



West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER | 60th EDITION | JULY, AUGUST, SEPT 2015

exploding the myths about domestic violence

Myths around domestic violence can make a difficult situation worse for women who are affected. We must challenge myths in order to ensure an effective response to domestic violence.

■ Domestic violence only happens in a small number of homes.

Domestic Violence is a daily reality for thousands of women in Ireland. Women's Aid research shows that 1 in 5 women in Ireland has experienced domestic violence. This means that 213,000 women in Ireland have been physically, emotionally, financially and/or sexually abused.

■ She must do something to provoke or deserve the abuse.

No woman "deserves" to be abused. So-called "provocation" often amounts to no more than asking for money for food or not having a meal ready on time. This is 'victim blaming' which focuses on the behaviour of the woman, rather than the behaviour of the perpetrator. 'Blaming the victim' is something that abusers will often do to make excuses for their behaviour. This is part of the pattern and is in itself abusive. Responsibility for the abuse lies with the abuser not with the person being abused.

■ Women must enjoy or be addicted to the abuse. Otherwise she would leave.

No-one enjoys being beaten, threatened and humiliated in their own home. Women stay with violent men because it is extremely difficult, and often dangerous, for them to leave. There are many complex reasons why a woman doesn't leave the relationship.



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exploding the myths about domestic violence continued

■ It only happens in working class, Migrant and Traveller families.

Domestic violence is described as the 'most democratic of all crimes'. It can happen to any woman regardless of age, marital status, ethnicity, religion or socio-economic background.

■ It is not gender-based violence.

The vast majority of the victims of domestic violence are women and children, and women are also considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of violence and sexual abuse. Irish and worldwide research - as well as data from hospitals and police stations all over the world - reveal a consistent pattern of violence in intimate relationships where men are the perpetrators 90 per cent of the time.

■ It is just a 'domestic' - we shouldn't get involved.

Domestic violence is a serious crime and should be treated as such. Domestic violence includes physical assault, cruelty, verbal abuse, rape, and sexual assault of women. It can lead to physical injury, hospitalisation, mental health issues. In some extreme cases it can result in homicide. Perpetrators of domestic violence

against women can also abuse the children of the relationship. No behaviour which so degrades and violates a human being can be dismissed as "just a domestic".

Domestic violence is a social problem, not a private affair. The abuse of any human being by another is everyone's business. Society has a responsibility to speak out against domestic violence. To show that domestic violence is not acceptable.

■ All men who are abusive come from a violent home.

Abusers come from all walks of life and backgrounds. Many men who grew up with domestic violence abhor violence and do not abuse their partners. Domestic violence is a learned intentional behaviour rather than the consequence of stress, individual pathology, substance use or a 'dysfunctional' relationship. Perpetrators of domestic violence frequently avoid taking responsibility for their behaviour, by blaming their violence on someone or something else. The abuser has a choice to use violence, or instead they can choose to behave non-violently, fostering a relationship built on trust, honesty, fairness and respect.

■ It is easy to spot an abusive man. She must have known what he was like.

Most perpetrators of domestic abuse are very charming at the beginning of a relationship. The tactics of abuse can be very subtle and difficult to recognise. Abusive men will quite often groom their partners, sometimes over months or even longer. Controlling behaviour may start slowly, perhaps with him telling her what to wear, picking out her clothes, making remarks on how she looks. He may start to isolate her from her friends and family by sabotaging arrangements or making her choose between time with him or her loved ones. Perpetrators of domestic abuse often continue to be very respectable and even charismatic in public. This can make it more difficult for women who are trying to reach out for support, as they may feel that they will not be believed when they speak out about the abuse.

Women do not seek out relationships with abusive men.

■ Alcohol causes domestic violence.

Alcohol does not cause domestic violence, but it is frequently used as an excuse.

There are links between alcohol abuse and domestic violence with alcohol abuse significantly increasing the risk to a woman and has clear links to increased severity in relation to physical and sexual abuse. But it is not the cause. Many men drink and do not abuse anyone as a result. On the other hand many men abuse women when they are sober.

■ The recession and economic difficulty causes domestic violence.

Economic difficulty does not cause domestic violence. Men, who were already emotionally, physically, sexually and financially abusing their partners, continue to do so during times of recession. Women disclose that the abuser may start to use his unemployment or financial difficulties as an excuse for the abuse. However, the violence and abuse, including financial abuse tactics, were a part of the relationship before the recession.

We hear from women living in abusive situations that they feel more trapped in the abusive relationship due to the recession. Women fear increased impoverishment, losing their home and the effect of poverty on their children. This barrier to leaving is exacerbated by the use of financial abuse by a controlling boyfriend, husband or partner.

Adapted from www.womensaid.ie/help/whatisdomesticviolence/myths

Myths about Children and Domestic Violence

Myth: The younger the child, the less the child will be affected by exposure to violence.

Young children are not immune to the effects of violence. Clinical experience suggests that young children are deeply affected by witnessing violence, particularly if the perpetrator or victim of violence is a family member.

Myth: Young children will not remember the violence they have witnessed.

Children do not forget what they have witnessed. Adults hope that if the violence is not talked about, the children's memories of the event will

disappear. However, young children demonstrate a remarkable capacity for recalling traumatic events. Children's vivid accounts of violent events stand in contrast to parent's reports that their children did not see the violence or were unaware of it.

Myth: Leaving home is bad for the children

Children are affected more while living in a violent environment than by moving to a safer environment. Parents often do not realise how the abuse is affecting their children. Children would rather live in peace with one parent than live in hell with two.

IF THERE'S VIOLENCE
IN THE HOME,
THE KIDS
GET THE PICTURE



40% - 69% overlap
between the physical
abuse of children and
domestic abuse

15% - 30% overlap
between the sexual abuse
of children and domestic
abuse

Stats from: Believe in
Children Barnardos Maddie
Bell - Children's Domestic
Violence Consultant

Cutting Services Does Not Protect Women

Many West Cork Whisper readers will have heard or read of the recent financial cuts made to Rape Crisis Centres and in particular the national organisation Rape Crisis Network of Ireland which is instrumental in keeping statistics on sexual violence in Ireland and lobbying for supports for survivors and improved legislation and policy in response to sexual crimes. The RCNI can no longer continue to function and many Rape Crisis Centres have already had to reduce their services and availability because of cuts and years of reduced funding.

Unfortunately, Tusla, The Child & Family Agency responsible for both sexual and domestic violence support services is also looking at reducing and restructuring domestic violence support services. Our national support organisation, SAFE IRELAND which does similar work as the RCNI did for Rape Crisis Centres, has had a 37% cut in its funding this year and may have to look at issuing redundancy notices to staff.

Women's Aid in Dublin has had a 20% cut to its core funding and no longer receives any funding as a specialist training provider to frontline professionals and organisations. That work enabled them to train many key service personnel such as Gardaí, health workers and family support programmes to recognise, respond and refer appropriately to protect women and children suffering domestic violence.

We in the DV sector feel strongly that instead of focusing on savings and service reduction the emphasis should be on putting the essentials in place that would eradicate domestic violence and protect those who experience it. Despite years of lobbying and the findings of national and international research, here in Ireland:

At West Cork Women Against Violence we have two dedicated workers to listen to you, support you and give you practical information. We know it can be hard reaching out and making that phone call. Our support workers will always answer the freephone helpline number 1800 203 136 if they are in the office, otherwise please do phone the office number 027 53847 (weekday mornings and some afternoons) to speak to our Coordinator or Administrator who can arrange a time for you to talk to a support worker in person or by phone.

- There is still NO CRIME OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE on Irish statute books.
- There is still no focus on making perpetrators accountable for their actions.
- Women and children are still often forced to leave the family home.
- There is no adequate housing response to those made homeless through domestic violence.
- There are not enough refuge beds for crisis accommodation.
- There is no training for judges in understanding or dealing with DV cases.
- There is no coordinated approach nationally to improve protections and responses to women and children at risk of domestic violence.
- There is no government programme for education in schools to encourage healthy relationships free from violence.
- There is no consistency across the Garda Síochána in their dealings with victims of DV or in their understanding in regard to domestic offences where women and children are at risk of violence.
- There is no accessible, affordable legal representation for women experiencing DV.
- There is no specific counselling support available to women and children experiencing DV except an extremely limited service available through some DV support services like WCWAV.
- There is no joined up thinking, analysis or response from Departments of Justice, Health, Education, Housing & Environment to tackle the problem of DV.

Cutting services puts women at risk



one woman's experience of domestic abuse

"Domestic abuse is not just about isolated incidents, but also patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour. The fact that one in four women will encounter domestic violence in their lifetime suggests that abuse in the home, although rarely discussed at the school gate, is by no means uncommon. Yet the lack of understanding about how domestic violence works is staggering.

I've recently come out of a violent marriage and it's perhaps unsurprising that it took me, my friends and family so long to work out that my relationship was abusive. The phrase "domestic violence" often evokes images of weak women and thuggish men. We don't fit that stereotype, my ex and I.

Last year, my ex-husband subjected me to threats and intimidation so

serious that I went into hiding with our child 100 miles from our home. Only the week before, an acquaintance had described us at a dinner party as the perfect couple.

An idea prevails that domestic violence victims must be stupid to stay in relationships. But abuse happens gradually. In my case, it wasn't about getting beaten every now and again. Abuse takes numerous forms, as terrifying as physical violence if not more so, including emotional, psychological and financial. Five years into my marriage, aspects of my ex's behaviour I'd perceived as expressions of insecurity, such as his critical manner, angry outbursts and monitoring of my movements, became more sinister. I was subjected to routine verbal abuse, locked in and out of the home, and denied access to joint bank accounts, leaving me and our young child without cash.

At the height of our personal dramas, I found myself thinking up survival strategies. How do I escape from a home I have been locked inside with no access to a phone? Where do I go when I am locked outside for the night? What do I feed our child when my husband has cut up every bank card I own? And when I have planned my escape, how do I pull it off? Where do I hide?

I followed the expected conventions of trying hard to mend our relationship. Meanwhile, my ex-husband charmed friends, neighbours, teachers and even a Relate counsellor. A week before I called the police in fear of my life, he told me he was committed to change. A woman's refuge worker who supported me likened emotional abuse in relationships to conditions faced by prisoners of war, including isolation and captivity, limits on communication and mental cruelty.

I first became aware of the implications of seeking legal redress after I fled my home with our child. After several weeks of crashing on friends' sofas, I wanted to return to the family home. But of course my ex refused to leave. *[The author who is based in the UK eventually took legal action to have her abusive partner removed from the family home but had to find the funding for legal representation.]*

A few months ago, I was taken to court by my ex-husband. He decided he wanted shared care of our young child, which I disputed. I have always been the primary carer and my ex showed little interest in practical childcare when we were together or after our separation. The judge asked why I didn't sit down with the man who had abused me so that we could work out our differences through mediation. He peered down at us as if we were two naughty schoolchildren.

It seems that because I made the mistake of entering into a relationship with this witty, educated, attractive man who failed to show signs of being abusive when we first met, the fact that we bought a home, got married and had a child together makes all the difference to how I am treated by the justice system. My ex managed to get an application for shared care granted and I'm now concerned about his bullying and controlling behaviour that manifests in his parenting.

If the government wants to take domestic violence seriously, it needs to prove its commitment not only by bringing in new criminal laws, but by considering how existing laws and services can be improved to provide better support for women and children."

First printed in The Guardian.

profile and behaviours of an **abusive** partner

Emotionally and verbally abusive

He may use silence as a technique to manipulate you. May use silent phone calls to intimidate you, damage property or pets or deny you access to finances. He may move things deliberately and then replace them, making you think you are crazy and forgetful. He may refuse to call you by your personal name, may try to intimidate you by punching something close to you or driving dangerously, breaking personal property, shouting in your face, pointing

down at you, kicking walls or doors, threatening to tell secrets to family / friends, or threatening to report you to social workers/ authority figures.

Isolating

He may want to isolate you from your friends / family and may want to always be alone with you. He is threatened by any close relationships you may have and will criticise, blame or point out ways in which friends have wronged you. He may use your heightened distress as proof to family or friends

that you are depressed or mentally unwell e.g. *"she is the one with the problem"*.

Denial and minimising

He may state you are overreacting to incidents which upset you - *"you can't take a joke."* In response to aggression or violent incidents, he may state *"I barely touched you."*

Controlling

Can be subtle, with you changing your behaviour without realising why. He may stalk or follow you or ring your house and hang up to see if you are at home. May keep track of your time, demanding to know where you are. May make you engage in activities you find uncomfortable. In a crisis stage, he may use the situation to appear calm when the woman is distressed and accuse her of mental health issues to Gardaí or officials.

Use of Children

He may use children to relay messages to you, to call you names or get them to report back to him. He may refuse to communicate with you only through them. He may encourage them to abuse you physically and emotionally. He may use access as a way to harass you e.g.: alter scheduled access times or refer back to court for the slightest alteration in schedule.

Jealous and Possessive

He may show up somewhere you have said you will be. He will call this surprising you. If you get angry, he

will act as though you were guilty. He may invade your privacy by going through mail, mobile phone, wallet or eavesdropping on telephone conversations. Remember: Jealousy does not equal love.

Mood Swings / Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde personality

Everything is going fine and suddenly your partner is furious. Can be loving and supportive one minute and cold, hostile, accusing or distant the next or may remain distant and cold.

Use of sexual abuse

Even though you may have agreed on a cut off point, you may find they do not respect the agreement. When confronted, he will say you are overreacting. Being forced to take part in sexual acts, rape, being exposed to sexually explicit material against one's will. Being denied access to contraception.

Passionate

The abusive relationship may be intense and passionate. This intensity means someone is holding on too tightly.

Alcohol or drug user

The partner may blame substance abuse as a built in excuse. Remember: many people abuse alcohol or drugs and do not become violent.

Low self-esteem

(Whilst also displaying conceited, arrogant or extrovert mannerisms) He may challenge your choices or your career. He may pressure you to quit your job or outside activities because he does not want you around members of the opposite sex and may want

you to become financially dependant on him. If you try to break up with him, may threaten to harm himself, attempt suicide. He may also threaten to harm you or your family.

Macho or super masculine (sometimes present)

He may have strong views on how men and women should behave (e.g. a woman should be at home with her children). You will find yourself explaining yourself and making excuses. However, everything to him is black and white and he will not accept any reasoning. He may act as if he is in charge and may want you to talk to him before making decisions about your activities or friends. May push your boundaries by tickling you until you are uncomfortable or wrestling you in an aggressive manner he calls playful but you find painful or upsetting.

Trouble trusting others (particularly you)

In spite of this, he may say that he knows you would never be unfaithful, whilst accusing you of being attracted to other males or flirting. He may state you are the only person who understands him. He may have very few friends and find social occasions difficult (or refuse to engage in them). He may buy a mobile phone so he can always reach you. This can start fights if you don't answer or call back straight away.

Blaming others

(may be subtle) Abusive partners will blame others for their mistakes or problems. E.g. *"I love you so much I can't help being jealous."* They may blame other stressors for a fight e.g. *"my parents...nobody understands"*

Use of physical abuse

Violence progresses in a gradual way. It can start with emotional abuse and progresses to shoving, grabbing or restraining. The next step could be slapping, kicking or biting. Punching or choking may follow after which the abuse usually escalates to beatings with repeated kicks, slaps, punches, being shoved, scalded, choked and attacked with weapons. After the abuse are periods when the abuser can be attentive - "the honeymoon period". In other cases, the abuse persists as emotional or psychological abuse or the level of this emotional abuse can intensify. Not all the above behaviours will be present. There are many ways that a person can be abusive, so this is a list that gives examples of abuse. Once a partner is violent, he is usually violent again.

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

Silence, fear
& embarrassment
are the best tools
an abuser can have.

Let your voice
be heard.
Speak up



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
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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.

Abusers control and manipulate
and make you feel like you are
the one with the problem.
Stand up, speak out and take back
your life. You are not to blame

We are here to
support you

1800 203 136

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Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency