



West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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a volunteer's story

When I saw the advertisement for court accompaniment volunteers, I jumped at the chance to be able to support women in violent relationships. Five of us completed the training which was comprehensive and daunting at the time. I was apprehensive at the thoughts of entering a court room as I had never been there before. Two aspects of the training were to sit in the court room while it was live and we also got the experience to shadow the support worker.

Sitting in the court room by myself was daunting - I was surrounded by Gardai, solicitors and other legal officers and all of this was presided over by the Judge who sat looking perceptibly at everybody. I had never been in a court room and I had never had any dealings with the justice system in general. We heard mostly drink driving cases and breaches of the peace on that day.

Then came the day when I got the call to shadow the support worker during a real court accompaniment. Despite having sat in the court room, I really didn't know what to expect for the day. The first thing that stood out for me was that I had never seen another person in a genuinely terrified state, the second was that the open courtroom is not a suitable domain for domestic violence survivors to have to turn to seek protection. The third was the most terrifying of all, **I left asking myself if I was in her shoes would I be brave enough to stand up for myself under these circumstances?**

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I was in awe of the woman's strength to be able to go into a court and talk about her experiences

I was nervous and anxious, but it wasn't just about being in the courtroom I was nervous about meeting a woman who had been the victim of domestic abuse. I have heard the horror stories and wondered about the "type" of women this happened to. Why did they stay? Why did they go through the process over and over? I was very aware of my preconceptions as to what a woman like this looked like and the kind of life she leads. I didn't want these preconceptions to taint the woman that would be standing in front of me. When she arrived these preconceptions melted away quickly, she looked "normal" she sounded "normal". She wasn't lacking in self-confidence, she was very well dressed and well spoken. I would not have associated domestic violence with her.

A support worker always meets with a client before court where possible so she can prepare her for court. This meeting had occurred (without me) beforehand and after the introductions had been made, the client started to ask the project worker about what would happen and she started to tell the story of what had happened to her. It wasn't her partner or husband who had abused her - it was another member of the family, one that didn't even live with her in her house. This situation had never entered my mind. She hadn't experienced beatings on a regular basis but

on occasion and she was tired of it. She was exhausted and terrified. This woman kept asking about where the abuser would sit and whether he would be able to talk to her. These questions were asked at least ten times so much was her fear that she just had to make sure time and time again. The project worker explained the whole process to her. This was my first time hearing the process as well. I wasn't clear on what was going to happen and that's when I started thinking about how this woman might be feeling. I was there to observe and I was nervous and confused this woman was there after experiencing major trauma mentally and physically and this court process was a secondary result of this. How was she coping? How was she holding it together? How did women in the past cope with no guiding hand to explain and help?

We made our way to the courtroom it was full and there were very few seats. We sat at the front, later the project worker pointed out to me that she preferred to sit at the back in the corner because it offers an already terrified woman a view point so she can see where her attacker sits and so he doesn't sit behind her. After an hour and a half the woman's case was called and the Judge decided to hear it in his chambers as it was an application for a Protection Order. In all other

The benefits of town twinning were felt by West Cork Women Against Violence when they received a cheque for \$1000 (€872.62) from the Lacrosse Irish American Friendship Association. The good people of Lacrosse, Wisconsin held a 'Hoolie' recently which raised funds for West Cork's own domestic violence service and New Horizons, a local project in Lacrosse which provides refuge and supports to those who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence.

domestic violence order applications, the Judge, court clerk, the two people in the relationship and their solicitors have their case heard in a closed court. The support worker is sometimes allowed to remain as a support person for the client.

The client got her order and she was exhausted. We all went for coffee afterwards where we spent time talking with the woman about the next steps. I was in awe of the woman's strength to be able to go into a court and talk about her experiences and in awe of the reality that she needs to go back in again on another day when all the parties are there. I was astounded and shocked that a survivor of a domestic abuse incident has to talk about her situation so many times and how this is bound to traumatise someone. I also was aware that when the next court happens, then the client will be in physical contact with her abuser and this has to be terrifying too. Court accompaniment is essential - both to have someone work through their choices, explain the court process, be there for the woman throughout the day as her support and help her in the aftermath of the court. I found the experience exhilarating, shocking, terrifying, awesome, very stressful and I have the utmost of respect for the woman who was able to stand up for herself that day.

Eileen O'Shea of Bantry Tourist Information presented the cheque from Lacrosse, Wisconsin to Marie Mulholland, co-ordinator of West Cork Women Against Violence.



West Cork Women Against Violence

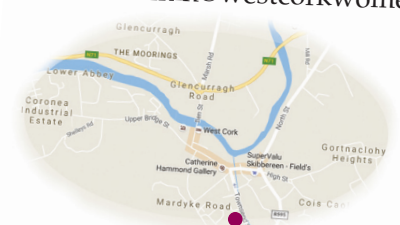
cordially invite you on
Thursday , 22nd September 2016, 10am-12.30pm in
Ludgate Hub, Townshend Street, Skibbereen
to a presentation of the findings and discussion of:

SOMEONE TO TURN TO, SOMEWHERE TO GO

*An evaluation of the impact and importance of our
domestic violence support services to women and children
and to partner agencies in West Cork*

This evaluation was undertaken by Dr. Caroline Crowley, independent research consultant.

Light refreshments will be served on arrival.
Please RSVP to admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie



Ludgate Hub, Townshend Street, Skibbereen

coulée hoolie ceili

new horizons

FUNDRAISER

To benefit the New Horizons Shelter & Outreach Centers (La Crosse) and West Cork Women Against Violence Project (Bantry, Ireland)

April 22, 2016
6:00 pm - 10:00 pm
Concordia Ballroom
La Crosse St., La Crosse

cost: of la Crosse - Traditional and Americanized Irish food for sale, cash bar available!

silent auction: "Celtic Woman" Concert Tickets, YMCA Gift Certificates • Nicklaus Karate Gift Certificates, Kwik Trip Gift Cards, Local Dining Certificates, Gift Baskets, More!

live music: Tim Jenkins - Set Caller • Houghton's Hooligans

our generous sponsors

\$10.00/Adults
\$8.00/Seniors, Students, Military
\$20.00/Families

Irish set dancing - Similar to square dancing, but with Irish flair! Instruction provided.

WCWAV gives advice and support to women who are living with and experiencing Domestic Violence. There is also a need for support to women who had used our services when in crisis but had now moved beyond that and were reconstructing lives for themselves and their families. To meet that need, a Support Group for users of the service was set up a couple of years ago.

This facilitated Group provides a safe space for women, who are in many ways starting again, to meet other women who are on the same path and have come out of a similarly dark place. The impact of meeting women who have been through the same general experience is hugely empowering. The legal and judicial process of leaving a violent relationship can be disempowering because one has to be seen as a victim in order to use the process. So to meet others who have escaped such a situation enables women to see themselves and their own strengths more clearly. This realisation of the abilities they have has a hugely positive impact on the emotional and psychological outcomes for the women and their families.

support g

"The support group is a lifesaver for me.."

"Meeting other women in similar situations has validated my own experience"

Having left the abusive relationship doesn't mean that there isn't still a risk from the ex-partner, either from physical violence, psychological pressure, access difficulties or the withholding of financial support. The Support Group provides a place to talk about these problems and the fear that surrounds them with other women who understand the problems acutely and can offer some solutions that worked for them along with advice on the pitfalls to avoid.

The Support Group facilitated by WCWAV, provide a framework which protects participants and gives them the opportunity not only to talk about how it was for them and how it is now but also to think about what they want to and can do to start building a life they choose for themselves if that is what they wish to do.

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"I now receive great validation from attending the support group."

"I have found a voice and inner strength."

charities & fu

Anger, disgust and betrayal are all emotions that have been provoked by the unconscionable activities of certain major Irish charities from REHAB, to the Central Remedial Clinic and most recently CONSOLE.

“Heartbreaking” is the word I hear most often from those who rely on the services of such charities and people who in good faith gave of their time, energy and funds to ensure that the services were available to the most vulnerable in our society.

For those of us who are involved in running small, community based initiatives that have charitable status, the word that I find most often describes my response is ‘bewildered’. Let me explain:

The level of financial accountability, records and paperwork required of small organisations like West Cork Women Against Violence who receive less than €200,000 p.a. government funding, in our case from Tusla, the Child & Family Agency, is of such a level that it almost requires a day a week of staff time to complete and maintain. We must maintain updated financial recording systems, detailed quarterly accounts, bank statements, annual budgets, an annual audit by an accredited auditor, financial compliance documentation (usually in triplicate). Our

financial records must be detailed and thorough and available upon request at any time by our funders. As a charitable organisation, we publicise our audited accounts in our annual report which is available to any member of the public. All of this is exactly as it should be, precisely because these are public monies drawn from your taxes that we have been allocated.

There is no room for error or complacency in recording how we spend those monies, indeed there is no room at all, for we receive well short of what we really need to run the kind of service we do. We make up the shortfall from donations and fundraising, all of which is also accounted for in the annual audit and our various reporting systems. We need at the very least an additional €5000 per annum just to maintain the level of essential services we provide. We get that through bucket collections, raffles, the generosity of individual givers and one off grants from small foundations. We have also been grateful for the proceeds of the ‘poor box’ in the West Cork district court.

We will gratefully accept any donation you would wish to make. There are a number of ways in which we can facilitate this.

A cheque/bank draft can be posted to us at:
West Cork Women Against Violence,
Harbour View, Bantry, Co. Cork

If you wish to make a cash donation, we can accept in person at our office address as above

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It is hard to find words to adequately describe the profound depths to which those individuals responsible for betraying the public trust by using the tragedies and struggles of others to line their own pockets have sunk.

However, it would seem that much like the banks and some major semi-state bodies, the bigger the charity and the more money going into its coffers, the less is expected in terms of reasonable requirements to account for monies. So, when we in WCWAV hear these scandals about charities' misappropriation of funds and outrageous salaries to Board members and senior managers, we feel complete bewilderment as to how there is one rule for some, while there seems to be little if any even oversight, let alone rules for others.

I want to reassure all of our supporters, clients, volunteers and the public of West Cork that good governance of your kind donations and of state funds is an integral part of our day to day administration. Our Board of Management are volunteers who receive no payment for their commitment and efforts on behalf of the service. WCWAV staff are paid on agreed payscales commensurate with Social Care and Clerical grades used by the health service and there have been no wage increases or increments for staff

in over 6 years because we do not have the monies to provide them.

Our 2015 Annual Report and accounts will be available at the end of September and will be available in hard copy and published on our website at that time. In addition, our audited accounts are also registered with the Charities Registration Board. In everything we do, in the service we provide to the women and children who need it, in the administration and governance of our organisation, we in West Cork Women Against Violence strive to adhere to best practice and continue to look for ways to improve upon even that. When those who are most vulnerable rely on us, when you the public provide us with our funds, we are morally as well as professionally obliged to respond with honesty, openness and integrity.

Marie Mulholland,
WCWAV Co-ordinator

A bank transfer/lodgement to the West Cork Women Against Violence,
BIC: AIBKIE2D
IBAN: IE02 AIBK 9360 1440 5051 65

Again, thank you for reaching out to us.
We appreciate your support.

*"No one
has ever
become poor
by giving."*

ANNE FRANK

HELPLINE **FREEPHONE:**
1800 203 136

Tuesday: from 10am to 4pm

Other weekdays: Helpline is covered
10am to 4pm whenever possible**Office:** 027 53847 -

Mon to Fri: 9 am to 5.30 pm

CONFIDENTIALITY West Cork Women's
Project assures all women contacting us that
four core values underpin our service:

- Confidentiality
- To be listened to
- To be believed
- Respect for her choice

Speaking to someone, perhaps for the first time, about experiencing violence or abuse in the home is never easy. Placing your trust in a stranger on the end of a phone or meeting someone for the first time face to face takes courage. These first stages of seeking support can be a time of stress and fear for women. It is important that women understand that they have the right to remain anonymous when contacting the service. If a woman is comfortable with giving identifying details, these details are not passed on to any other agency except at her request.

There are two exceptions to confidentiality:

- If a disclosure raises concerns with regard to Child Protection issues
- If a woman discloses that she intends to harm another person.

West Cork Women Against Violence Project is registered with the Charity Regulator and is in full compliance with all of their requirements. Charity No. 20056292 Company No. 6355556J. West Cork Women Against Violence publish an Annual Report on all our activities and the services we provide, including an annual audited financial report each year. Copies of our Annual Report and financial accounts can be obtained by request to admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie



*We are here to
support you*

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
<i>from Monday to Saturday 10am - 10 pm or office at 029 60633</i>	
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.

Bantry The Square, 076 107 8390 *Daily from 10am - 5pm*
(Fridays until 4pm, closed 1pm-2pm Mon, Tues & Thurs)

Bandon, c/o St Michael Centre, South Main Street, Bandon
Every Thursday from 10am - 1pm & 2pm- 4pm

Dunmanway, Ross House, The Square, Dunmanway *Wednesday 10am-1pm (Fortnightly)*

Clonakilty, c/o Employability Service, 16 Rossa Street, Clonakilty
Every Wednesday from 10am - 1pm & 2pm- 4pm

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 0761 07 2450.