



# West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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## Rural Homelessness and Domestic Violence



Often we think of a home as a sanctuary, a place to live in peace, security, and dignity. It is where we form our social relationships, it ties us to our communities, and it is where we develop our livelihoods. This concept of a home is deprived from those who experience domestic violence. It is deprived from those who seek refuge in homeless accommodation or who feel no other option but to remain in domestic violence situations and abusive households rather than see their family face an experience of homelessness.

2016 has seen a rise in rural homelessness in the West Cork region with figures up 78% compared with 2015 and 121%

compared with 2014. This increase in people accessing this service is reflective of the escalation of the homeless and housing crisis nationally. The demand for the Novas West Cork service in 2016 exceeded the capacity of this lone working initiative. Although caseload has more than doubled in the past two years, the service still remains a lone working initiative.

Within these figures, the relationship between homelessness and domestic violence is clear. Women represented 62% of clients who accessed this Novas service in 2016. 50% of the women clients had expressed a past experience of domestic violence with 10% accessing the service as a direct result of an experience of domestic violence.

These figures are only the tip of the iceberg and do not account for those experiencing hidden homelessness, such as those couch surfing with friends and relatives who do not seek support from community or statutory services. Involuntary sharing and precarious and unsafe living arrangements are common in the experience of rural homelessness due to rural isolation and the relative remoteness and lack of access to mainstream agencies and community and voluntary services. With this in mind, it is absolutely clear there is a need for a women's refuge in West Cork.

When investigating this issue deeper, we see that there is actually a much bigger

problem below the surface and one can expect that the actual figures of domestic violence and homelessness in West Cork to be much more significant. Tackling the complexity and underlying causes of homelessness and domestic violence requires responding with solutions that are not narrowly focused. There needs to be a focus on integrated and preventative service delivery, working in conjunction with a range of statutory, community and voluntary services that captures the complexity of these issues and recognises and responds to the specific needs of women.

The West Cork Tenancy Support and Sustainment Service is a person-centred service that aims to alleviate rural homelessness and to promote social inclusion through housing, health, and recovery. This service believes that homelessness is not just about the lack of a house, but that meeting the many needs of clients requires a holistic approach which goes beyond four walls and a roof. The service provides sensitive and pragmatic support services to individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the West Cork region. If you would like any further information on this service, please contact the Tenancy Support and Sustainment Worker, Patrick Healy on 086 8279996 or [patrick.healy@novas.ie](mailto:patrick.healy@novas.ie)



### for this issue we're focusing on homelessness

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## CORK DV Services & TUSLA Collaborate on Ground-breaking Research

West Cork Women Against Violence with sister DV organisations throughout Cork City and County, including YANA, OSS, Mna Feasa and Cuanlee refuge are collaborating with Tusla's Domestic & Sexual Violence services team to conduct a Needs Analysis Project ( NAP) to assess the level of services needed and the priorities for those services in the region.

This is an extremely important development as it will provide an overview of current services, current statistics, evidence of the gaps in service provision as well as the specific needs of various groups of people such as Travellers, migrants and LGBT communities and importantly try to identify what can be done to increase accessibility to those who need DV supports but who currently do not access help.

A group of community consultants have been commissioned to undertake this far-reaching research and they will be overseen by an impressive advisory group to the project. This advisory group is made up of all the DV services mentioned above as well as the Tusla team, a representative from UCC School of Law; a senior social worker from CUH and a representative from the Sexual Assaults Treatment Unit, NASC- the organisation which provides supports to asylum seekers and refugees, the Cork Traveller Visibility Group, the Children & Youth Services Committee and An Garda Síochána.

The Advisory Group has already identified key themes on which the work should focus:

- Public Awareness
- Advocacy & Accompaniment
- Legal system
- Accessibility to the law
- Accommodation
- Interagency work (including referrals and training)
- Parenting
- Preventative Work and Early Intervention
- Mental Health
- Substance Misuse

The NAP initiative aims to have its work completed in early spring 2018 and its findings will influence Tusla provision and resources in the area of Domestic and Sexual Violence services for Cork from 2018 onwards. West Cork Women Against Violence welcomes this initiative and plans to play a full role in helping to bring it to fruition.

**TUSLA**  
An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

# Safe Home





## Catherine Casey of Yana shares her delight at the successful implementation of an emergency crisis accommodation project.

YANA, the North Cork Domestic Violence Project decided to prioritise the provision of local temporary crisis emergency accommodation in North Cork at the end of 2015. Women who needed to leave their homes due to domestic violence had to avail of Refuge in Cork, Kerry or Limerick, head to a B&B or stay with friends or family. There was no designated domestic violence crisis accommodation in North Cork. So with this aim YANA approached County Councillors at a meeting in the County Hall and also raised the issue at the local Homeless Forum Meetings. We were supported from the beginning as the agencies around the table knew at a practical level the difficulties that were facing women and their families as they tried to access safety. During 2016 we looked at different models of safe housing and spoke with domestic violence groups and housing associations to work out what would be best for our area

Then this year something amazing happened in North Cork, this year a group of interested people rolled behind a concept and made it happen. This year saw the Board, Staff, Stakeholders, funders and supporters of YANA, North Cork Domestic Violence Project work together and achieve emergency crisis

accommodation for women and their children in North Cork. By June, 2017 this project will be realised and up and running.

For me, this is a start, and it is a recognition of the awful truth by a community. It recognises a need in their own community, for women and their children to seek shelter from violence and abuse. You may say this is a given, but for over 20 years I have participated in campaigns, conversations and training that strived to dispel myths about intimate partner violence. So, I see this achievement as not only a much-needed practical support for women and their children at a local level, it is also a social change, an awakening, a step forward. The strength of this project is the involvement of the local community in the response.

There is a lot more work to do in the domestic violence sector and it is undergoing review and change at present. I am hopeful at the end of the year that this change will be inclusive and that structures are and will continue to be put in place that will encourage women's voices to be heard.

I do this work because I believe in equality and fairness and I believe victims of violence need a safe place to talk about the inequality and the disregard that they

face every day. YANA aims to provide a place where women can feel safe to talk, feel respected, supported, empowered, valued and equal. Everyone deserves that, no one deserves to be abused or disrespected, undermined and made feel worthless. We need to tell women that they are equal; we need to remind our legislators and society that women are equal so that policies and practices support women and their children. And we all need to place the responsibility with the perpetrators of the violence so that there are consequences for trying to destroy lives.

Providing one safe house in North Cork will not solve this epidemic but it will help at a practical local level, and it is a start, a new hope and a good community response to violence against women.

I want to thank everyone who supported YANA, North Cork Domestic Violence Project and the development of safe housing, including our friends in West Cork, and I want to thank the women who trusted us with their experiences.

And in the words of the great Maya Angelou:

**“All great achievements require time”.**



# west cork counselling

providing professional counselling at its centres in I

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## Our aims:

- 1 To provide an affordable and accessible 'Life Event Counselling Service' to individuals over the age of eighteen.
- 2 To provide a free 3-Option 'Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service' supporting anyone effected by a crisis/unplanned pregnancy. We make every effort to facilitate individuals in other locations, subject to resources.
- 3 To provide a free 'Abortion Aftercare Counselling Service' to anyone wishing to seek support following the termination of a pregnancy.
- 4 To provide information on existing voluntary and statutory groups and services.
- 5 To identify needs for additional supports and services.

Our Crisis Pregnancy and Abortion Aftercare Counselling services are available to individuals of all ages and from all regions.

## Why Counselling?

### Life Event Counselling Service

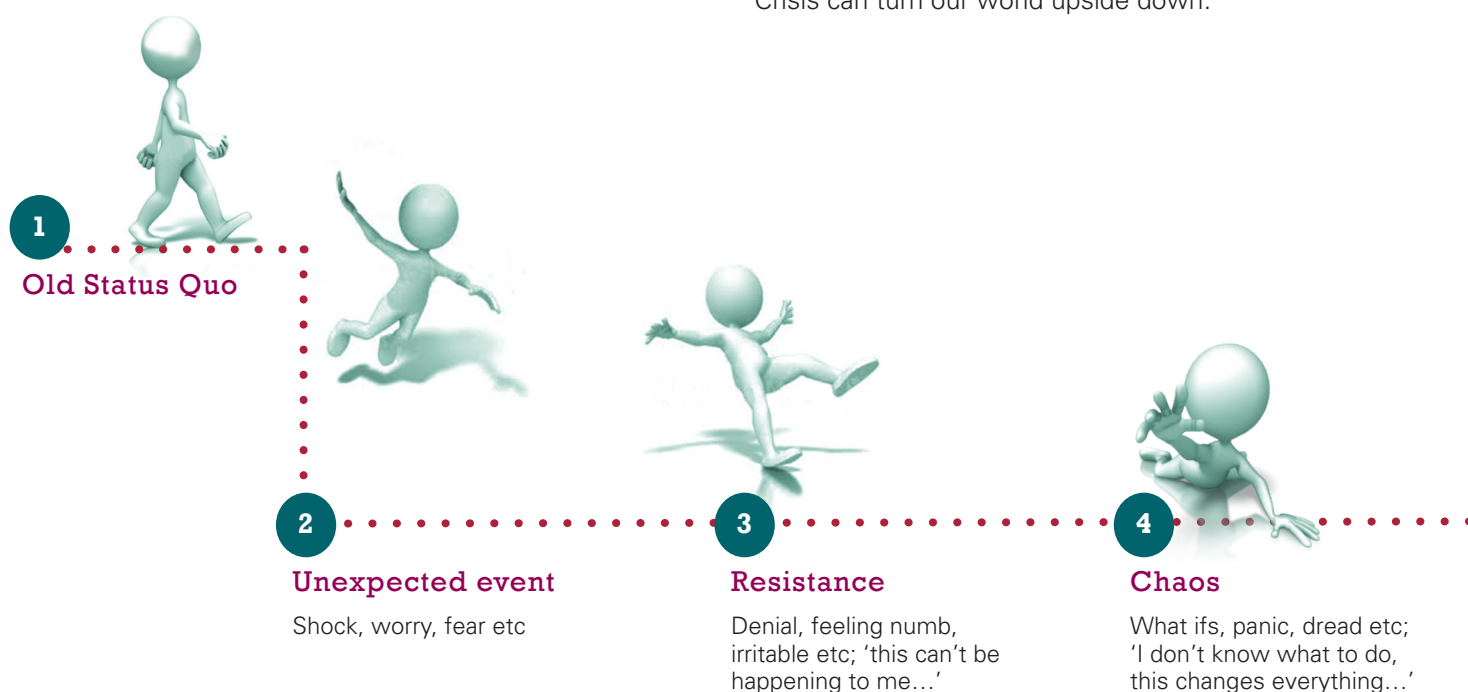
People seek life event counselling for varied reasons, for example:

- Current distressing life issues such as stress/ anxiety, isolation/loneliness, bereavement /loss and family/ relationship issues.
- Pre-existing issues such as low-self-esteem, overwhelming emotions, low-mood, problematic coping patterns.
- Personal development reason: exploring values, goals and ambitions in life.

Individuals have reported improved personal awareness, insight and empowerment following counselling.

### Crisis Pregnancy Counselling Service and Abortion Aftercare Counselling Service

Implicit in the word 'Crisis' is the idea of impending change, an abrupt adjustment or turning point in life. Crisis can turn our world upside down.





# and support services

## in Dunmanway and Skibbereen

by Rae Brady MIACP, Clinical Director at WCCSS

### The Main Features of a Crisis:

- It is unexpected.
- It creates uncertainty and unpredictability.
- It threatens existing routines and goals.
- It involves change in our lives.

### Typical Reactions to a Crisis:

- 1 Behavioural - A 'fight or flight' reaction is common.
- 2 Emotional - Feelings of shock, anger, fear, anxiety, resentment, grief and devastation.
- 3 Somatic - Sleep disruption, difficulty in completing everyday tasks, changes in eating habits, physical complaints/ailments such as upset stomachs, headaches etc
- 4 Interpersonal - Strained interactions with others; irritability, becoming more clingy or withdrawn.
- 5 Cognitive - Poor concentration, racing thoughts, difficulty in thinking rationally.
- 6 Spiritual - A sense of unfairness in life, struggles with feelings of injustice.

Navigating a crisis involves acknowledging the change or threat, acceptance of feelings without judgement and exploring options. During a crisis we can often uncover underlying strengths and resilience within ourselves.

### How to support a person experiencing a crisis:

- 1 Listen to understand rather than to respond.
- 2 Remain physically and emotionally present.
- 3 Validate what the person is feeling and saying.
- 4 Be patient, do not interrupt or interpret.
- 5 When the time feels right move towards productive problem solving and decision making.

For appointments or further information contact:  
WCCSS Life Event Counselling Service:  
**Telephone: 023.8856852**

West Cork Crisis Pregnancy Programme  
Counselling and Support  
**Freephone: 1800 252 359**

Alternatively, call in and speak to one of our team at Ross House, Main Street, Dunmanway, from 9am to 1pm Monday to Friday.



5

#### Transforming Idea

Acceptance and acknowledgement of new situation, exploring options and making new decisions.



6

#### Integration and moving forward

Re-engaging with life in a way that incorporates this change, renewed energy, feelings of optimism and hope.



7

#### Time

Self-discovery, new learning, feelings of satisfaction, allowing time to adjust to the new situation.

#### New Status Quo

8

## *Citizens Information Advocacy & Housing*

As part of its work, West Cork Citizens Information Service provides a free, independent and confidential advocacy service to people who need support or non-legal representation in accessing their rights and entitlements

Increasing numbers of callers require advocacy in relation to housing and homelessness. In 2016, the number of queries relating to Housing Issues dealt with by the CIS increased by over 12% and accounted for 7.86% of all queries.

These issues included assisting with applications for Local Authority Housing, dealing with issues in relation to the Housing Assistance Programme (HAP) and also dealing with queries arising from landlords and tenants in the Private-Rented sector.

The priority for Citizens Information is to support people to stay out of homelessness and enable them to get suitable, secure and sustainable accommodation. This is done through assistance with form filling, negotiating with landlords and local authorities and working with other agencies.

Further information is available from West Cork Citizens Information Service, Wolfe Tone Square, Bantry,  
Tel: 0761 07 8390 or email: [bantry,cic@citinfo.ie](mailto:bantry,cic@citinfo.ie)



Over 4,000  
domestic  
violence  
victims a year  
are being  
ignored in the  
housing crisis



Store has surplus food  
they cannot sell



Food Cloud believes food  
should not go to waste

Stark research undertaken by SAFE Ireland has warned that homeless figures are being greatly under estimated. The research has highlighted that the 4,000 plus women and children being accommodated every year in emergency refuge accommodation are not being counted and recognised as being homeless.

Government figures at the end of February 2016 show that 912 families with 1,881 children were in emergency homeless accommodation but this figure does not include the 4,000 plus in emergency refuge accommodation.

The new housing research reflects that women are staying in refuge for longer than ever due to external barriers to housing, spiralling rents, low or no housing stock and inadequate or unavailable rent allowance. The knock on effect of this is that the needs of thousands of women also looking for crisis accommodation cannot be met because refuges are constantly full. A Safe Ireland National Domestic Violence Service Statistics Report 2014 indicates that domestic violence services across the state were unable to meet up to 14 requests every day from women looking for safe accommodation in 2014. This is equivalent to 4,831 requests for safe accommodation being unfulfilled because refuges were full.<sup>1</sup>

These figures do not meet the requirement of Article 23 of the Istanbul Convention which states that 'states must provide shelters in sufficient numbers to provide safe accommodation for and to reach out proactively to victims' <sup>2</sup>

Women and children who have left their home due to domestic violence often meet challenges in relation to accessing and being eligible for social housing. For example if they stay with friends or family, they may not

be considered 'homeless', so they may not be deemed eligible for priority housing, despite the fact that staying with friends is not an appropriate long term solution. Women may be required to have lived in the area for a specified time or to have local connections. This can pose a problem for women wishing to move away from the abuser for safety reasons. A woman may not be entitled to social housing if she jointly owns a property with her abuser, regardless of the fact that this property is not available to her as she would not be safe there.<sup>2</sup>

In its pre-budget submission for 2017, The National Women's Council of Ireland rightly called for flexibility on rent allowance levels to those transitioning from an abusive situation.<sup>3</sup>

At a recent launch of a new SAFE Ireland report *The State We Are In*, CEO Sharon O Halloran stressed that women and children forced to leave violent homes are being caught in the crossfire of the national housing crisis.

'Domestic Violence is simply not on the homeless agenda' she said. 'According to local authority practice women leaving violent homes are not being considered homeless, they are seen as being out of home, as they have a home, albeit an unsafe, violent one. They are being rendered invisible when it comes to their right to a safe home'.<sup>4</sup>

1. Safe Ireland National Domestic Violence Service Statistics Report 2014.

2. Women's Aid Briefing Paper on Domestic Violence, June 2016.

3. Fill the Gap- Pre Budget 2017- Submission of the National Women's Council of Ireland.

4 <http://www.safeireland.ie/2016/over-4000-domestic-violence-victims-a-year-being-ignored-in-housing-crisis/>



Dunmanway Family Resource Centre has access to a limited supply of fresh food and are making it available to people who want it

To sign up phone  
023 8868110 or 0872078016.

Collect free food that would  
otherwise go to waste.



*The ache for home  
lives in all of us,  
the safe place where  
we can go as we are  
and not be questioned.*

MAYA ANGELOU



## annual report

West Cork Women Against Violence Project's Annual Report for 2016 was presented at the AGM held on June 15th at the Ludgate Hub in Skibbereen. Attended by friends and colleagues of the Women's project, the Annual Report presentation and the AGM is a perfect opportunity to look back at what work we did in the past year, and discuss how it prepares the way for the work to do in the next year.

The annual report can be viewed on our website  
<https://westcorkwomensproject.ie/>

## WCWAV in Dublin

Four representatives of WCWAV were invited to a reception in Áras an Uachtaráin to mark International Women's Day on Wednesday 8 March, hosted by the President and Mrs Sabina Higgins. The reception aimed to encourage and highlight the work of activists, campaigners, volunteers and staff of organisations working to combat domestic and sexual violence and that play an important role in empowering women to live dignified and meaningful lives, free from terror and abuse.



You can watch the President's speech by clicking on the link <http://www.president.ie/en/diary/details/president-and-sabina-host-reception-to-mark-international-womens-day>

### 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

Designed by Jenny Dempsey 085 7580569

## 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)*

**Macroom** South Square Macroom,

0761 078 430  
*Mon, Tues, Weds, Thursday (Closed Friday)*

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

**Dunmanway**, Ross House, The Square,  
 Dunmanway *Every Monday 10am-1pm*

**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.

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.

Published by West Cork Women  
 Against Violence Project  
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**www.westcorkwomensproject.ie**

**email:**  
**admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie**

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