



# West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

52<sup>nd</sup> EDITION

JULY, AUGUST, SEPT 2013

## BREAK THE SILENCE **contact us**

[www.westcorkwomensproject](http://www.westcorkwomensproject)

email: [admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie](mailto:admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie)



## stalking

What is stalking?

Are you a victim of it?

If so, what can you do?

Stalking behaviours are often used by men to control and intimidate their girlfriends, partners and ex partners. Stalking can occur at any stage in a relationship but can escalate when a relationship ends. The effects of stalking have caused women to leave jobs / college courses and become isolated from family and friends. Social media and the digital world have made stalking so much easier for men who wish to control and hurt women.

### Ways in which women are stalked:

- He can turn up at her place of work frequently (often when she is alone there); call her at work on the office line in attempts to cause trouble for her.
- He will find out what her social activities are and be waiting outside evening classes, or bars / restaurants she is at with friends. He can talk to her friends in order to find out more about her or cause trouble in order to isolate her.
- He will use social media, texting and email to further control, isolate and humiliate his victim.
- He could text his victim constantly swinging from abusive and threatening messages to ones saying he can't live without her.
- He will contact her family and friends in order to check up on her or to damage those relationships.
- He can put abusive or embarrassing comments on to social media networks about her. Perpetrators have used their ex partner's passwords in order to access her social network page and post nasty comments and embarrassing photos which her family and friends will believe she has posted.

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## What can you do if you think you are being stalked?

- 1 Keep a record of sightings, phone calls, and suspicious incidents.
- 2 You may need to check that your home is secure and make appropriate improvements.
- 3 Always carry your mobile phone with you and a personal alarm when you go out.
- 4 Record any incident you are suspicious of:
  - **Telephone calls** - remain calm, say nothing, put the handset down and go away for a few minutes, then cut off the connection.
  - **Sightings** - record the date, time, location, and details of what he was doing and the clothes he was wearing, what he was carrying etc.
  - **Cars** - If you are aware of a particular car around a lot, again note the dates and times of sightings along with registration number, make, model and colour.
  - **Camera** - Record on your camera anything you can as evidence of what is happening.
- 5 Contact the phone company's Malicious Calls Department for advice - you can block the person's contact number (but he may obtain another and continue the harassment).
- 6 Inform friends, family, neighbours, and work colleagues of what is happening so that they can support and protect you.
- 7 Keep telephone numbers of support services and people you can trust handy in case of something happening.
- 8 Contact the Gardaí and give them details of what has happened. If you feel in danger call the Gardaí immediately.
- 9 Try to show no emotion to your stalker (easier said than done), and DO NOT attempt to confront him or agree to meet him. If you do come into contact with him try to get away to a busy place.

**ABOVE ALL BE STRONG, YOU WILL GET THROUGH THIS AND ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT FEEL LIKE IT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

## contacting a solicitor

If you are experiencing domestic violence and your abuser is your husband, partner or close family member you can choose to obtain legal protection. A Protection Order can be obtained without legal expenses but at West Cork Women Against Violence Project we strongly recommend having a solicitor present with you at court. We can offer emotional and practical support but we are not trained legal experts.

### Questions you may find helpful when you are employing a Solicitor:

- Have you experience in family law?
- What is your minimum fee? What is your fee per hour?
- What is covered in this fee?
- How many negotiation sessions are included?
- What is your rate for appearance in court?

Also, having outlined your situation, it may be useful to address issues like maintenance, access/custody of children,

- How much maintenance can I expect ?
- If there is a separation agreement will the amount of maintenance be written in?
- Can I expect to remain in the family home?
- Can I expect to get custody of my children?
- What access rights can I expect my husband/partner to be granted by the courts?
- What happens if children refuse to attend access to their father?
- How best can I resolve issues without on-going confrontation?

### REMEMBER

- Your solicitor is there to represent you.
- If you don't understand, don't be afraid to say so.
- Keep in regular contact with your solicitor and ask how long each stage will take.

# court accompaniment

Going to court can be a daunting experience at any time and attending a Family Law Court can be especially so.

The experience of support workers in our project is that the more preparation a client does prior to the court day, the greater the chance of success. We offer pre-court support, court accompaniment and post court services to women experiencing domestic abuse.

In West Cork the Family Law Court is heard in the District Court. Article 34(1) of the Irish Constitution provides that Family Law court proceedings are held *in camera*. This means that the proceedings are held in private in order to prevent disclosure of confidential and intimate details of the parties' family life and their personal relationship. The only people present at a family law hearing would be the client, her partner, the judge and court clerk, any witnesses or any other professional person having an involvement in the case. Under Section 40.5 of the Civil Liability and Courts Act 2004, court accompaniment will be permitted. This means that (with permission) a support worker can go into the Court Room with a client. Family Law is nearly always heard either prior to the start of the ordinary sittings or at the end of the day's ordinary business. The time spent attending at Family Law varies according to the listing. It may be that a client could be in the Court House from mid-morning until late afternoon. Where necessary the client should make arrangements for after school child care. A person has the right to appeal any decision from the Circuit Court to the District Court.

The Support Workers at WCWAVP can offer support and information about court procedure prior to a court day. However, if a client wishes us to provide court accompaniment it is important to book same with us at least one week prior to the court date.

- We offer emotional and practical support, not legal advice.
- We will meet with the woman in advance of the court hearing to talk through with her what is likely to happen in court and to help her prepare her evidence, explain court procedures and layout.
- On the day of the court, hearing we will meet with the woman about half an hour beforehand to talk through her concerns and offer support.
- In the case of transport difficulties, i.e. if the client does not have own transport or there is no suitably timed local bus service available we may be able to arrange transport.
- We shall always spend time post court to talk through the decisions of court and the next steps that are available.

*West Cork Women Against Violence Project always recommends that clients contact a solicitor for advice. If a client cannot afford a solicitor privately she can apply to the Legal Aid Board for a solicitor to represent her. Phone Number 021 4551686.*



# JUSTICE?

*'I feel like he can just go somewhere and pretend this never happened, and I can't. I can't pretend it never happened; I have a scar on my face.'*

Jane Ruffino's\* partner beat her with such force that the only thing that stopped his attack was the fact that he broke his fist on her face. Last year, an Irish judge, Justice Martin Nolan in an Irish court gave Mark Jordan, her abuser a two and a half year suspended sentence.

Suspended sentences, token compensation payments, questionable mitigating circumstances taken into account for the perpetrator and little, if any, weight given to a victim's impact statement are now almost daily occurrences in our courts for men accused of physical and sexual violence towards women. In one June week, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre has been forced to publicly condemn the offensive sentencing handed down to two rapists who preyed on two young women, one was the perpetrator's 14 year old sister-in law and the other was a young female employee raped by her boss.

There is a pressing need to change the sentencing structure for men who terrorise women. The gravity of the crime needs to be understood by the judiciary. Where there is a domestic abuser on trial, the impact of years of domestic abuse, control and coercion needs to be considered within the sentence. Sexual violence towards any woman or young girl must be subject to seriously deterrent sentences. Our courts need to start taking violence against women seriously.

Women's Aid in their 2012 Annual Report, have warned that the more severe the violence towards a mother, the higher the risk of abuse towards the children by the perpetrator. Ironically, despite the recent broadening and strengthening of child protection legislation, there are too many examples where this increased concern for children's rights and protections are not reflected in our legal system. Judges rarely consider in their sentencing the impact on children who have witnessed and/or lived with the domestic abuse of their mother. The Irish legal system continues to give perpetrators access with children in almost every case where there has been domestic abuse. In June of this year, Women's Aid called for Government to recognise the links between domestic violence and child abuse and to take steps to increase the safety of vulnerable women and children, such as an out of hours on call system for emergency barring orders and for changes in the family courts.

There are too many incidents in our courts and even among attitudes in the Gardai where the plight of women and children who are living with domestic abusers is given far less attention and almost casual dismissal because the abuser is a 'pillar of the community', 'a good provider', 'has a lot on his plate', etc. etc. etc. The excuses, the mitigation is all too frequent even in the face of blatant abuse and violence. Instead of making allowances for perpetrators in our courts and turning a blind eye to their behaviour as a community, those who terrorise women and children, those who pick on the vulnerable and keep them in fear need to be named, shamed, shunned and sentenced accordingly.

Until there is a real and meaningful stigma attached to domestic abusers rather than to the shame and secrecy experienced by their victims, then the offensive and dismissive sentences we have seen in our courts will continue. Violence against women and children must be rejected by all of us. It starts with each one of us taking it seriously; by men challenging other men when they laugh, joke and deride women; by teaching your sons that violence is not an acceptable means of communication; by teaching your daughters that love is never to be found at the end of a fist and that a healthy relationship is one where violence has no place. Instead of jumping to find ways of excusing a perpetrator's behaviour, such as 'he has a lot to put up with' or 'she must have driven him to it', begin by believing women when they reveal the fear that they live with.

Our laws, the judges, the Gardai and the courts reflect what we as a society deem to be unacceptable and uncivilised. We need to show by our own rejection of violence against women how seriously we want our system of justice to deal with the issue and the perpetrators. It begins with each one of us.



**WE NEED YOU!**  
TO RUN, OR WALK  
THE CORK MINI  
MARATHON WITH US.

Give us a call to sign up and to get sponsorship cards.

**EVENING ECHO CORK WOMEN'S MINI MARATHON**  
**SUNDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER**  
West Cork Women Against Violence **NEED's YOU!**

## CONTACT US

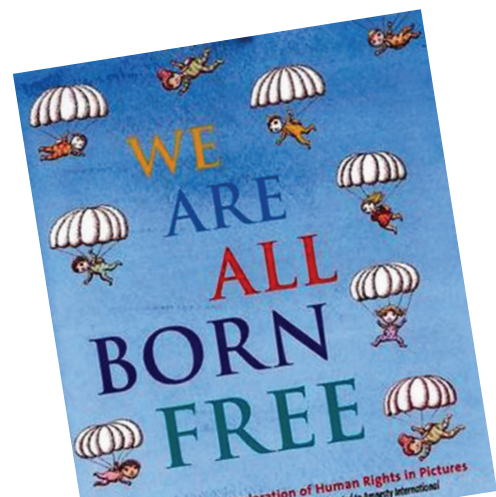
**FREEPHONE HELPLINE**  
**1800 203 136**

open on tuesdays from 10am to 4pm  
*and*  
our office is open from 9am - 5.30pm,  
monday - friday

**TELEPHONE 027 53847**







# court closures

## CLONAKILTY, SKIBBEREEN AND KINSALE

West Cork Women Against Violence Project offers a confidential listening and information service with court accompaniment, pre court preparation and post court support. As the only domestic violence agency in the entire West Cork area and based in Bantry, we are extremely concerned at the threatened closure of our local court services in Clonakilty, Skibbereen and Kinsale. It would appear from the proposed cutbacks in court services that the only courts remaining in the West Cork area would be in Bantry and Bandon with a significant number of court hearings potentially being deferred to Cork city.

The closure of these courts will have several catastrophic consequences on our service delivery and in particular on our clients.

### IMPACT ON CLIENTS:

- 1 Reduced court accompaniments for clients due to time constraints in travelling and funding costs of same.
- 2 Instead of offering a responsive service to our clients, we would have to prioritise to whom we could offer this service.
- 3 Increased and unnecessary stress on clients would be experienced in relation to:
  - Emotional trauma due to our service being unable to offer accompaniment because of the additional time and resources required.
  - Increased expenses placed on clients in relation to transport and childcare costs.
  - Inevitably some clients may decide not to seek court protection due to the associated difficulties outlined above in points 1 and 2.
  - Issues where client's and children's safety may be placed at risk due to point 3.

- In many situations our clients come into contact with the same judge over a period of time. This can lessen the stress on the client as the judge becomes aware of the violent background and there is less need to inform him/her of the background details (which re-traumatises the client). Having cases deferred to Cork means the client will need to revisit the entire history of her experience with an unknown judge. We would expect that some clients will drop proceedings rather than re-experience the trauma of disclosure.

### IMPACT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

- There would be a reduction in experienced support worker availability as most of the time would be spent travelling (specifically if courts are in Cork which means a three hour journey). Where a court is in Bandon it means two hours travel time for support workers. The decision would also mean a reduction in the availability of other related professionals on the ground (e.g.: gardai / social workers) as they too will have to increase their travelling time thus impacting on their availability to provide frontline services.
- Increased transport costs to the service at a time when domestic violence services are being hit by cuts in funding grants.
- Given our own limited staffing, time spent in travelling to courts means less availability of support staff to deal with new crisis referrals.
- Increased referrals to the three domestic violence services in Cork city as our policy dictates that support workers do not provide court accompaniment to the Cork city area due to funding implications. These services are also stretched due to cuts in resources and funding.

In conclusion, the proposal to close more courts in West Cork is short-sighted and in the long-term provides no real cost effective savings. Instead, it will impact on the delivery and availability of already stretched frontline public and NGO services, and perhaps most importantly deny the fundamental right of access to justice for those most in need of the protections offered by the courts.

It is essential that these indigenous courts be retained in order to ensure that women and children at risk are able to access legal remedies locally. Should the closures go ahead then it will lend support to the growing perception that access to justice is the privilege of those who can afford it.

## book review

### We are All Born Free

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures

published by Frances Lincoln Children's Books 2008

ISBN: 978-184507-650-4

This beautiful book is an illustrated version of the declaration of human rights by Amnesty international. It sets out the 30 articles of human rights each one illustrated by a different artist.

I am not a political animal. I don't pay attention to world news. I rarely read newspapers and am not really knowledgeable about the things that others suffer in the world. I live a small life trying to cope with my own problems. I thought organisations like Amnesty International was for victims of kidnap or torture in far flung places. I admired their work but believed they had nothing to do with me.

I came across this book through an exhibition in Bantry library. I was brought to a stand still by some of the declarations. I realised that I actually was a victim of torture. I might not be in an obvious prison but my rights were being denied.

One of the declaration is 'We all have the right to life and to live in freedom and safety'. Another is 'We can all ask for the law to help us when we are not treated fairly'.

These declarations are not some idealistic version of how the world should be. These are actuality. These are our rights. The simple fact of being born gives each of us these rights and no one can take them away.

This book gave me both hope and courage. JD

THURSDAY

21<sup>st</sup>

NOVEMBER 2013

Save the date in your diary!

### West Cork Women Against Violence Conference

"The Personal & Public Cost of Domestic Violence" in the Maritime Hotel, Bantry, Co. Cork

We are delighted to announce that the West Cork Women Against Violence project will be hosting a conference in the Maritime Hotel in Bantry on 21st November 2013. Speakers confirmed to date: Dr. Kylee Trevillion, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London; Nata Duvvury, Political Science & Sociology, NUI Galway; Annie Campbell, Director Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation; Margaret Costello, National Lead for domestic, sexual and gender based violence, Children and Family Services.

Look out for more information in the Oct-Dec's West Cork Whisper. We'll also be updating our website regularly with information about the conference.

Our **SUPPORT WORKERS** can help you to **develop a 'safety plan'** if you are at risk in your home.

POSITIVE AFFIRMATION

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

ARTICLE 3 - UN DECLARATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS



## My Brilliant Image

a poem/prayer by Hafiz (c.1320 - 1389) translated by Daniel Ladinsky

One day the sun admitted,  
I am just a shadow.  
I wish I could show you  
The Infinite Incandescence  
That has cast my brilliant  
image!  
I wish I could show you,  
When you are lonely or in  
darkness,  
The Astonishing Light  
Of your own Being!

## we're here to help

If you - or someone you know - think we could help we're offering you this card to cut out and keep in your wallet for when you get the chance or courage to ring us. We've purposely made it discreet so only you will know what it is about. Trust us, Trust yourself

Trust Yourself.  
You know more than  
you think you do.

BENJAMIN SPOCK

1800 203 136

# support services for women

## cork

West Cork Women Against Violence ..... Freephone 1800 203 136

Cuanlee Refuge, Cork ..... 021 427 7698

Free Legal Aid Clinic ..... Locall 1890 350 259  
Information and referral

IRD Duhallow Domestic Violence Support ..... Helpline 087 7733 337  
from Monday to Saturday 10am - 10 pm or office at 029 60633

Legal Aid Board, Cork ..... 021 455 1686 / 021 427 5998

Mná Feasa (Domestic Violence Project) ..... 021 421 1757

OSS, Cork ..... Freephone 1800 497 497  
(Domestic Violence Resource Centre for men and women)

S.A.T.U. .... 021 492 6100

Sexual Violence Centre ..... Freephone 1800 496 496

Domestic Violence Social Work ..... 021 492 1728

Y.A.N.A. North Cork ..... 022 53915

## kerry

Kerry's Women's refuge and Support Services (Adapt) ..... 066 712 9100

Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre ..... Freephone 1800 633 333

Legal Aid Board ..... 066 712 6900

Tralee Women's Resource Centre ..... 066 712 0622

## national

Women's Aid ..... Freephone 1800 341 900

## west cork citizens' information service

West Cork Citizens' Information Service can provide you with information, advocacy and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is free, confidential and independent. Open daily, please call for times.

**The Square, Bantry, ..... 076 107 8390**

**South Square, Macroom, ..... 076 107 8430**

**CIS Outreach, Dunmanway every Wednesday 10am - 1pm**

**Legal Aid Board - monthly on 3rd Tuesday 10.30am - 4.30am** - For an appointment with the Legal Aid Board please phone the Legal Aid Office on 021 455 1685

**Free Legal Aid Clinic - monthly on 1st Tuesday 6pm - 7pm** - For an appointment please contact West Cork Citizens' Information Service by either dropping in or phoning 076 107 8390.

**MABS outreach Clinic - Each Friday 10am - 11.30am** - For an appointment please phone MABS on 023 885 5155.

West Cork Women Against Violence Project, Harbour View, Bantry, Co. Cork  
www.westcorkwomensproject email: admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie