



West Cork Whisper

WEST CORK WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 72

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16 Days of Action Opposing Violence Against Women 25th November to 10th December

One in three women worldwide face abuse, violence and rape everyday. In no country of the world are women free from this fear and terror. In Ireland, one in five women experience domestic violence during their lifetime, and it is estimated that 213,000 women in Ireland are living with severe abuse from their boyfriends, husbands and partners.

The International 16 Days of Action runs between two significant UN days of human rights awareness raising. The 25th of November is UN International Day Opposing Violence against Women, and 16 days later, the 10th of December, is International Human Rights Day. Holding the campaign within these global days of action sends a strong message that violence against women is a violation of their fundamental human rights. The campaign spans these 16 Days in order to highlight the link between violence against women and human rights. Today, women and girls are subjected to many forms of human rights violations solely on the basis of their gender.

The 16 Days of Action began in 1991. Since then, over 4,114 organisations in approximately 172 countries have taken part. Participating in 16 Days is a public political statement to local elected representatives and the media that we want positive change and better protection of women and children from violence and abuse.

The 16 Days Campaign provides us all with the opportunity to break the silence around domestic violence. By organising events in our local communities that highlight the issue of domestic violence and promote the services available for women, we make the issue visible, we give hope to women who are suffering and we hold perpetrators of abuse to account.



STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Significant dates during the 16 days

25th
NOVEMBER

UN
International Day of
Elimination of Violence
against Women

29th
NOVEMBER

International
Human Rights
Defenders Day

1st
DECEMBER

World Aids Day

2nd
DECEMBER

International Day
for the
Abolition of Slavery

3rd
DECEMBER

International Day
of Disabled Persons

5th
DECEMBER

International Volunteer
Day for Social and
Economic Development

6th
DECEMBER

The anniversary
of the
Montreal Massacre*

10th
DECEMBER

Human Rights Day



#whiteribbon

**STAND UP
SPEAK OUT**

#endthecycle: stop family violence



Aims of the Campaign

The 16 Days Campaign is an opportunity for individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and increase women's safety by:

- Highlighting the nature and prevalence of violence against women
- Raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue
- Showing solidarity among women around the world
- Promoting women's leadership
- Lobbying government
- Strengthening local work to tackle violence against women

INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender-based violence (GBV) or violence against women and girls (VAWG), is a global pandemic that affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. The numbers are staggering:

- 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.
- Globally, 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner.
- Globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.
- 200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting. (World Bank 2018)
- Approximately 130 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of the practice.
- Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.3 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million). Violence and abuse characterize married life for many of these girls.

TRAFFICKING

- Women and girls are 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked across national borders annually, with the majority (79 percent) trafficked for sexual exploitation.
- One study in Europe found that 60 percent of trafficked women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence before being trafficked, pointing to gender-based violence as a push factor in the trafficking of women.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

- Between 40 and 50 percent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other form of sexual harassment at work.
- An estimated 150 million girls under the age of 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.

RAPE IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

- Conservative estimates suggest that 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia & Herzegovina, while approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women & girls were targeted in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.
- Between 50,000 and 64,000 women in camps for internally displaced people in Sierra Leone were sexually assaulted by combatants between 1991 and 2001.

seminar

West Cork Women Against Violence are delighted to welcome Professor Stephanie Holt of Trinity College Dublin back to West Cork.

Last December Stephanie gave a seminar on the impact of domestic abuse on children to a packed audience of professionals who work with children and young people and to women with children who have experienced domestic abuse.

Her research focuses on the Voice of the Child in domestic abuse and WCWAV has invited her back to develop that theme in her next seminar for us on **Thursday 6th December at Celtic Ross Hotel, Rosscarbery**. Professor Holt's work centres directly on children's voices who share their feelings and thoughts with her and her researchers. The title of the seminar is *Post-Separation Conflict and its Impact on Children*, and will look at how abusers use the courts and access to continue to exert control and how children feel about those situations.

Stephanie Holt with researcher Ruth Elliffe from TCD will also host a focus group for professionals working with preschool children during their visit to West Cork and this will take place on the morning of the 6th December. If you are a preschool play leader, PHN, social worker, child therapist, nursery nurse or involved in any profession where your work involves contact with 0-5 year olds, please contact our office if you would like to take part in the focus group and/or the seminar.



Further details and times for the seminar and the focus group will be posted on our facebook and website and any queries can be directed to our office in Bantry. Stephanie Holt's seminar is a FREE event.

* 1989 - A lone man walked into an engineering class at L'École Polytechnique at the University of Montréal. He separated the men from the women and told the men to leave. After the male students complied, the man declared his hatred of feminists and began to shoot the women with a semi-automatic rifle. While police forces stood outside, Marc Lépine went on a rampage, shooting and stabbing the women at the school. 14 women were killed, 14 other people injured. He then shot himself.

I am in an abusive relationship what do I do?

No matter what type of abuse you are experiencing this is not OK. Abuse is caused by the abuser no one else. There are no circumstances in which you should compromise your mental and physical health for someone.

The most important things to remember are that you are not alone, you are not to blame and that there is support available.

The following steps are important if you are considering leaving an abusive relationship



1 Realizing you are in an abusive relationship is one of the first steps. Many individuals in abusive relationships do not understand what abuse is, are in denial or worried what their peers/family might think. You must first realize your relationship is abusive before you try to get out of it. Learn about and notice the warning signs, believe the red flags.

2 Go to your support system and speak with someone you feel safe with. If you do not want to speak to a family member or friend, there are other options. Helplines are available at any time and can be very important to allow you to speak with a trained support worker who can provide a non-judgemental space. A support worker can help you confirm your concerns for abuse in the relationship that you have identified in the first step. When calling a support worker you will not be pushed into a decision to leave the relationship. Instead,

you will benefit by being given the space to figure out your thoughts, feelings and needs at that time. If deciding to speak with a friend or family member, it is very important you choose carefully who you speak with (someone who you trust and who will understand). Your support system helps you throughout the whole process.

3 Keep your decision quiet. If you speak with your partner about the abuse you are experiencing, they might use this conversation to further manipulate and blame you. Also, voicing the fact that you intend to leave only places your abuser on edge and could potentially lead to more abuse. If you are planning on leaving don't talk to anyone other than your support system about that. Linking in with a support worker at this time is very, very important to discuss a safe way of leaving the home. Leaving an abuser is one of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship.

4 Remind yourself why you're leaving. Even when leaving an abusive relationship, you will still be in the process of grieving the relationship you had. Remember that it is normal to still care for a partner, even if they are abusive and you have left the relationship. Constantly remind yourself why you're leaving and why you two can't be together. Once you have left the relationship you can and will gain back some confidence and power through re-engaging with friends and your own interests/hobbies.

5 Cut them out of your life COMPLETELY. Now that you've got out of the relationship, you must remove them from every other aspect in your life. Otherwise the abusive partner will try to re-enter your life in any way. If your abuser continues to contact or follow you this is still abusive behaviour and you need to speak to your support system. Also, abusers will continue to have a presence in some form in your life through access with children. Remember there is support available for managing co-parenting with an abusive ex-partner.

If someone you know is in an abusive relationship, what should you do?

Before you get involved, ask yourself if it's safe and legal to intervene. If the situation is already violent or looks like it's escalating quickly, don't directly intervene. Call the Gardai on 999. The only effective bystander intervention is a non-violent one. If you try to 'rescue' a victim or fight off an abuser, you'll not only endanger yourself, but the abuser may take out their anger on the victim later. The victim could end up more isolated and less likely to seek help later on.

As with all kinds of bystander interventions, the only way to know how to intervene is to know when to intervene. There are some warning signs that someone you know may be experiencing abuse.

Follow your instincts. If you've noticed these warning signs and expect that someone you know is being abused, don't wait for them to approach you. Look for a private moment where you can express concern and let them know you're there to support them.

1. Express concern - Tell your friend that you've been concerned for them or that you're worried. This is a non-judgmental approach that might make them feel comfortable about opening up. If they deny that anything is wrong, don't push, simply communicate that you'll be there for them if they ever want to talk.

2. Assure them that the violence is not their fault - This can be such an important thing for a victim of violence to hear. Some useful things to say might be,

"No one deserves to be treated this way," "You are not to blame," or simply, "What's happening is not your fault."

3. Support, but don't advise - This can be so hard to do, especially if the victim is someone close to you. But remember that you cannot make someone leave a relationship if they are not ready to do so. Also be aware that leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim. The victim is best placed to assess the danger for themselves. Give them options and offer to help and support them along the way, but pressuring a victim to leave a relationship who does not want to may only isolate them further by making them feel like they can't confide in you. Remember that abusive behaviour is a pattern of getting power and control over someone else. Validating a victim's choices and encouraging them to make their own decisions can help to break the cycle of power and control.

4. Give resources - There are plenty of services in Ireland who can offer help and support to the person you are concerned about. Check out our list of services to find the one most appropriate. You can help a friend with their safety plan.

5. Keep it confidential - Assure the victim that anything that has been said will stay between the two of you. Breaking a victim's trust after they have opened up to you may only isolate them further and could even put them in danger.

When it's between strangers

Before we can be ready to intervene, we first need to learn what kinds of situations might require our involvement. Unfortunately, if you're a bystander to abuse between people you don't know, you'll probably have a limited amount of time to assess the situation and decide how to best intervene.

If you've decided that a situation requires an intervention and that you feel motivated about getting involved and are happy that it is safe to do so, try following these three Ds to evaluate the best way to intervene.

1. Distract - Creating a distraction is an indirect and non-confrontational way to intervene, and it can help keep a dangerous situation from escalating. You can try distracting either the person about to commit violence, or the potential victim. Either way, your goal is to prevent a situation from getting worse, or better yet, to buy enough time to check in with the potential victim. Examples: Ask for directions, the time, help looking for a lost item, or anything else that you think might keep them from leaving quickly. Better yet, if you can use a distraction that will get you a moment alone with the victim.

2. Delegate - Even if you don't know the victim and the abuser, someone else in the room might. Friends of the people involved might be in a better position to get involved, and they might have a better opportunity for a

sustained intervention than you. You could say to them, "Look, I'm concerned about that person. Their partner seems really angry. Would you be able to check in on the situation now or later?" Or, if you don't feel comfortable intervening but it doesn't seem like the situation calls for Garda involvement, look for someone else who might be in a better position to get involved. If you're at a bar, look for the bouncer or someone in a similar role and point out what's happening.

3. Direct - In a direct approach you either approach the potential victim or potential abuser and intervene. The problem with directly approaching an abuser is that they may attack you and they might end up taking it out on their partner later. If you're going to have any direct contact with a possible abuser it's probably best to be subtler, like using body language to communicate disapproval and make your presence and concern known. You could do this just by watching the situation and making it obvious that you're keeping an eye on the situation.

If you're going to try a direct approach, your best bet will probably be to approach the victim. you could say, "No one deserves to be treated like that," or, "That wasn't your fault." Don't try to give advice or judge or blame the victim for what's just happened. Use the opportunity to say that you're concerned, that you want to help, and that it's not their fault.

a day in the life of a support worker

It is a Tuesday. We are normally in the office from half nine in the morning. First off, prior to anything, I need a cup of tea to start the work day. It requires skill to juggle and prioritise - hence the need for caffeine. I also never have breakfast in the early am so my colleagues know that I am in when they smell the burnt toast. Whilst the toast is burning, Julia our administration finds me and we talk about that database again! I check the phone lines for any calls. A client has requested that I phone her back.

Our Coordinator Marie, catches us for a quick update on yesterday and assigns any immediate appointments scheduled for the day. We catch up on any headline news and inform each other where we will be during the day. My colleague Susan has been pencilled in for a crisis court accompaniment (from speaking with a client yesterday) and she will be offline for the day as we can never be sure when a court will finish. Lisa is out with a client appointment and due in for 10am. Our staff meeting is scheduled for half ten.

I log into emails and respond accordingly but I shelve these when the helpline rings early at 9.50am and I speak to my second client of the day. As a situation occurred over the weekend, she needs to offload the stress of both the incident and its aftermath. I spend over half an hour speaking with her and by the time the call comes naturally to a close, she states she feels calmer, more in control. She has talked through the options available to her and has made a plan as to what she needs to do next. I phone the first client who left a message and we arrange an appointment for 12.30pm in the office. All our client's contacts need to be documented from two perspectives: we need to record the amount of calls we receive each year from clients plus it helps when Susan or Lisa have contact from the same client and they are aware of

what has recently happened to her. I spend some time documenting the key issues addressed with the clients I have spoken with. A repeat client links in to thank us for our support yesterday and that she is in a better place today.

I return to the emails and finish the one I had started earlier and also confirm our attendance at a training event scheduled for next week around substance abuse. A community welfare officer rings to refer a client on the office line, I ask to speak with this client and we arrange an appointment for tomorrow at ten. I make a to-do list at this stage as I know I am not going to get around to the work I left yesterday. We all meet up to begin the staff meeting and plan our activities. Twenty minutes later the helpline rings again, I leave and work with this client for another forty minutes. I return and catch up with what I have missed (and find out what activities I have been kindly "volunteered for" in my absence). My client arrives for my 12.30pm appointment and we spend 70 minutes together. We cover issues regarding what domestic violence is, dynamics, tactics and profiles of an abuser all of which enables the client to recognise for the first time that she is experiencing emotional abuse. She believed everything was her fault. A lot of time is spent on this and on making her safe in her current environment. She has been experiencing physical violence also but she hadn't recognised this as violence as "he only nudges and pushes" her against the wall. We talk through a safety plan for the next time that violence occurs and pinpoint who she can go to for accommodation. She leaves with contact numbers for the local refuge in Cork city and information about the other options open to her. Susan is on the office line having finished Court so Marie our Coordinator spends some time talking about this case and she heads back to the office.

I grab a sandwich and fill out client paperwork at my desk. Things quieten somewhat when Susan and Lisa are back in the office as there are now three of us to share the phones. Marie sticks her head in to check that we are all still working hard, gives us some more work (just in case we don't have enough) and we enjoy some banter. I hear Lisa on the helpline to another client. Susan and I consult on a child protection issue and about what next to do in this case and link in with Marie.

Julia comes to help me to figure out what I did to my desktop feature when I hit that small button. A client drops in unexpectedly at 2.30 carrying a two year old toddler with a baby in a buggy and 90 minutes is spent with her. The toddler decides to ransack the client room (at that age we just leave her to mangle the place) and we concentrate on the client's needs. She was referred by Bantry Citizens Information Service, is trying to access the housing list in the County Council and needs support due to the physical and financial abuse she is experiencing with her partner. I provide information around the application process and help her fill out the application forms that we have in the office. I also complete an advocacy letter to support her application and we do safety planning around what to do if she needs to leave in a crisis. I also work on the impact of her abuse and the resultant diagnosis (made by her GP) of post-natal depression/post-traumatic stress disorder. I offer on-going support to her and reinforce that this will be given regardless of her choice to remain in the relationship or leave. I fill out all the paperwork (again).

At this stage its nigh on half five pm and my computer pings me (again) to remind me that I had set myself a deadline to write an article for the next Whisper due tomorrow. I still haven't returned to my to-do list so I add it onto my- to- do list, take a deep breath and turn off the computer. 😊

wonder

women of west cork



Louise O'Neill is our guest in this issue of Women of West Cork

Where are you from? I'm from Clonakilty, one of the most beautiful parts of west Cork. (No, I'm not biased at all.)

Job Title: Author, and columnist with the Irish Examiner

What does your work entail? My work entails sitting at my laptop in my dressing gown, making up stories for a living. I basically chose this job so I could wear my pyjamas all day long. I'm usually at my desk from about 7am until lunch time, during which time I try and get 1000 words completed on whatever project I'm currently working on. I go to the gym in the afternoon but then I'm back at the desk, reading, researching, and making notes. When the book is published, *finally*, I have to do a lot of media. I find the publicity side of things quite draining but I know it's important in order to reach readers. I work very hard on my novels and I want them to be read

Why and how did you get involved in West Cork Women Against Violence? I met Marie Mulholland, the coordinator at WCWAV, at the Safe Ireland summit in 2016, and I was completely blown away by her energy and passion for the centre. She asked me if I would ever want to be involved with WCWAV and I jumped at the chance. Violence against women - physical, emotional, sexual or otherwise - is such a massive issue, the scale of its prevalence is something that causes me to lose sleep at night. This is not because I am a feminist or because I am a woman, even though obviously I am both of those things. It is because I am a human being and I want all other human beings to feel safe and secure.

Since your first involvement with WCWAV do you feel things have improved for women experiencing DV?

It's difficult to answer that. Since becoming involved with WCWAV, I have become more and more aware of how common domestic violence is and how little funding is given to attempt to eradicate it. This is something that needs to change. However, the new bill about coercive control and the possibility of a local safe house in west Cork give me great hope. I am constantly impressed by the work that is done by the women at the WCWAV, how determined they are, and how they keep fighting on behalf of us all.

How do you relax? I'm a member of Inchydoney gym and I really only work out so I can sit in the relaxation room afterwards and drink cucumber flavoured water. That helps alleviate a lot of stress. Yoga is incredible too, as is meditation. I try and get enough sleep and I don't drink, both of which help with anxiety.

What changes would you most like to see for women?

I would like to see equality for men and women in every aspect of life, where we are all free to express our true selves regardless of gender stereotypes. For women in particular, I would like to see equal pay - financial freedom is essential in creating a fair society. I would also like to live in a world where we believe women when they say they have been the victim of domestic or sexual abuse, without finding ways to blame, discredit, or silence them instead.

Could Someone Like You, Help Someone Like Me?

BECOME A FOSTER CARER

Do you have:

Time in your Life
Room in your Home
A Place in your Heart

FOSTER CARERS
URGENTLY NEEDED

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

Contact the Child and Family Agency at:
www.fostering.ie
Cork Area
Tel: 021-4521138

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

She had forgotten who she was. The day she remembered who she was, the game changed.

So did her fate.

SHREYA KUMARI

MABS, is a National FREE, CONFIDENTIAL & NON-JUDGEMENTAL Service for people already in debt, or in danger of getting into debt.



WHAT SERVICE DO WE PROVIDE?

- Help YOU take CONTROL of your money.
- Help YOU MAXIMISE your household income.
- Help YOU work out your BUDGET.
- Make REALISTIC arrangements with your creditors, where possible.

Contact Us/Call In to South Munster **mabs**

West Cork Office

Unit 11, Underhill Commercial Park, Dunmanway

Telephone Dunmanway at

(076) 107 2450

Email: dunmanway@mabs.ie

OUTREACH CLINICS ALSO HELD BY APPOINTMENT IN
Bantry, Macroom, Clonakilty, Bandon, Skibbereen and Castletownbere

mabs National Helpline

Monday to Friday 9am – 8pm on (076) 107 2000

Debt Relief Notice (DRN) – Debts of €35,000 or Less.

For those who are on low income and have unsecured debt, little or no assets, a debt write off of up to €35,000 may be availed of through MABS in the form of a Debt Relief Notice. This is a formal, legally binding solution whereby unmanageable debt is completely written off after three years, subject to certain rules. Log on to www.backontrack.ie or www.lsi.gov.ie



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

gentlydownthestream.design.

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.

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.

We're here to support you

1800 203 136

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

Bantry Office: 027 53847 - Mon to Fri: 9 am to 5.30 pm

Helpline: 1800 203 136 - Tuesday: from 10am to 4pm

Skibbereen Outreach: 028 23607 - Fridays 11-2

Clonakilty Outreach Thursdays by appointment

www.facebook.com/westcorkwomenagainstviolence