar Counselling Service provided by Women' Community Project's Mullingar offers counselling to people who have been affected by domestic violence or sexual abuse. These sessions are funded by TUSLA. The counselling model used by Mullingar Counselling Service is Person Centred based, using many different models of therapy to help the client, these include CBT, Polyvagal therapy, Art therapy, Systemic, EFT by Sue Johnson. Solution focused therapy, Mindfulness, Gestalt, Parental skills, Relaxation therapy, Risk and Crisis management. The therapists are fully qualified and accredited or working towards their accreditation.

Services we offer:

- Face to face counselling
- Online counselling via Zoom
- Confidential phone Counselling
- Referral Service
- Links to services within Women's Community Projects

**Mullingar Counselling is an accessible, affordable & confidential service**

## Other supports in Longford & Westmeath

An Garda Síochána **Dial 999/112 if in immediate danger**  
[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie) **Garda Confidential 1800 666 111**

### Longford/Westmeath Garda Stations

<b>Mullingar</b>	Mullingar Garda Station	<b>044-9384000</b> (Available 24 Hours a day)
<b>Athlone</b>	Athlone Garda Station	<b>090-6498550</b> (Available 24 Hours a day)
<b>Longford</b>	Longford Garda Station	<b>043-3350570</b> (Available 24 Hours a day)

**If Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired Register your mobile on [www.112.ie](http://www.112.ie) and Text 112 to report a crime or get Garda Assistance (Available 24 hours a day)**

### Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU)

[www.tusla.ie/services/domestic-sexual-gender-based-violence](http://www.tusla.ie/services/domestic-sexual-gender-based-violence)

Mullingar Midland Regional Hospital **T 044-9394239 / 086-0409952**  
**Out of hours: 044-9340221 ask for SATU**

SATU provides specialist care for women and men aged fourteen years and over who have recently been sexually assaulted or raped. The specialist team of SATU staff provide easily accessible, holistic services which address the medical, psychological and emotional needs and appropriate follow up care for victims of sexual crime, in a supportive and sensitive manner. This includes provision of treatment such as emergency contraception and medication to reduce the possibility of developing sexually transmitted infection. The SATU services respond to requests from the Gardaí for the collection of forensic evidence to aid the legal process and also provide services for people who do not wish to report the incident to the Gardaí. There is no charge for any of the SATU services or follow up appointments. SATU services can be contacted at any time via An Garda Síochána, or by contacting the individual SATU.



## Tusla Child and Family Agency

[www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/concerns/](http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/concerns/)

### **Longford/Westmeath Duty Social Work T: 044-9353999**

Social workers provide frontline services to children and families. Duty Social Workers deal mainly with urgent difficulties with children, young people and child protection matters. If you need to report a concern about a child or need to discuss a concern, Duty Social Workers can help. Information on how to make a report or referral please go to Reporting a concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should be communicated to the Agency.

## Tusla Child and Family Agency

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/>

### **Longford/Westmeath T: 044-9353999**

#### **Child & Family Support Network Coordinator**

Family Support Services are also included in the Tusla Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme for families and individuals who need help and support. Family life is not always easy. Life events like birth, death, depression, redundancy, separation, illness, abuse, or financial problems all put stress and strain on family life and relationships. Family Support Services can help. Simply having someone to talk to about your problem can be the easiest way to begin to deal with your problem. There are many support groups for adults, teenagers, children and carers that give people the chance to tell their own stories and give support to each other. Specialist services provide support for domestic violence or child abuse. Family Support services are generally provided to families in their own homes and communities. Your concerns are dealt with in confidence by trained personnel who will give the appropriate support, advice, and help.



## Legal Information and Advice

### Longford/Westmeath Court Services

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

Athlone	090-6492271	athloneDC@courts.ie
Mullingar	044-9348315	mullingarcourtoffice@courts.ie
Longford	043-3346410	longfordcourtoffice@courts.ie

Opening Hours Monday to Friday: 10.00-13.00 and 14.00-16.30

#### Emergency/ Out of Hours Domestic Violence Applications:

- If you need to bring an emergency application after hours, contact your local Garda Station. The Garda Station will contact the Court Clerk on call to arrange a court.

### Citizens Information Centres (CIC) in Longford/Westmeath

[www.citizensinformation.ie/en/](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/)

#### Mullingar Citizens Information Centre, T: 0818 076 660

County Buildings, Mount St, Complex, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath,

#### Athlone Citizens Information Centre, T: 0818 076 610

Arcadia Retail Centre (Office 2, 1st Floor), Athlone, Co. Westmeath,

#### Longford Citizens Information Centre, T: 0818 075 890

Level 1, Longford SC, Co. Longford

### Legal Aid Board

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

#### Longford Law Centre

7/8 Market Square, Longford. N39K093

Wheelchair Accessible

T: (043) 334 7590

E : [lawcentrelongford@legalaidboard.ie](mailto:lawcentrelongford@legalaidboard.ie)

## National Support and Information

Further information on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Services from  
[www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)    [www.stillhere.ie](http://www.stillhere.ie).    [www.victimscharter.ie](http://www.victimscharter.ie)

### Women's Aid [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie)

T: 1800 341 900      E: [info@womensaid.ie](mailto:info@womensaid.ie)

The Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline offers confidential information, support and understanding to women in the Republic of Ireland, who are being abused by current or former boyfriends, partners or husbands.

The service also supports family members, friends and professionals who have concerns about a person, they know or are working with, who might be experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The Helpline provides support to callers where English is not their first language, through our Language Line facility (operational daily, 8am-8pm) and for women who are deaf or hard of hearing through its Text Service facility (operational daily, 8am-8pm).

The Helpline aims to empower women to identify what is happening for them within their relationship and support them to stay safe and support the safety of any children living within the relationship. The Helpline aims to at all times ensure that the responsibility for the abuse is placed firmly with the perpetrator of the abuse and not with the woman.

### Safe Ireland [www.safeireland.ie](http://www.safeireland.ie)

T: 090 6479078      E: [info@safeireland.ie](mailto:info@safeireland.ie)

Safe Ireland has a clear ambition: to end domestic violence and make Ireland the safest country in the world for women and children. Safe Ireland's approach is to:

- Change social behaviour and attitudes
- Establish a whole system response to domestic violence
- Cultivate leadership at all levels in Irish society
- Communicate our understanding of the problem and enhance everyone's capacity to respond.



**AkiDwA**  
**www.akidwa.ie**

T: (01) 8349851 E: info@akidwa.ie

Akina Dada wa Africa, or AkiDwA for short, is a national network of migrant women living in Ireland. Akina Dada wa Africa means sisterhood in Swahili. AkiDwA works to promote equality and justice for migrant women living in Ireland by ensuring equal opportunities and access to resources. Their activities are focused on helping migrants to participate fully in all aspects of social, cultural, economic, civic and political life in Ireland.

AkiDwA's work focuses on female genital mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, forced marriages and trafficking. Their work has involved awareness raising, training and advocating for migrant women affected in particular by Female Genital Mutilation.

**Men's Aid**  
**www.mensaid.ie**

T: 01-5543811 E: hello@mensaid.ie

Men's Aid Ireland formerly known as Amen, is a dedicated national service supporting men and their families experiencing Domestic Violence in Ireland. Their professional and qualified support team have years of experience in supporting men and families experiencing domestic abuse.

Men's Aid provide the following services:

- National Confidential Helpline – 01 554 3811
- Legal clinic – Information about Safety Orders, Protection Orders, Barring Orders.
- One to one practical support – Explaining Court Paperwork, Safety Planning, Care plans
- Counselling – By Telephone
- Counselling – Face to Face
- Certified Training – All areas of domestic abuse including coercive control.



## Men's Development Network Male Advice Line

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

T: 1800-816 588

E: [men@mensnetwork.ie](mailto:men@mensnetwork.ie)

The Male Advice Line was developed by the Men's Development Network. Counsellors provide an outlet for men, who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse in their relationship, to speak confidentially with professionals who are trained to advise on domestic crime.

## Additional Resources

### Women's Aid Free Interpretation Line

<https://www.womensaid.ie/services/helpline/telephoneinterp.html>

### New Communities partnership

<https://www.newcommunities.ie/>

### IOM Cultural mediators

<https://ireland.iom.int/>

### Migrants Rights Centre

<https://www.mrci.ie/>



## Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV) Agency Department of Justice Ireland

The DSGBV Agency is to be established in January 2024 under the new DSGBV Agency Bill, which is expected to be published shortly, subject to its approval by the Government. The legislation is further supported by a programme of actions to establish an Agency in line with commitments in the Programme for Government and the Justice Plan to ensure the coherent delivery of DSGBV services and practical support for the Third National Strategy on Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. At present, Tusla, in line with its functions under section 8 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, has a role in commissioning DSGBV services. In this context, DSGBV services are refuges, rape crisis centres and helplines, and any ancillary activities the organisations undertake. It is intended that with the establishment of the new DSGBV Agency, responsibility for the funding and oversight of services will formally transfer from Tusla to the new Agency.

The principal functions of the Agency are envisaged as follows.

1. To plan, coordinate and monitor the development of refuge accommodation for DSGBV victims.
2. To provide support, including financial assistance, for providing services within refuges and other services for victims and persons at risk of DSGBV.
3. To provide support, including financial assistance, for programmes for individuals and families to prevent and reduce domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.
4. Prepare and publish standards for the provision of refuges and other services and monitor adherence to those standards.
5. Compile and distribute information on the availability of refuge accommodation and DSGBV services and programmes.
6. Develop and implement DSGBV awareness campaigns and provide advice and support on developing other such campaigns by other public bodies and civil society.
7. Assist the Minister in developing and evaluating strategies and plans relating to DSGBV.
8. Coordinate, oversee and provide advice and support to public service bodies about implementing such strategies and plans.
9. Undertake, commission, or collaborate in research (including the collection and analysis of statistical data) to support the evaluation of DSGBV policies, strategies, and services and to support the effective performance by the Agency of its functions generally.



## Appendices

### Appendix 1:

#### Tusla Child and Family Agency – Child Protection and Domestic Abuse

Tusla has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children and as such must always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being abused or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Such child protection concerns need to be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of abuse or neglect. In the case of Domestic Abuse, initial referrals are generally made by the Gardaí (called to attend an incident, where there is a child/children present within the household) to the local Duty Social Work team. Where the Garda attending believes there is an immediate and serious risk to the health and welfare of the child, they will invoke Section 12 of the Child Care Act 1991 which will in turn enable the duty social worker to access an out of hours bed. Specialist Domestic Abuse services also provide initial child protection/welfare referrals.

Where it is suspected that a child is at risk there must be a report made under Children First. The term "Children First" was originally used in relation to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, first published in 1999 and reviewed and updated on a number of occasions since then, most recently in 2019 including online safety.

Since the enactment of the Children First Act 2015, the term is now a generic term used to encompass the guidance, the legislation and the implementation of both. Children First relates to the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Túsła - Child and Family Agency and the best practice which organisations should adhere to keep children safe while availing of their services. Non statutory obligations for all persons coming into contact with children are set out in the Children First Guidance. The Children First Act 2015 sets out additional statutory obligations for defined categories of persons and for organisations providing relevant services to children.

Society has a duty of care towards children and everyone should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or be at risk of abuse<sup>25</sup>. A joint working protocol for An Garda Síochána/Tusla Child & Family Agency was introduced into practice to ensure that:

- The safety and welfare of the child is promoted
- Everything possible is done to assist the criminal investigation
- Everything possible is done to assist the child protection and welfare assessment
- There is an effective flow of relevant information between both agencies
- Decisions and actions follow consultation with and between both agencies.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Children First, Tusla <https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/children-first/>

<sup>26</sup> [www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/CF\\_Joint\\_Protocol.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/CF_Joint_Protocol.pdf)



## Appendix 2:

### Legal Protection for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

Below is information on the types of orders available to victims of Domestic Violence and Coercive control under the Domestic Violence Act 2018 : <sup>27</sup>

Barring orders remove the abuser (respondent) from the family home, there are three different types.

#### Emergency Barring Order (short term)

An emergency barring order requires the abusive person to leave the home and prohibits the person from entering the home. This is an immediate order where there is reasonable grounds to believe there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the applicant or a dependent person if an order is not made immediately.

An emergency barring order may be obtained by:

- A person who is not a spouse or civil partner or is not related to the respondent but did live in an intimate relationship with the respondent prior to the application.
- A parent of the respondent who is not a dependent.

An emergency barring order is only granted in circumstances where the applicant has no legal rights to the property or their rights are less than the respondent and there is an immediate risk of significant harm to the applicant or dependent person.

An emergency barring order can be granted ex parte. Where granted, an emergency barring order shall operate in the same manner as a barring order but will only last for eight days. A subsequent emergency barring order cannot be sought within one month of the expiration of a previous emergency barring order.

An emergency barring order may, if the court thinks fit, prohibit the abusive person (respondent) from:

- using or threatening to use violence against the applicant / dependent person,
- molesting or putting the applicant / dependent person in fear,
- watching or besetting a place where the applicant / dependent person resides,
- Following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant / dependent person.

<sup>27</sup> The information on the orders was drawn from [www.garda.ie/en/Crime/Domestic-abuse/What-is-a-Safety-Order-.html](http://www.garda.ie/en/Crime/Domestic-abuse/What-is-a-Safety-Order-.html) and <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/6/enacted/en/pdf>



## **Interim Barring Order (short term)**

Where the court, on application to it for a barring order or between the making of that application and its determination, is of the opinion that there are reasonable grounds for believing there is an immediate risk to the safety of the applicant or a dependent (and a protection order would not provide sufficient protection), the court shall grant an interim barring order. The interim barring order requires the abusive person to leave the home and prohibits the person from entering the home for up to 8 days.

An interim barring order may also prohibit the respondent from doing any one or more of the following as the Court thinks fit:

- using or threatening to use violence against the applicant/dependent person,
- molesting or putting in fear the applicant/dependent person,
- watching or besetting a place where the applicant/dependent person resides,
- following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant or dependent person

An interim barring order may be obtained by:

- the spouse of the respondent,
- the civil partner of the respondent,
- a person who is not the spouse or civil partner of the respondent and is not related to the respondent within a prohibited degree of relationship but lived with the respondent in an intimate relationship prior to the application for the barring order, or
- A parent of the respondent who is not a dependent person.

An interim barring order may be made ex parte (where the respondent is not in court). An ex parte interim barring order will not exceed eight days. An interim barring order will cease to have effect on the determination of the application for the barring order.

## **A Barring Order (longer term)**

A barring order requires the abusive person (the respondent) to leave the home and prohibits the abusive person from entering the home. The court may also, if it thinks fit, prohibit the person from further violence or threats of violence, watching or being near the applicant's home, or following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant or a dependent person (any child).

A barring order may be obtained by:

- the spouse of the respondent,
- the civil partner of the respondent,
- a person who is not the spouse or civil partner of the respondent and is not related to the respondent within a prohibited degree of relationship but lived with the respondent in an intimate relationship prior to the application for the barring order, or
- a parent of the respondent who is not a dependent

A barring order shall:

- direct the respondent, if residing at a place where the applicant / dependent person resides, to leave the place,
- if the respondent is or is not residing at a place where the applicant/dependent person resides, shall prohibit the respondent from entering the place until further order of the court or until such other time as the court shall specify,

A barring order may also prohibit the respondent from doing any one or more of the following as the Court thinks fit:

- using or threatening to use violence against the applicant / dependent person,
- molesting or putting in fear the applicant / dependent person,
- prohibits watching or besetting a place where the applicant / dependent person resides,
- Following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant / dependent person.

A barring order may remain in place for up to 3 years after its making and may be renewed on or before expiration date of the barring order, for a period of up to three years.

Where the respondent doesn't live with the applicant then a safety order can be applied for instead. Again, there are short term and longer options available.



### **Protection Order (short term)**

Where there has been an application to the Court for a safety or a barring order or between the making of that application and its determination and there are reasonable grounds for believing that the safety or welfare of the applicant or dependent (any child) so requires, a protection order may be granted.

The protection order will prohibit the respondent from:

- using or threatening the use of violence against, molesting or putting in fear, the applicant or a dependent person,
- if residing elsewhere, watching or besetting a place where the applicant or a dependent person resides,
- Following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant or a dependent person.

A protection order is temporary and expires on the determination by the court of the application for the barring or safety order. A protection order may be made ex parte.

### **A Safety Order (longer term)**

A safety order is an order of the court which prohibits the abusive person (the respondent) from committing further violence or threats of violence. They are not obliged to leave the home. If the abusive person is not living with the applicant, the safety order prohibits them from watching or being near their home and following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant or a dependent person (any child).

Safety and protection orders may be obtained by the following:

- the spouse of the respondent,
- the civil partner of the respondent,
- a person who is not the spouse or civil partner of the respondent and is not related to the respondent within a prohibited degree of relationship, but was in an intimate relationship with the respondent prior to the application for the safety order,
- a parent of the respondent and the respondent is of full age and is not, in relation to the parent, a dependent person,
- being of full age, resides with the respondent in a relationship the basis of which is not primarily contractual, or
- has a child with the respondent



A safety order does not exclude the offender from the home but offers the applicant (or a dependent) safety by prohibiting the respondent from:

- using or threatening to use violence against the applicant/dependent person,
- molesting or putting in fear the applicant / dependent person,
- if not residing with the applicant, prohibits watching or besetting a place where the applicant / dependent person resides,
- Following or communicating (including electronically) with the applicant / dependent person.

A safety order may remain in place up to 5 years after its making and may be renewed.

### **Coercive Control** <sup>28</sup>

Coercive control is a newly recognised crime in Ireland and is described as:

1. A person commits an offence where he or she knowingly and persistently engages in behaviour that –
  - (a) is controlling or coercive,
  - (b) has a serious effect on a relevant person and
  - (c) A reasonable person would consider likely to have a serious effect on a relevant person.
2. For the purposes of 1. A person's behaviour has a serious effect on a relevant person if the behaviour causes the relevant person-
  - (a) to fear that violence will be used against him or her or
  - (b) serious alarm or distress that has a substantial adverse impact on his or her usual day-to-day activities
3. A person who commits an offence under subsection 1 is liable to
  - (a) On summary conviction to a class A fine or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both and
  - (b) On conviction on indictment, to a fine or imprisonment not exceeding 5 years or both
4. In this section, a person is a "relevant person" in respect of another person if he or she-
  - (a) Is the spouse or civil partner of that other person or
  - (b) Is not the spouse or civil partner of that other person and is not related to that other person within a prohibited degree of relationship but is or was in an intimate relationship with that other person.

Other relevant legislation that can be used in domestic abuse cases includes the following act on harassment and harmful communications.

## **Key Provisions of the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020**

### **Section 1.**

**Intimate Image** in relation to a person is defined as any visual representation (Including any accompanying sound or document) made by any means including photographic, film, video or digital representation-

- (a) Of what is or purports to be the person's genitals, buttocks or anal region and in the case of a female, her breasts
- (b) Of the underwear covering the person's genitals, buttocks or anal region and in the case of a female her breasts,
- (c) In which the person is nude or
- (d) In which the person is engaged in sexual activity

"Harm" includes psychological harm.

### **Section 2**

Distributing, publishing or threatening to distribute or publish intimate image without consent with intent to cause harm or being reckless as to whether harm is caused

### **Section 3**

Recording, Distributing or Publishing intimate Image without consent

### **Section 4**

Distributing, Publishing or sending threatening or grossly offensive communication

### **Section 5**

Anonymity of victim of offence under section 2 or 3









