

# Annual Impact Report 2021



Women's Aid



Women's Aid would like to acknowledge the support of our statutory funders



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland





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# Chairperson's Welcome



*Ailbhe Smyth*  
*Chairperson*

I am delighted to welcome all readers to the 2021 Annual Impact Report from Women's Aid. Despite progress over the last number of years, domestic violence<sup>1</sup> remains alarmingly prevalent across the globe, including here in Ireland. It is an undeniable fact that, at this very moment, there are women and children around the world living in constant fear.

At least one in three or up to one billion women have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetime. One in four women in Ireland have experienced domestic abuse from a current or former partner. I am proud to be a part of Women's Aid, who have been working for almost 50 years to protect and support women and children subjected to domestic violence, and to improve social responses to combat this scourge. This Annual Impact Report 2021 gives us important insights into the lived experiences of the women they support, as well as the critical work that Women's Aid conducts to help make Ireland a safer and fairer place to live in.

In 2021, the global Covid-19 pandemic continued to present challenges to Women's Aid, and to women subjected to fear and abuse in their own homes. We continued to innovate and adapt to meet women's needs in these desperately acute circumstances. I want to thank our incredible staff, volunteers and my fellow highly dedicated Board members for their tireless work. I also want to thank all our partners

<sup>1</sup> While recognising that the legal term in Ireland is 'domestic violence' we acknowledge that many victims/survivors identify more with the term 'domestic abuse' or 'intimate partner violence'. Women's Aid uses these terms interchangeably in this submission to refer to the same set of abusive behaviors perpetrated by current or former intimate partners (including emotional, physical, sexual and economic abuse and coercive control).





in the community and voluntary, private and statutory sectors, who collaborated with us in 2021, to progress a concerted whole community response to domestic violence and abuse.

I also want to recognise here the incredible outpouring of generosity to Women's Aid by donors who reached out to us at a time of real uncertainty. As an organisation that fundraised just over 70% of its operating costs for 2021, this groundswell of support was a lifeline to us throughout the pandemic. It ensured that all Women's Aid vital services could adapt and continue to be available 24/7. We were able to offer women and their children direct practical assistance like never before. We have also been able to plan and develop a range of new and innovative projects to help increase our positive impact on women at risk of, or subjected to abuse.

Today, there is an increased recognition in Irish society that domestic abuse and all forms of male violence against women are not women's issues, but an issue for men. In Women's Aid, we know that we cannot achieve success alone. Therefore, we must be a part of a cooperative community alongside our colleagues in civil society and community organisations, and with statutory partners and survivors – but also the general public.

As we now embark on delivery of our new Strategic Plan 2022-2024, Women's Aid will continue to advocate, to seek opportunities, work in partnership and to innovate, so that we can all as a society do better for

the one in four women in Ireland who need our solidarity at some point in their lives.

As a charity of nearly 50 years standing, we also recognise and take very seriously the trust we hold and the public confidence to do our work transparently, and to the highest standards of good governance. As Chairperson myself and my colleagues on the Women's Aid Board work in partnership with the executive team to ensure we meet and maintain these standards. We are proud of being part of an organisation that is fully compliant with the Governance requirements of the Charities Act.

We will work steadily and with determination alongside our partners, survivors, funders and peers across the sector, collaborating where our interests are aligned and working to bring about the required fundamental social change that will end male violence against women. We warmly invite you to join with us in achieving this vision for Ireland.



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**Ailbhe Smyth**

Chairperson, June 2022





# CEO Introduction



*Sarah Benson*  
*Women's Aid CEO*

The Women's Aid Annual Impact Report for 2021 serves as a harrowing and poignant reminder of the level of domestic violence against women and children that prevails in homes and relationships across Ireland. **This report provides an insight into the coercive and controlling emotional, physical, economic and sexual abuses inflicted upon women and their children** at the hands of current and former intimate partners, whom we supported during just one year.

I am so very proud of the work of the Women's Aid team, including our incredible staff, volunteers, and Board members, for the organisation's achievements in 2021. Our amazing team goes above and beyond every day to listen, believe and support women and to help shape a safer society for everyone. We will continue our work, building on yet another exceptionally busy year, until we see an equal Irish society with zero tolerance of domestic violence and all forms of violence against women.

There is so much work to do, and we are so grateful to our statutory, non-statutory and public supporters for their continuing commitment to us, and to our work. We are fully committed to honouring this support and to maintaining and innovating our vital services to deliver positive impact.





## An exceptional year for services

In 2021 there were **26,906 contacts made with our direct services** during which a staggering **33,831 disclosures of abuse** were made: including **28,096 against women** and **5,735 disclosures of abuse against children.**<sup>2</sup> Behind these figures are real people living in our communities right now, whose lives have been devastated by the scourge of male violence against women.

The National 24hr Freephone Helpline team responded to **21,126 contacts** providing an unprecedented **3,863 hours of direct support** (an overall increase of 8% on 2021). Our contacts were considerably longer on average, and women's needs were often more complex. We experienced more calls in the quietest and darkest hours of the night. Women were reaching out for support, understanding, and the space to make sense of what their partners or ex-partners were doing to them.

There were **5,780** contacts with our face-to-face services in the Greater Dublin area. Women sought support through our drop-in court information and support service, one-to-one service, court accompaniment and High Risk Support Project. This marks a significant increase, and all these services are still under constant demand in 2022.

Contacts to all our services in 2021 revealed **ever more complex cases**, and deep levels of distress, fear and isolation, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Women told us about the broad and brutal patterns of behaviour that they were subjected to by those who were supposed to care for and love them. Domestic abuse, including coercive control, is just that: a pattern of many tactics that erode the victim/survivor's emotional, physical, sexual, and economic safety and well-being.

Women reported assaults with weapons; constant surveillance and monitoring; relentless put downs and humiliations; taking and sharing of intimate images online; complete control over all family expenditure; sexual assault and rape; and being threatened with theirs or their children's lives.

The impacts on women are chilling and ranged from exhaustion, isolation and hopelessness; to being brutalised and wounded, suffering miscarriages, feeling a loss of identity and suicide ideation, hypervigilance; poverty, and homelessness.

## Systems under pressure

Domestic violence is a public health crisis. **The Covid-19 pandemic did not cause domestic abuse, but exacerbated situations** for those already at risk of, or already in, abusive relationships. Systems slowed and courts became further backlogged. Isolation from family and friends became more acute because of public health measures. Our

<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that as the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and our Face-to-Face Services are primarily support services, any data collected is secondary to the provision of that support. For this reason, we do not actively seek to gather information from callers, it is only if it is disclosed to us that we record the information. Therefore, we do not have information on all aspects of the experiences of those who contact us.





housing crisis worsened. In some ways, the urgent and necessary efforts to manage Covid-19 compromised the country's response to domestic abuse.

Aside from the horrific and often long-lasting impacts of abuse itself, there are so many challenges today for those subjected to domestic abuse. Family and criminal law systems that are creaking at the seams, creating lengthy, protracted, and traumatising delays for women navigating both criminal and civil law systems. The housing crisis and dearth of appropriate specialist accommodation provision for survivors of abuse, limits options for a safe home for many. The negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on family incomes, taken especially with deliberate economic abuse, exacerbate acute and frightening situations for many thousands of women and children across the country.

## Innovating for positive change

Through **generous state and public support** Women's Aid **sustained our vital services and also innovated in 2021** to keep meeting women's needs as they presented to us. Women's Aid has **expanded cover** for the National Helpline and Face-to-Face services and initiated a **pilot project** to target vulnerable women accessing **maternity** services. We increased our efforts to shine a light on the under-reported and under-resourced issue of **intimate relationship abuse among young people**. Women's Aid collaborated on **new national public campaigns**.

We developed **new specialist training and support for employers** committed to making their workplaces a supportive environment for employees suffering domestic abuse. We also delivered over **€400,000 of practical support directly to women and their children all over Ireland** through emergency funds and resources to reduce risk of poverty, enhance children's lives and improve home security for families after separation.

In 2022, we continue to **invest in research and collaborative projects** to broaden our impact towards ending domestic, sexual and all forms of gender-based violence, as well as remaining a vital lifeline for those in need of help.

## A whole of government and society approach

The government has now completed the Third National Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Strategy. The final publication, together with an implementation plan, is due in the coming days. For the first time ever, the government has structured its' strategy around the four key components that will help truly eradicate male violence against women: **prevention, protection, prosecution, and policy co-ordination**.<sup>3</sup> Work is already underway to improve the family law system, to introduce stalking and strangulation legislation and to enact legislation for statutory paid domestic violence leave for employees. This is all **excellent progress** but all still in planning or process. **It will require**

<sup>3</sup> These are the four pillars of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention against Violence against Women and Girls. See <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/the-convention-in-brief> for more information.





**focus, co-ordination and - crucially - investment from Government to see the ambitions of an excellent plan realised.**

## Partnerships for lasting change

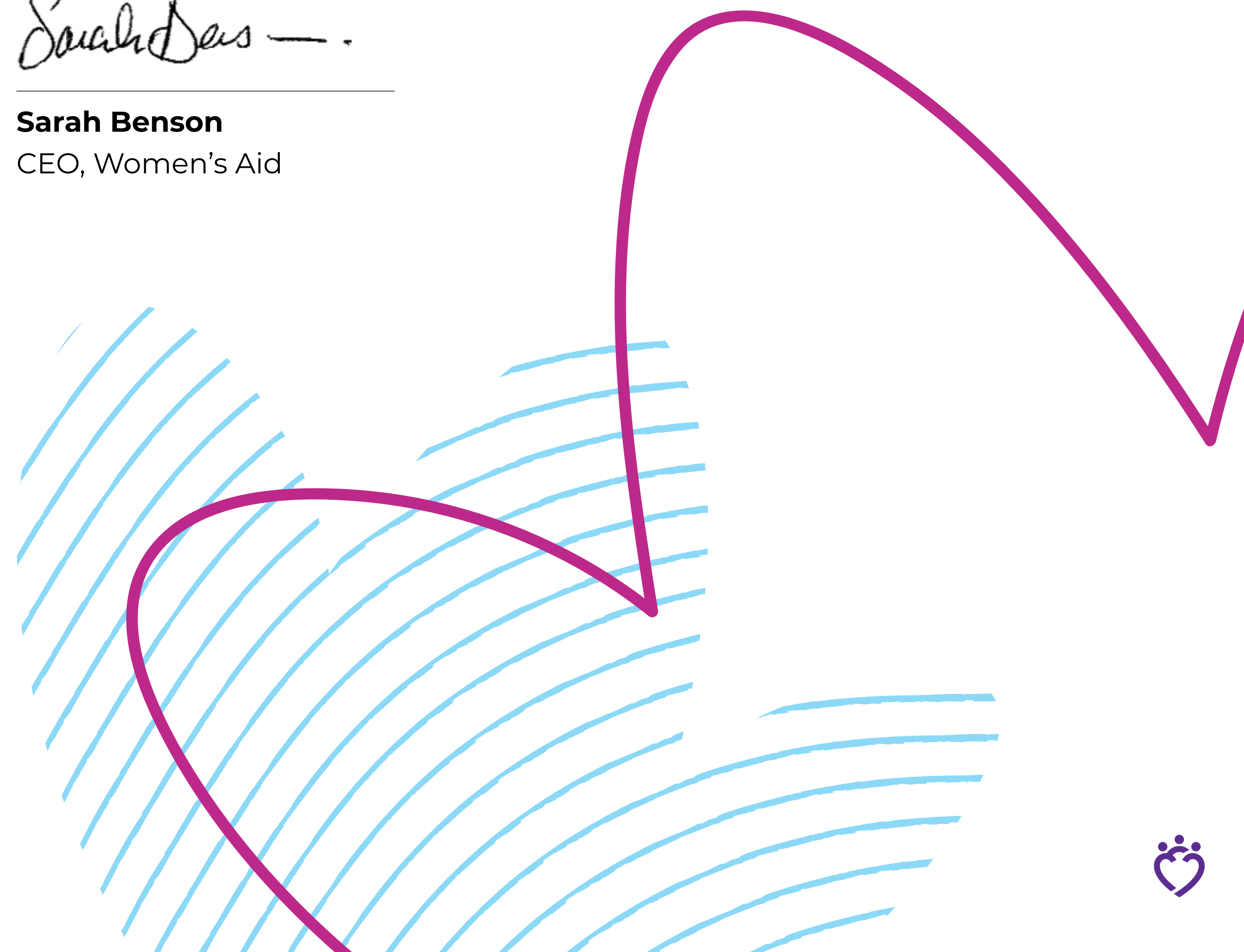
With global and economic challenges looming we must not become distracted. We must not forget that one in four women in this country will suffer abuse from a current or former partner. Unfortunately, this statistic is not reducing. Our recent research shows that **one in five women is subjected to abuse by the young age of 25. Just over half of these young women experienced the abuse before the age of 18.**

Recent and terrible events have again highlighted **persistent issues with misogyny** and structural gender inequality, which are both cause and consequence of male violence against women. This comes into stark focus every time a woman's life is lost because of male violence. As curators of the Femicide Watch for Ireland, Women's Aid recorded the names of **a further seven women who died in violent circumstances during 2021.** While we need to consider ways to prevent and target public safety for all, it **remains the case that the most dangerous place for women statistically is their own home.** The nightmare of violence and abuse most commonly will be at the hands of a current or former intimate male partner.

Now is the time to **be brave and ambitious.** The public conversation must continue to focus on how we, women and our male allies, can work together and create positive and lasting change for everyone in Irish society.



**Sarah Benson**  
CEO, Women's Aid





# About Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse including coercive control, in Ireland since 1974.

## We do this by:

- advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland
- and
- providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services.

## Our Frontline Services

### 24hr National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900

Women's Aid operates the 24hr National Freephone Domestic Violence Helpline in the Republic of Ireland. The Helpline provides a listening ear, emotional support and practical information to women subjected to violence and abuse from their current or former partners. The Helpline also acts as a gateway for direct referral to all other local specialist services across Ireland. It is the only free, national, domestic violence and abuse Helpline with specialised, trained Support Workers, fully

accredited and quality assured by The Helplines Partnership.

### Women's Aid Telephone Interpretation Service

The 24hr National Freephone Helpline has a Telephone Interpretation Service facility covering 200+ languages for callers needing support in their own language. Interpreters are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Instant Messaging Support Service (IMSS)

The Women's Aid IMSS is a free, confidential and secure service where women can seek support and advice from fully trained Helpline Support Workers through instant messaging. The service is open daily and can be accessed through [womensaid.ie](http://womensaid.ie) or [toointoyou.ie](http://toointoyou.ie). The service is more easily accessible to women who feel they are at risk of being overheard by their abuser.

### Face-to-Face Services in the Greater Dublin Area

#### One-to-One Support Service

The Women's Aid One-to-One Support Service provides in-depth information and support to women who have been subjected to domestic violence and abuse throughout Dublin City and County. This ongoing face-to-face and phone support can include court accompaniment, safety planning, advocacy and referral support to external organisations. Our advocacy and referral work includes





accompaniment to the local Gardaí to make statements; assistance with legal aid applications; support with immigration status within the context of domestic violence and abuse; advocating to Housing Authorities for women who are no longer safe in their homes; and support in accessing local refuges. Court accompaniment includes emotional support before, during and after the court proceedings, clarifying legal terminology and exploring further options. We support women with applications and hearings in the context of domestic violence orders as well as access, custody, maintenance, divorce and separation cases where domestic violence and abuse is present.

#### Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service (D.A.I.S.) - A Drop-In Service for Women in Dolphin House Family Law Court<sup>4</sup>

Based in the Dolphin House Family Law Court in Dublin, the Domestic Abuse Information and Support Service (D.A.I.S.) is a free and confidential drop-in service for women who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse. The service is available Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm and provides support and information on legal options and safety planning, and links women in with domestic violence and abuse services for ongoing support. Women's Aid runs this service in partnership with the Inchicore Outreach Centre.

#### High-Risk Support Project

The High-Risk Support Project provides a multi-agency response to women at a high-risk of ongoing violence, abuse and homicide from their ex-partners and ex-spouses. Women's Aid works with An Garda Síochána and local domestic violence services to deliver a coordinated rapid response system for women and their families, which is generously supported by the Vodafone Foundation Ireland and the Department of Justice.

#### Women's Aid Maternity Project

This is an innovative pilot project (2021-2024) which has the aim of enhancing maternity hospitals' and units' response to victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse through a jointly created, delivered and operated Domestic Violence and Abuse Training, Awareness and Referral Programme. The project is a partnership between, Women's Aid and three Dublin Maternity hospitals and Cork University Hospital who collaborate on delivery and evaluation of the key strands of the programme.

<sup>4</sup> formerly known as the Dolphin House Family Law Court Support and Referral Service





## Working for Social Equality

### Specialised Training

Women's Aid's Training and Development Department has a proven track record of designing and delivering specialist domestic violence and abuse training to local and national organisations throughout Ireland. We support organisations in the statutory, community and voluntary sectors, as well as corporate bodies, to enhance and improve responses to women who are subjected to domestic violence and abuse. All Women's Aid training is informed and guided by our decades of experience directly supporting women and by models of best practice.

### Public Awareness and Campaigns

Women's Aid leads the way in raising awareness and providing information on domestic violence and abuse to victims and survivors, their families and friends, their communities and wider society. Our annual public awareness campaigns and communications activities are a vital way to highlight the prevalence, nature and impact of domestic violence and abuse, intimate relationship abuse and femicide. Too Into You is a Women's Aid campaign and resource for young women (aged 18-25) to learn about their intimate relationships and seek support if they are suffering, or fear they may be suffering, intimate

relationship abuse. Friends, classmates, colleagues, family members and professionals can also access information about intimate relationship abuse here. The campaign highlights the hidden reality of many young intimate relationships.

We also engage with the media to promote the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and our other support services. The Women's Voices Testimony Project encourages and facilitates victims and survivors to tell their stories in a safe way to improve awareness of domestic violence and abuse and reach women in similar situations.

### Influencing Government and Policy

Women's Aid provides solution-based recommendations on improving preventions, legal responses, policies and protections to support women and children subjected to domestic violence and abuse, and we bring their concerns to a number of national and local fora. We make submissions and meet with government ministers, policymakers and members of the Oireachtas to discuss a range of issues and collaborate with other agencies and organisations to bring about social and political change.





# 2021 Summary



**33,831**

Disclosures of Domestic Abuse

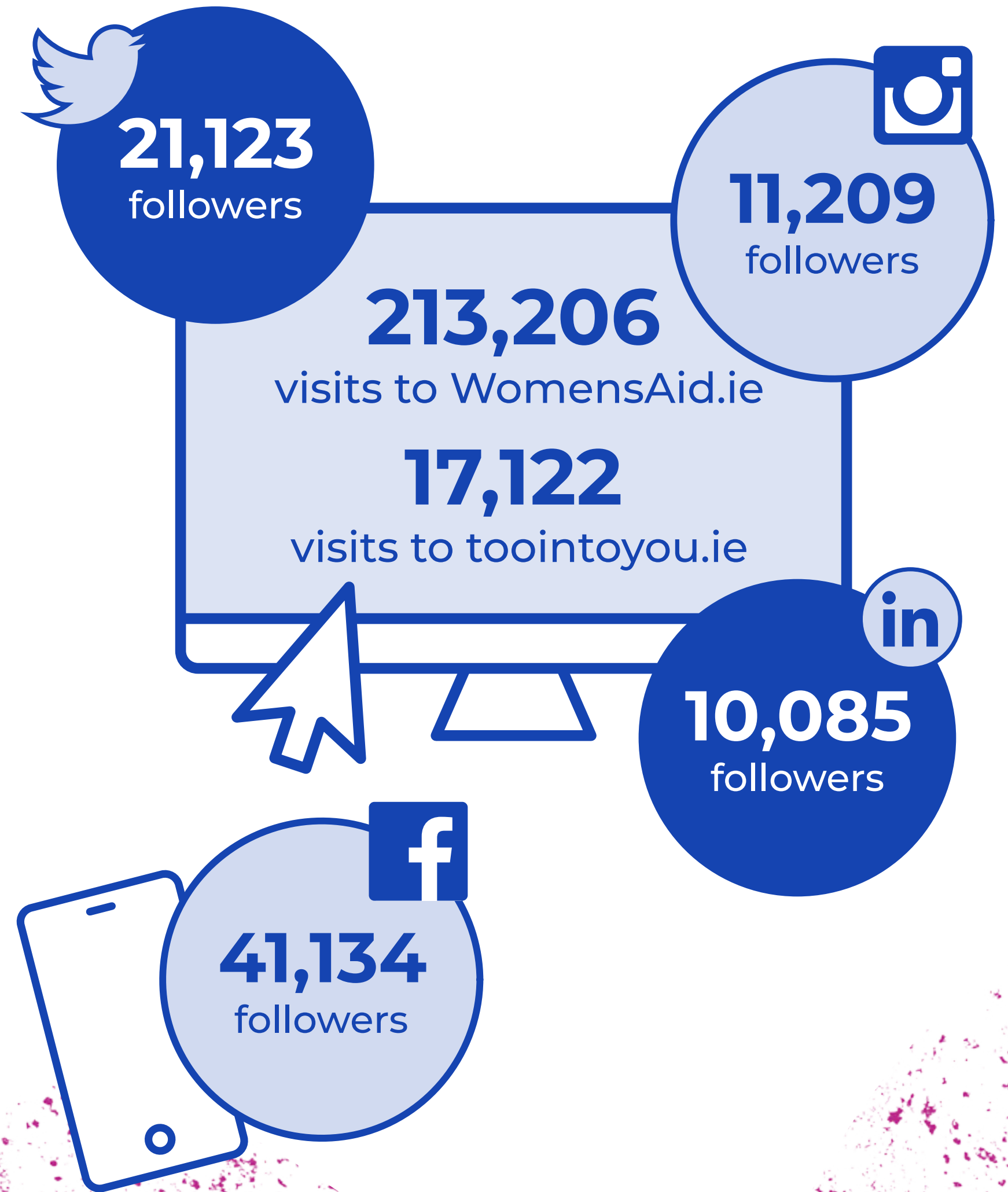
**28,096**

Disclosures of abuse against women

19,902 emotional abuse  
4,707 physical abuse  
2,383 economic abuse  
1,104 sexual abuse

**5,735**

Disclosures of abuse against children





# 2021 Innovations



## Too Into You Campaign

**New campaign leader** position created  
**Increased awareness and support** for young people (aged 18-25 years) experiencing intimate relationship abuse.

Awarded **European Parliament Citizen of the Year Prize**

**New research and engagement** with groups of young people

## Maternity Domestic Abuse Project

Partnership with four leading maternity hospitals to **enhance support to women** experiencing domestic abuse during pregnancy.

Training

Awareness

Outreach



## Women's Emergency Funds

Over **€400,000** distributed directly to women facing financial hardship and/or in need of support to increase their security at home because of domestic abuse.

Over **€100,000** support to women in contact with our Face-to-Face support services.

30 grants of **€10,000** given by Women's Aid to local domestic violence support services and refuges nationwide to distribute to women engaged with their services.



# 2021 Innovations

## Frontline Services

**Additional Helpline support** recruited to cover busier night time shifts.

Increased resources to support our **High Risk Support Project** and development of plans for a phased national roll out to commence mid 2022-24.

**Expansion of the Domestic Abuse Information Service (D.A.I.S)** at Dolphin House to a full-time service. This means that support is now available every morning and afternoon, Monday to Friday.

## Employer Response to Domestic Abuse Package

Creating a supportive, understanding, and safe workplace environment for victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Training

Awareness

Policy development

## National Awareness Campaigns

**World's Strongest Women** campaign in partnership with Allianz Ireland

Partnership with Hair & Beauty Industry Confederation to **raise awareness among hair and beauty professionals.**

All of these fantastic innovations were made possible by the support of the general public, companies, foundations and funding from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the Department of Justice.

**Thank you.**





## Comparative Statistics

	2020	2021	Comparison
<b>Contacts with Women's Aid</b>	<b>29,717</b>	<b>26,906</b>	<b>-9%</b>
24hr National Freephone Helpline (including calls, instant messages and emails)	<b>26,400</b>	<b>21,126</b>	<b>-20%</b>
Talk Time Hours (including 24hr National Freephone Helpline calls and instant messages)	<b>3,582</b>	<b>3,863</b>	<b>+8%</b>
Face-to-Face Support Services (including one to one support, court accompaniments, drop-in visits, HRSP support sessions)	<b>3,317</b>	<b>5,780</b>	<b>+74%</b>
<b>Disclosures of Abuse against women and children<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>30,841</b>	<b>33,831</b>	<b>+10%</b>
Abuse against women	<b>24,893</b>	<b>28,096</b>	<b>+13%</b>
— Emotional abuse	— 17,321	— 19,902	— +15%
— Physical abuse	— 4,792	— 4,707	— -2%
— Economic abuse	— 1,925	— 2,383	— +24%
— Sexual abuse	— 855	— 1,104	— +29%
<b>Abuse against children</b>	<b>5,948</b>	<b>5,735</b>	<b>-3%</b>
<b>Information, Referrals and Advocacy</b>	<b>19,301</b>	<b>21,446</b>	<b>+11%</b>

<sup>5</sup> The disclosures of abuse against women and children and the referrals, information and advocacy are combined totals from the 24hr National Freephone Helpline, IMSS and Face-to-Face Services.



## Section 1

Listening.  
Believing.  
Supporting.

### 1.1 The 24hr National Freephone Helpline

In 2021, the Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline team responded to **21,126 contacts**. These contacts equalled **3,863 hours** of talk time.

**18,911**  
Helpline calls

**1,420**  
Instant Message  
Support  
Sessions

**795**  
Helpline emails

**3,863**  
hours of talk  
time (Helpline  
and IMSS)





### 1.1.1 Talk Time

During 2021, our National Freephone Helpline actively supported women over an unprecedented 3,319 hours of talk time, during 18,911 calls. This was an increase of 6.5% compared to 2020. **Calls were longer on average, and women's needs were often more complex.** Calls over the 24 hours of the service became more common in the quietest and darkest hours of the night as women reached out for support, understanding, and information that could help them make sense of what was being done to them, and the help that might be available. The increase in support hours was also borne out on the Instant Message Support Service run by the national helpline. In 2021, we had 1,420 conversations that equalled 544 hours of talk time. This was a 17.5% increase on the previous year.

### 1.1.2 Disclosures of Domestic Abuse

In 2021, the **24hr National Freephone Helpline support workers heard 24,979 disclosures of domestic abuse against women.** There were 18,294 disclosures of emotional abuse, 3,984 disclosures of physical abuse and 1,725 disclosures of economic abuse. We heard 976 disclosures of sexual abuse including 411 disclosures of rape.

**Domestic abuse including coercive control affects one in four women in Ireland** and it includes emotional, physical, sexual and economic abuse. Coercive control is at the core of domestic abuse. It is a common

#### Disclosures of Domestic Abuse to the 24hr National Freephone Helpline

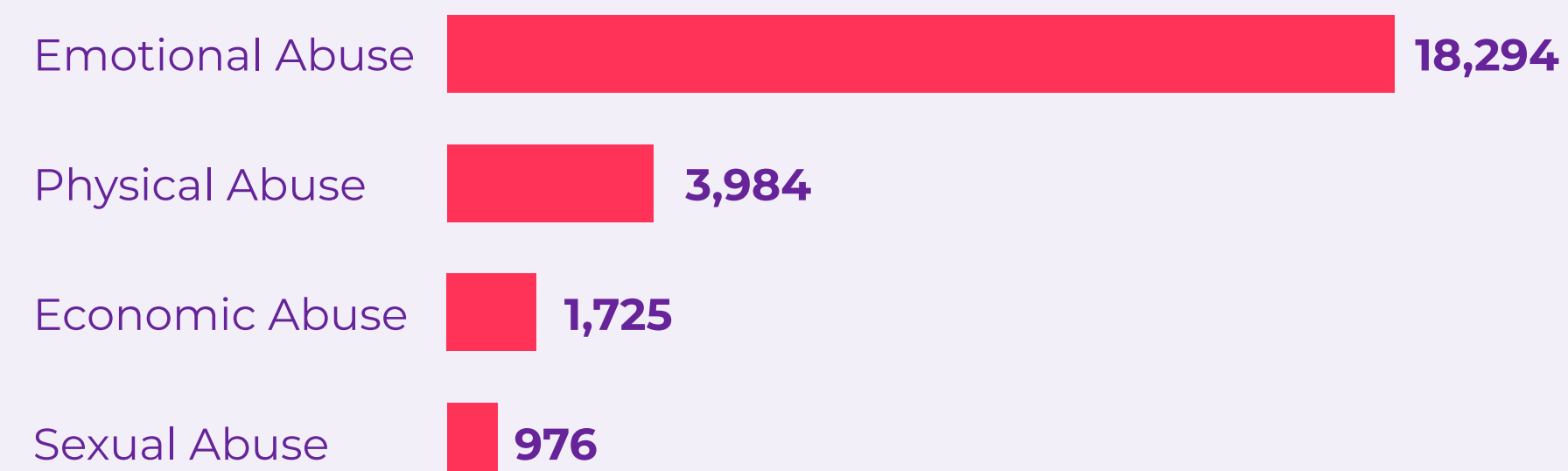


Figure 1: Disclosures of domestic abuse including coercive control to the Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline in 2021.

component of the disclosures of abuse, which we hear every day at Women's Aid. Coercive control is a persistent pattern of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour by a partner or ex-partner. It traps women in relationships and damages their physical and emotional well-being.

**18,294 disclosures of emotional abuse included:**

- Name calling and verbal abuse.
- Isolation from family and friends.
- Stalking and being monitored both physically and online.
- Living with the threat of physical and/or sexual violence.
- Being forbidden to leave the home without the abuser.
- Having the abuser threaten to hurt or kill her, themselves, their children or her family or her friends.
- Abuser denying access to car keys or to a car.
- Sleep deprivation as a tactic of abuse.
- Abuser denying or minimising the abuse shortly after it happened (Gaslighting).
- Abusers targeting the mother-child bond by manipulating and encouraging the children to join in on the abuse of their mother.
- Abuser threatening to reveal their residency and visa status to authorities if they did not comply with abuser's demands.
- Abusers preventing them from seeking family planning advice or access to medical treatment.

**3,984 disclosures of physical abuse included:**

- Assault, including with an object (i.e., hammer, golf club, hurl, gun).
- Strangulation.
- Pushing and shoving.
- Harm with knives including cutting and stabbing.
- Punching and slapping.
- Inflicting physical injuries including: broken bones, having hair pulled out, teeth broken.
- Head butting and/or hitting woman's head off hard surfaces.

**976 disclosures of sexual abuse included:**

- Rape and sexual assault.
- Coerced sexual activity.
- Unwanted sexual advances.
- Being spoken to, or about, in a sexually derogative way.
- Abuser forcing them to watch and re-enact pornography.





### 1,725 disclosures of economic abuse included:

- Abuser denying access to household income to pay for food, medication and other necessities for themselves and the children.
- Abuser pressurising them into giving them large sums of money or getting them into debt.
- Abuser jeopardising women's access to employment.
- Abuser controlling women's income.
- Abuser refusing to pay maintenance for any children in common or only paying sporadically. Often, abusers use child maintenance payments as a means to control and coerce their ex-partners.

### Within the above disclosures of abuse, there were 639 disclosures of digital abuse and cyber-stalking including:

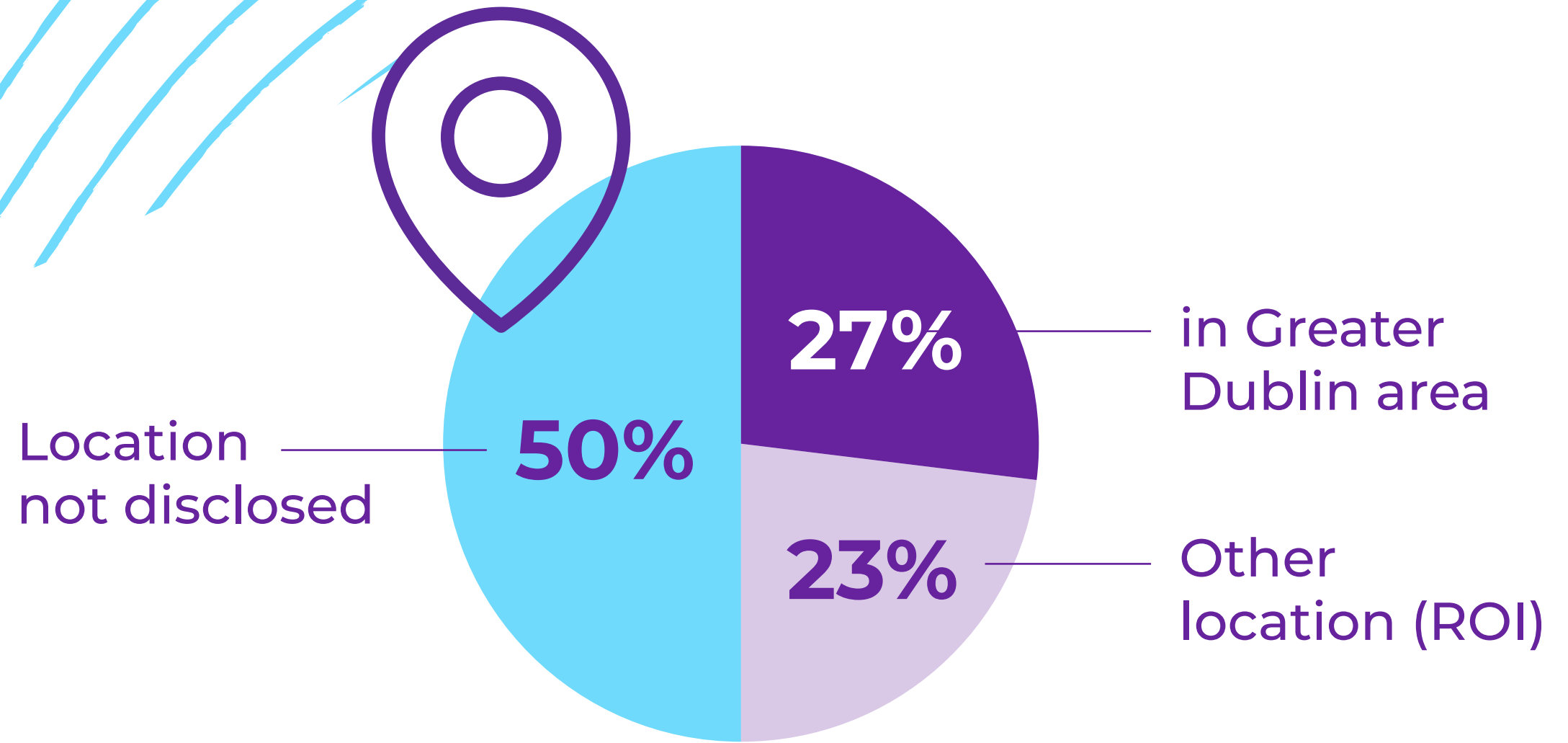
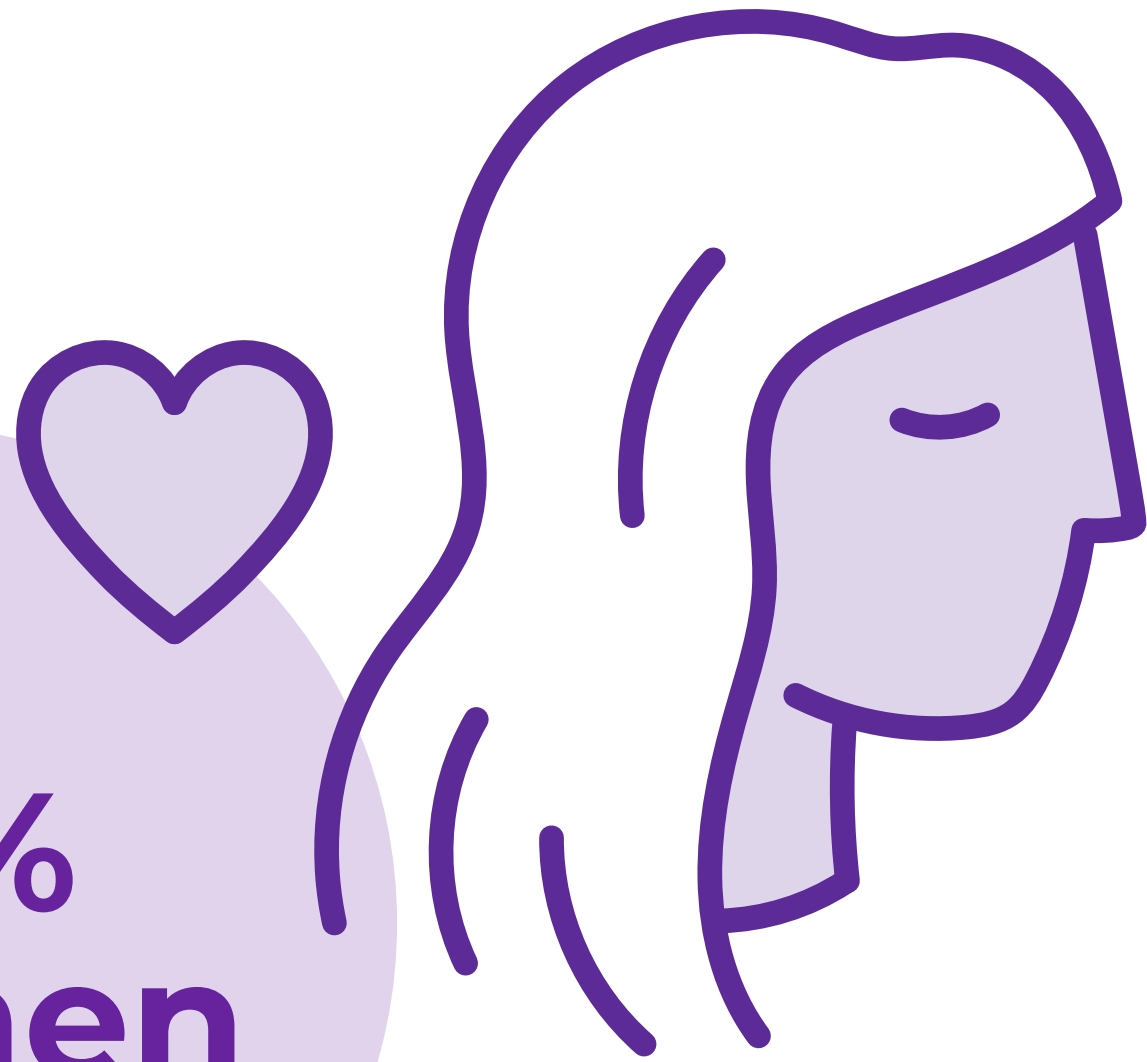
- Abuse by text, email, phone call and social media.
- Abuser sending explicit and violent images and videos.
- Abuser monitoring their internet use.
- Abuser subjecting them to image-based sexual abuse by:
  - Secretly recording them
  - Sharing or threatening to share intimate images of them without their consent.
  - Blackmailing them into sending intimate images.

**The Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020** (known as Coco's Law) commenced in February 2021 making online harassment, abuse and image-based sexual abuse a criminal offence.

# Who we supported on the 24hr National Freephone Helpline in 2021

4% Men

96% Women



80% of callers were first time users

20% of callers were repeat users

85% of calls were support calls

15% of calls were hang-ups





### 1.1.3 Impact of Abuse

The mental and physical impacts of domestic abuse including coercive control on a **woman's health and well-being are significant and can be long lasting and wide-ranging**. The ultimate cost, in some extreme cases, can be fatal due to homicide and suicide.

#### Physical impacts include:

- Broken bones and broken teeth.
- Bruising.
- Nausea.
- Nerve damage.
- Damage to throat and neck due to strangulation.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Miscarriage.

#### Mental and emotional impacts include:

- Depression, anxiety, panic attacks, fear.
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- Feeling alone with nobody to turn to.
- Suicidal ideation and attempted suicide.
- Hyper-vigilance.

#### Other impacts include:

- Living in, or being at risk of, poverty.
- Fear of homelessness and homelessness.
- Living in fear of deportation or the threat by abuser of spousal visa not being renewed.

### 1.1.4 Responding to Disabled Women, Migrant Women and Traveller Women

In 2021, **942 women** who called us said that they were members of a **minoritised group**. Of those who provided this information:<sup>6</sup>

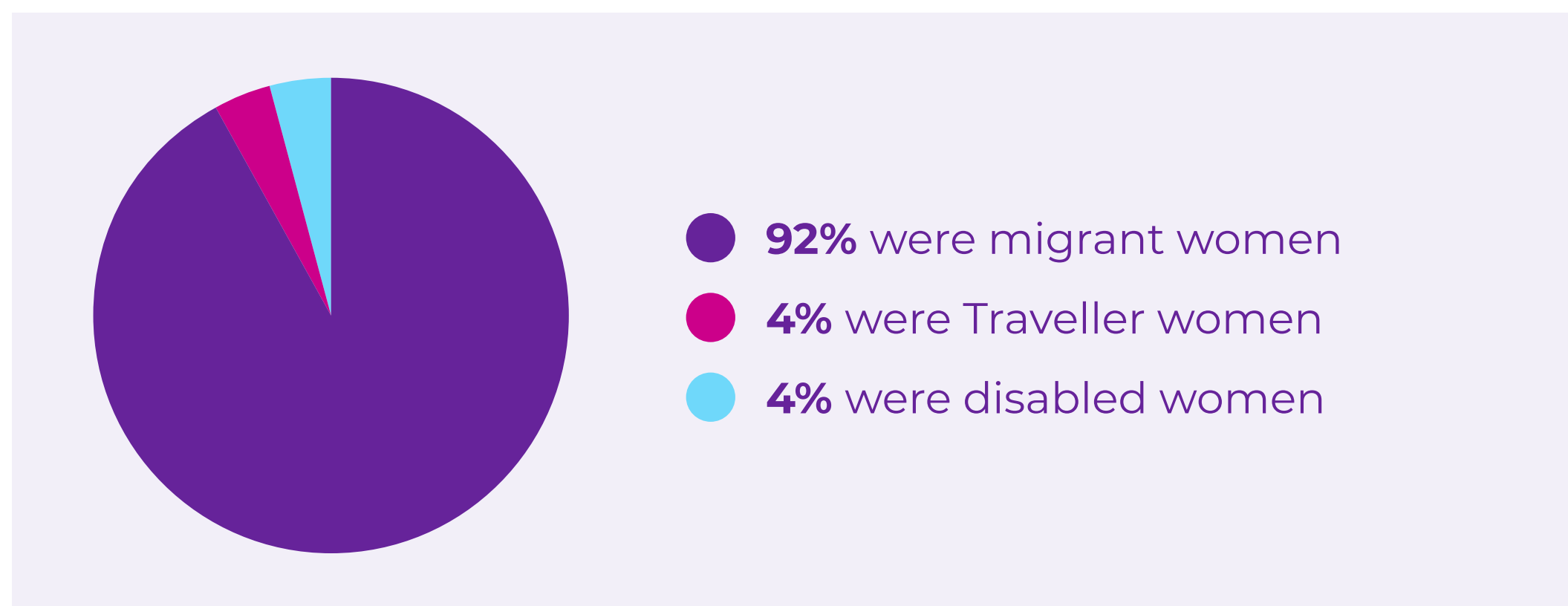


Figure 2: Women who identified that they were members of a minoritised group.

### 1.1.5 Women's Aid Telephone Interpretation Service

The 24hr National Freephone Helpline offers a Telephone Interpretation Service to ensure that women can access support in their preferred language.

In 2021, there were **548 calls facilitated in 30 languages**. 43% of the calls were facilitated in an EU language with the remainder facilitated through a non-EU language.

26% of calls were facilitated through Polish, making it the second most common language used on the Helpline after English.



<sup>6</sup> Women's Aid does not actively request information on ethnicity, nationality or ability from callers. Therefore these figures represent only instances where women offered this information to us, and are highly likely to represent an undercount.



### 1.1.5 Disclosures of Child Abuse

In 2021, there were **5,383 disclosures of abuse against children** made to the 24hr National Freephone Helpline. The majority of abuse against children was emotional abuse with 5,056 accounts of such abuse disclosed. Additionally, there were 242 reports of physical abuse and 85 reports of sexual abuse against children.



Figure 3: Disclosures of child abuse to the Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline in 2021.

The child abuse disclosures included:

- Emotional abuse including verbal abuse, name-calling and being threatened with violence.
- Physical abuse including slapping, hair pulling, assault with weapons.
- Children, including infants, hurt by the abuser as they attacked the mother.
- Sexual assault and molestation.
- Witnessing domestic violence against their mother.
- Children forced to go on access visits with an abusive father.
- Mother-Child bond deliberately damaged by abuser.
- Older children abused by fathers through the use of technology.

There were **788 disclosures** to the Helpline team where the **abuser continued his abuse during access visits**. This included:

- 605 disclosures of abuse against the woman during access handover.
- 183 disclosures of children abused while on access visits.

In **526 calls, the Helpline recorded social worker involvement** where women felt that their children were at risk of emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse.

## 1.1.6 Impacts of Abuse on Children

Children experience both short-term and long-term effects of domestic abuse. These include:

- Guilt.
- Anger.
- Insecurity and anxiety.
- Difficulty with sleep, including nightmares.
- Flashbacks.
- Lower self-worth.
- Difficulties at school.

However, it is important to remember that some children may not exhibit any negative effects.

## 1.1.7 The Abuser

In 2021, **82% of callers** to the 24hr National Freephone Helpline were **abused by a current or former male intimate partner**.

An additional 11% of women were abused by a man who was not an intimate partner or ex-partner. 1% of callers were abused by a female partner. 6% of women disclosed abuse by another female who was not an intimate partner.

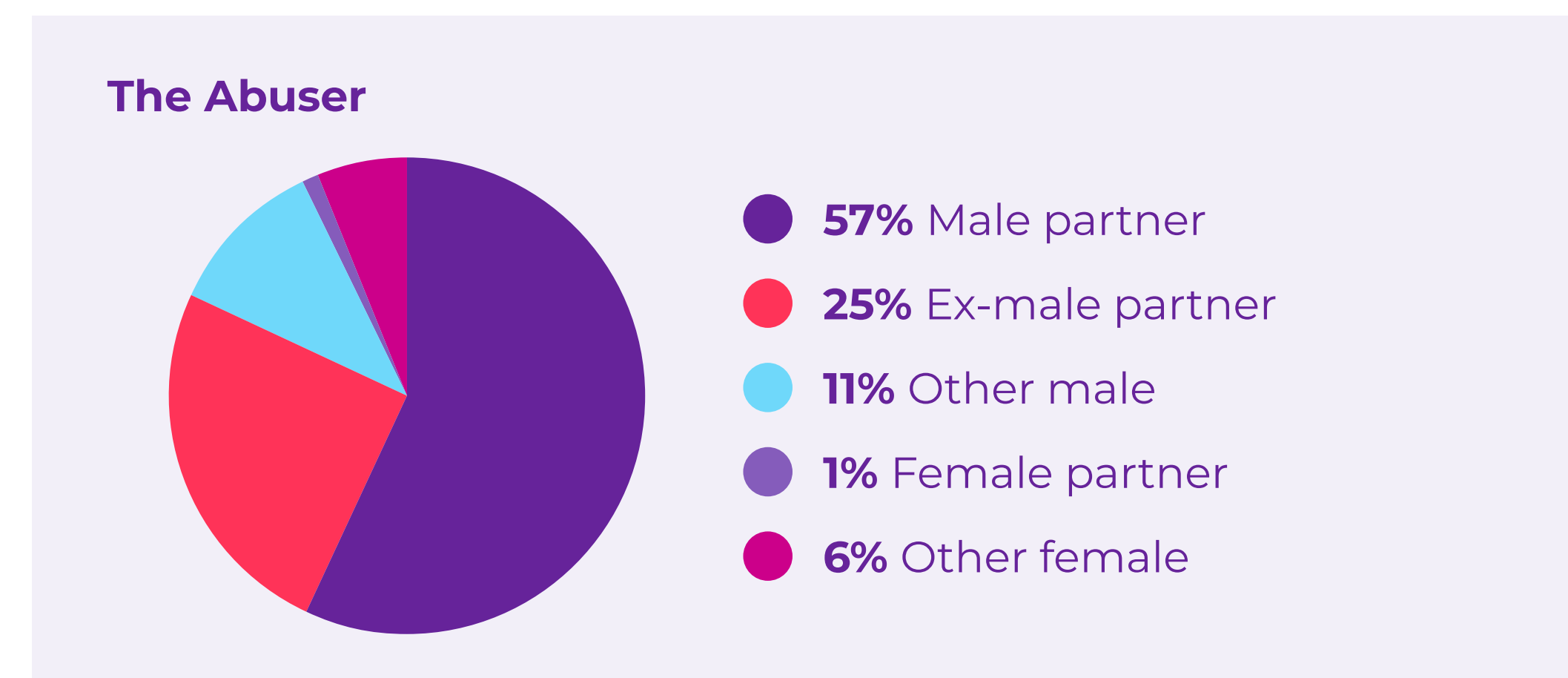


Figure 4: Relationship status of the abuser as disclosed by women calling the Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline in 2021.



### 1.1.8 Information, Referral and Advocacy

In addition to offering a listening and support service, the 24hr National Freephone Helpline is a valuable source of information, onward referral and advocacy for victims/survivors of domestic abuse.

**Helpline support workers made referrals, provided information and/or advocated on 18,424 occasions last year.** Figure 5 outlines the assistance given.



#### Information, Referral and Advocacy

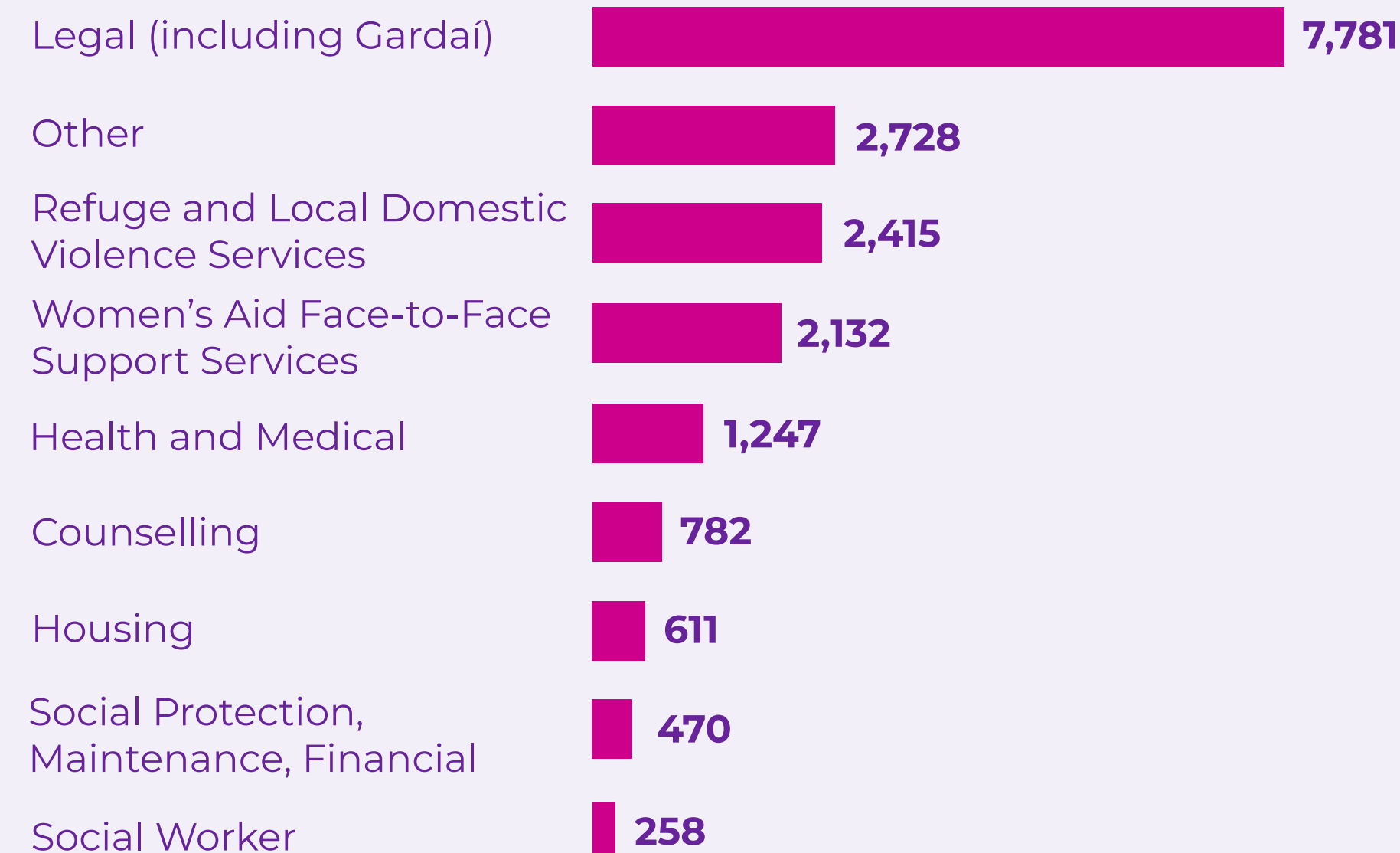


Figure 5: Information, referral and advocacy provided by the 24hr National Freephone Helpline support workers.

We also support women through **safety planning and risk assessment** to enhance their efforts to keep them and their children as safe as possible.



## 1.1.9 Access to Refuge

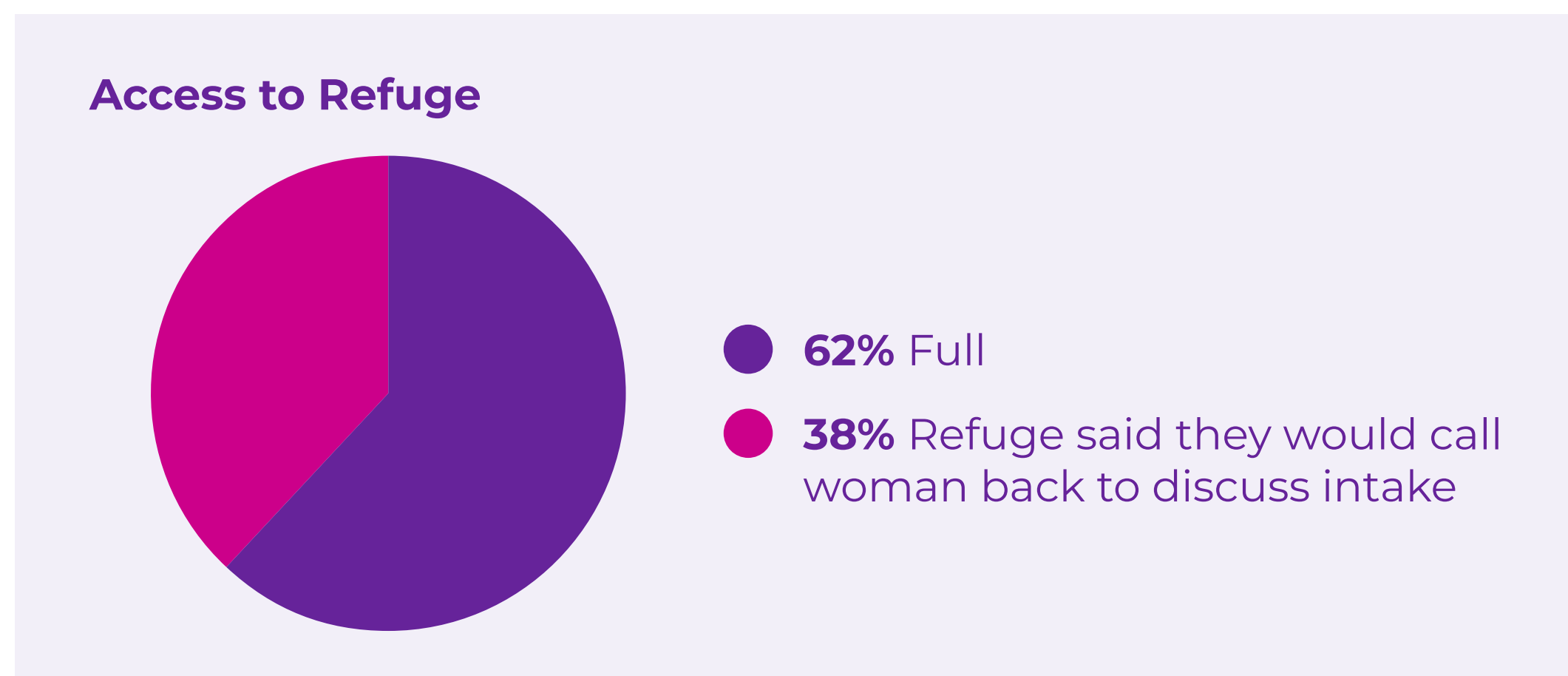


Figure 6: Response to National Helpline support workers when enquiring about refuge space

In 2021, the 24hr National Freephone Helpline team made 275 calls to refuges on behalf of women. We know that **62% of the time, refuges said they were full.**

Ireland urgently needs more refuge spaces as well as a wider range of dedicated and resourced accommodation responses to meet women and children's needs.

The Istanbul Convention requires states to provide for specialist support services and refuges in sufficient numbers and in an adequate geographical distribution (Articles 22 and 23). Ireland falls short of the

required number of refuge spaces to meet this requirement and to meet the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence and abuse. Moreover, refuge space is not available in nine counties.

## 1.1.10 Response from An Garda Síochána

An Garda Síochána play a unique and vital role in protecting victims of domestic abuse both while in the relationship and post-separation. They are the key agency that holds the perpetrators of abuse to account. However, the Garda response to victims of domestic abuse can vary from negative to excellent, among and even within, Garda stations.

**On 757 occasions last year, women in contact with the 24hr National Freephone Helpline disclosed that they had rung the Gardaí because of domestic abuse.** 104 women are noted as having rung the Gardaí more than once.

62% found their response helpful while 38% found their response unhelpful.





Figure 7: Women's experience with An Garda Síochána.



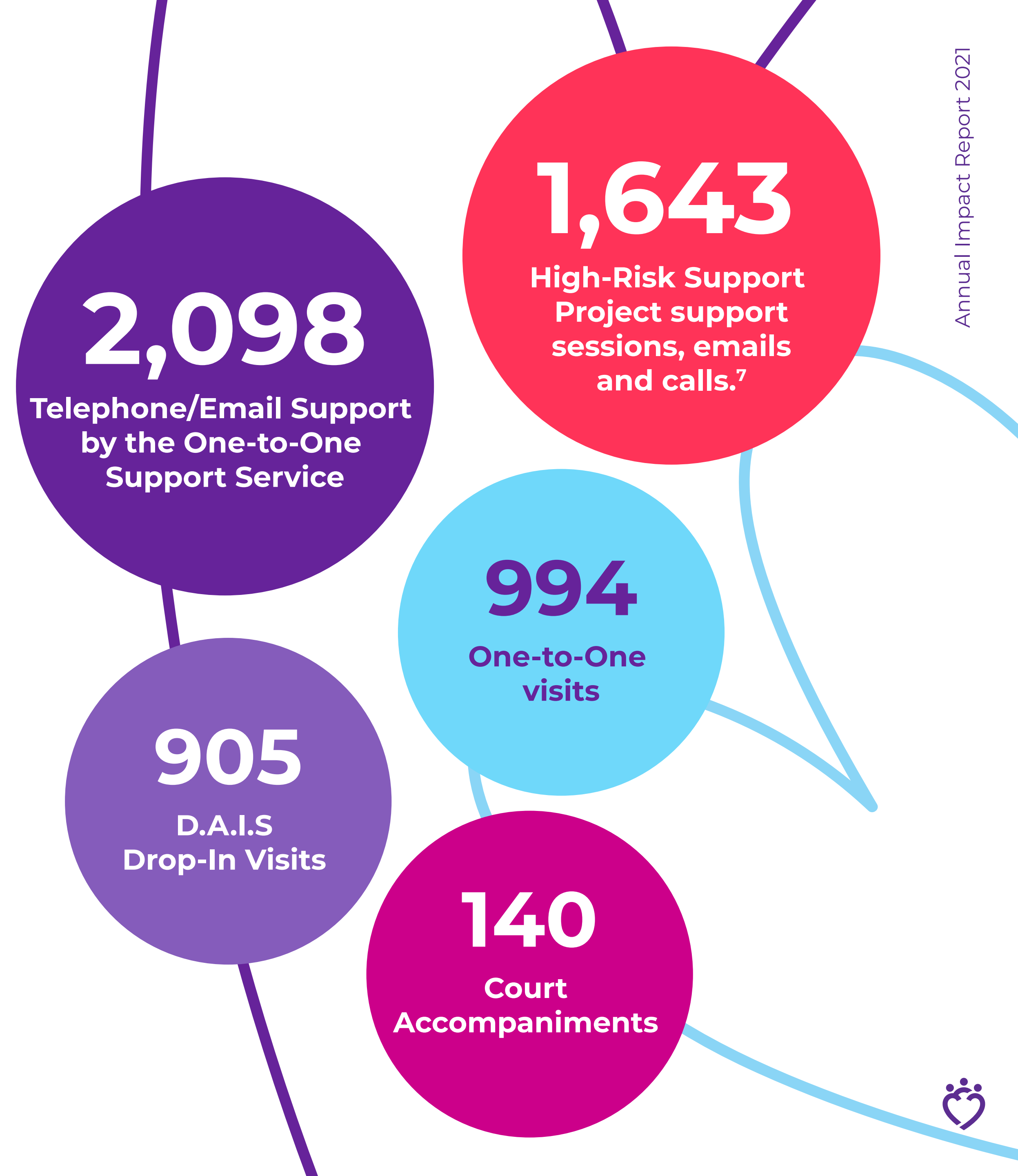
## 1.2 Women's Aid Face-to-Face Services in the Greater Dublin Area

Women's Aid provides a number of Face-to-Face support services in the Greater Dublin area. These specialist services offer in-depth support, court accompaniment, advocacy and safety planning to women subjected to domestic abuse including coercive control.

The services include:

- One-to-One Support Service in five locations across Dublin.
- Domestic Abuse Information and Support (D.A.I.S) – A Drop-In Service for Women at Dolphin House Family Law Court.
- The High-Risk Support Project.

In 2021, there were **5,780 contacts with our Women's Aid Face-to-Face services in the Greater Dublin area.**



<sup>7</sup> High-Risk Support Project figures included in the Face-to-Face services data for the first time in 2021.





### 1.2.1 One-to-One Support Service

During the **3,232 contacts with our One-to-One support workers, we supported 276 women** through one-to-one sessions, by telephone, email and on court accompaniments.

98 women had used the service before (36%).

178 women (64%) used the service for the first time in 2021.

36% of women who used the service were from migrant communities.

64% of women were Irish.

**Most of the new service-users had children**, as outlined in figure 8 below.

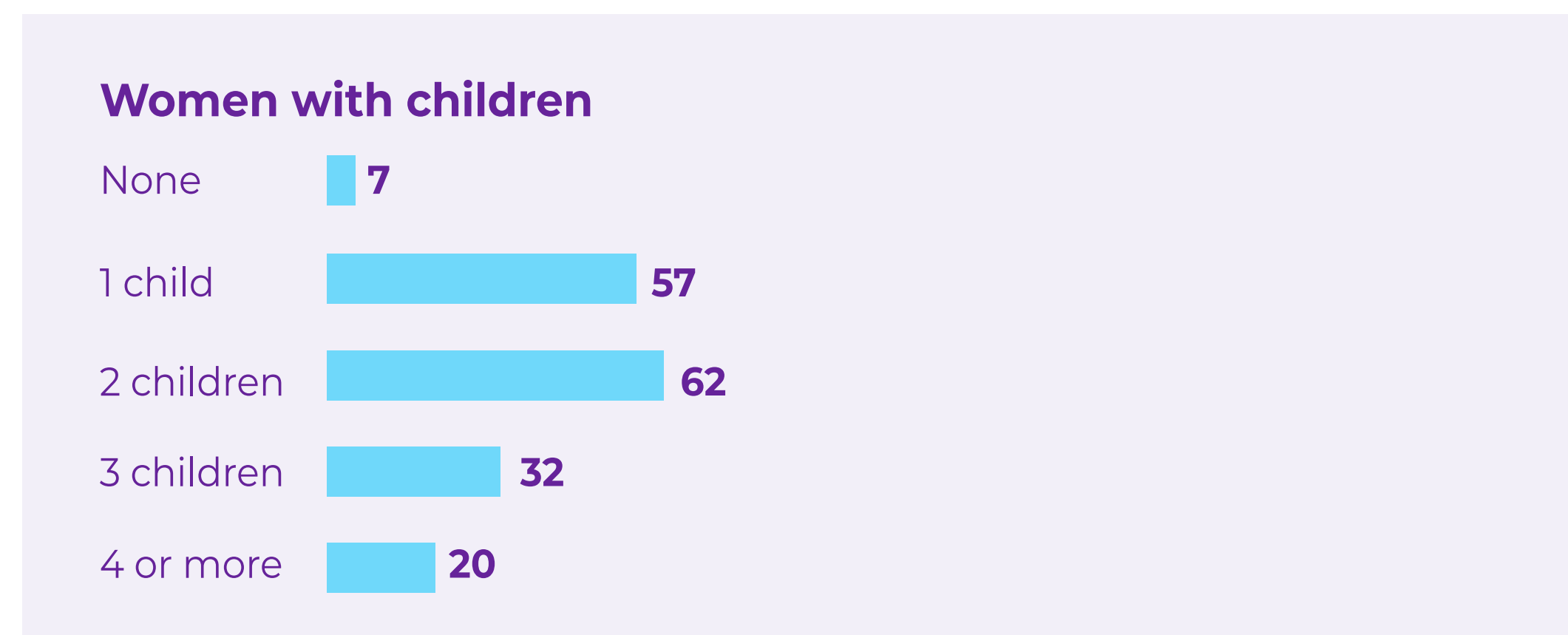


Figure 8: Number of new service-users with children

In 2021, our One-to-One support workers accompanied **75 women to court 140 times**. We supported women in the Family Law Court and the Criminal Law Courts.

Most women were attending the Family Law Court relating to orders under the Domestic Violence Act (2018).

- 54% related to Domestic Violence Orders.
- 42% were child-related matters in the context of domestic abuse including custody, access and child maintenance arrangements.
- 4% related to other matters such as separation and divorce in the context of domestic abuse.



### 1.2.2 Domestic Abuse Information and Support (D.A.I.S) – A Drop-In Service for Women at Dolphin House Family Law Court

At the Domestic Abuse Information and Support (D.A.I.S) service, we supported **572 women during 905 drop-in visits in 2021**. The D.A.I.S became a full-time service in 2021, extending our support to women to include afternoon sessions, Monday to Friday.

### 1.2.3 Disclosures of Domestic Abuse

There were **3,117 disclosures** of domestic abuse including coercive control against women to our One-to-One and D.A.I.S support workers in 2021.

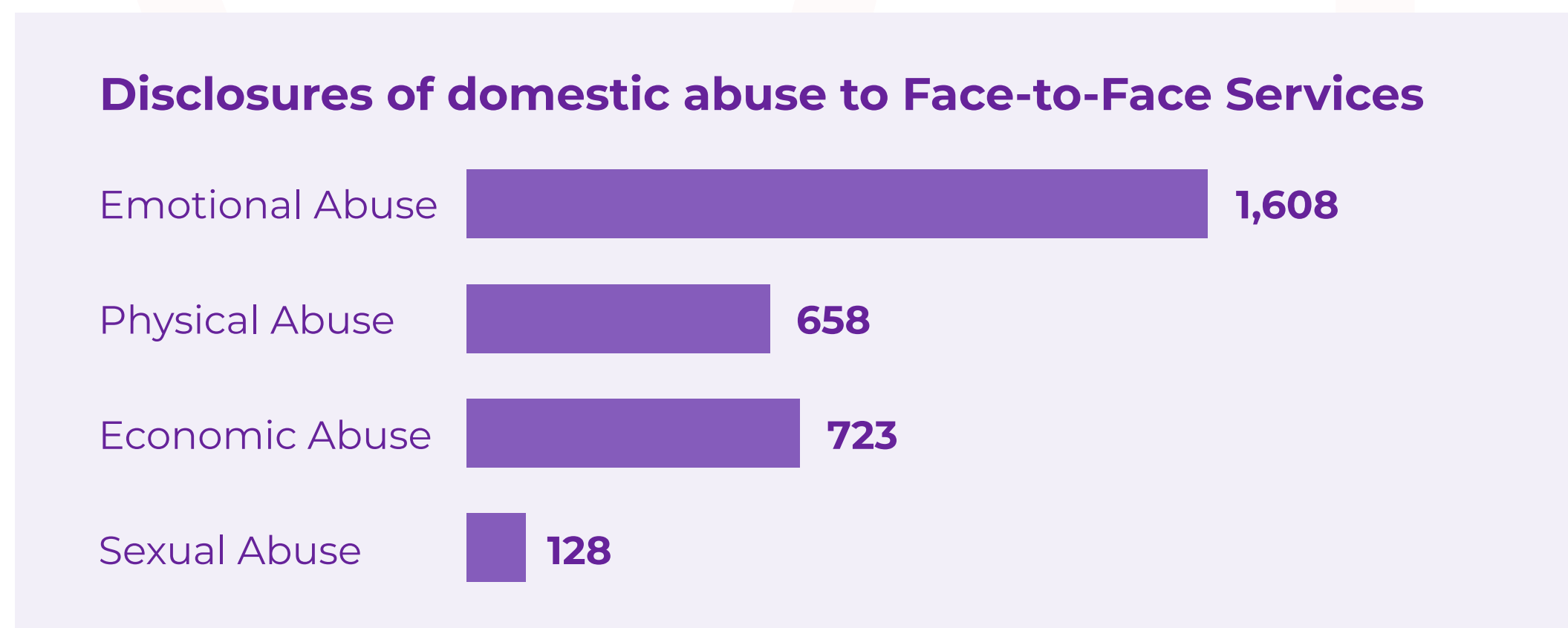


Figure 9: Disclosures of domestic abuse to our Face-to-Face Support Services in 2021.

There were **352 disclosures of abuse against children** made to our support workers in 2021.

### 1.2.4 The Abuser

Across our Face-to-Face services, women were primarily experiencing abuse from male intimate partners. **63% of women** said they were abused by a **current male partner**. A total of **35% of women** disclosed that they had been abused by an **ex-male partner**.

In addition, 2% of women said that they had experienced abuse from a male or female family member or another person.

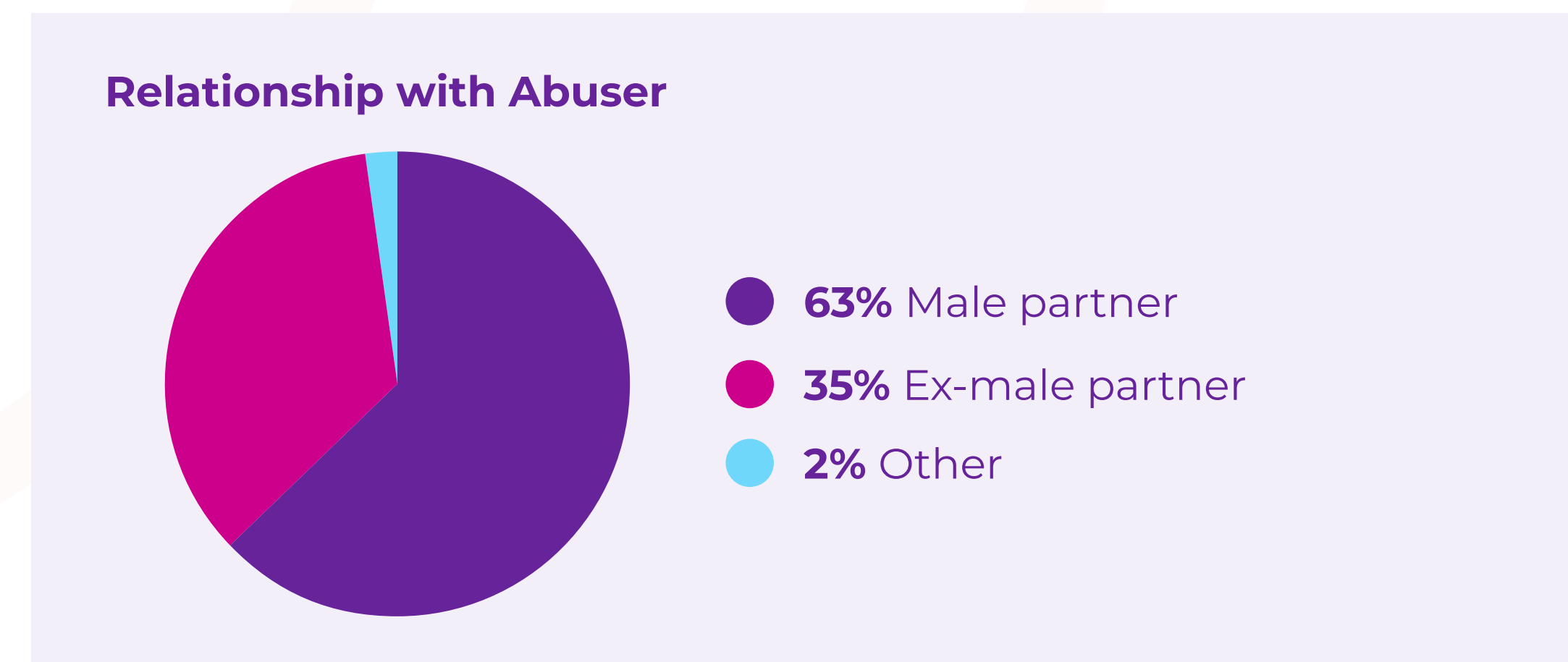


Figure 10: Relationship with abuser.





## 1.2.5 Information, Referral and Advocacy

In 2021, there were **3,103 provisions of information, advocacy and referrals** made during contacts with Women's Aid Face-to-Face support workers.

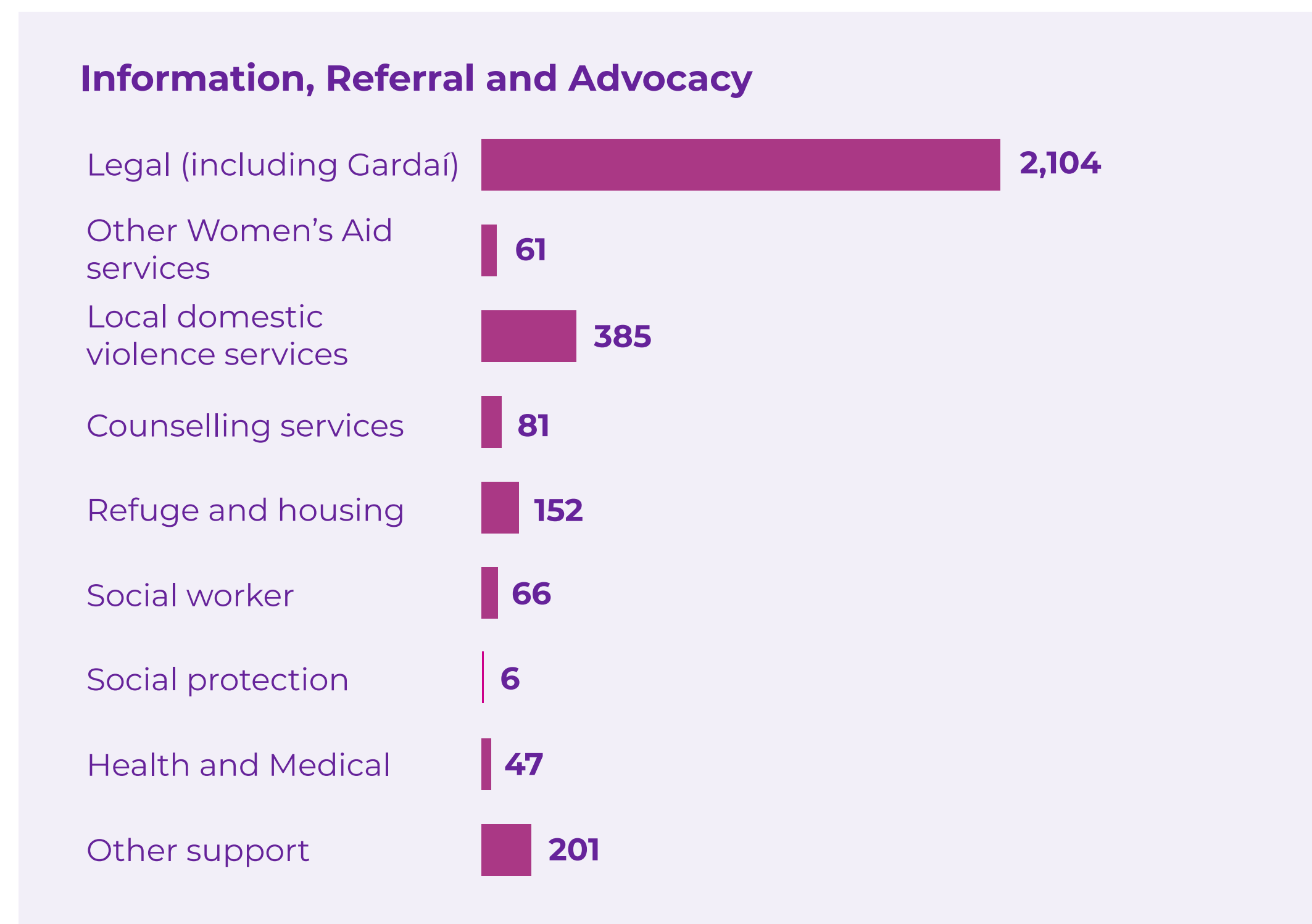


Figure 11: Information, advocacy and referrals by the Women's Aid Face-to-Face support services in 2021.

## 1.2.6 High-Risk Support Project

In 2021, the **High-Risk Support Project supported 290 women during 1,643 contacts**. Contacts included 231 support sessions, 587 support calls and 825 support emails. **We added 107 new women to the project last year.**

The High-Risk Support Project provides a **multi-agency response to women at a high-risk of ongoing severe violence and homicide from their ex-partners**. Women's Aid collaborates with An Garda Síochána and local domestic violence services to deliver a coordinated, rapid response system for these women and children.

In the course of delivering the High-Risk Support Project, Women's Aid identified a need for women who are at a high risk of domestic violence and abuse by an ex-partner to have **enhanced security in their homes**.

As part of the High-Risk Support Project risk assessment process, new service-users are offered a home security assessment in which a Garda Crime Prevention Officer recommends safety improvements. In 2021 a number of safety improvements to service-users' homes were made including the **installation of monitored alarm systems, video doorbells, enhanced locks on doors and windows, security film on windows, new front doors and provision of CCTV cameras**.

The High-Risk Support Project is generously supported by the Vodafone Foundation Ireland and the Department of Justice.

### 1.2.7 Emergency Funds to Support Women

In 2021 Women's Aid **dispensed €109,044 in funds to women in receipt of support from our services, and their children.** These vital funds covered a wide range of urgent and practical needs including (but not restricted to) CCTV and home security costs, bills, groceries, as well as offering some small contribution at Christmas time, a key point of financial pressure for women suffering economic hardship as a direct and indirect result of domestic abuse.

"I literally just burst into tears with relief. Thank you so much, I really appreciate it, it could not have come a better time. Thank you."

"Thank you so much. The vouchers are well needed. Such a relief to open the envelope. Really thank you from me and the baby for all your support. You've helped us a lot".

"Just received the vouchers you sent, that's amazing thank you so much I can pay for lunches for the kids and pay the bills."





## Section 2

# Highlights in 2021

## 2.1 A Special Thank You to our Volunteers

**2,420.5**  
hours volunteer  
contribution

Women's Aid would like to **thank our volunteers for the outstanding work that they do.** Women's Aid recruits volunteers, who undertake extensive specialist training to work alongside our staff on the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and Instant Message Support Service. We also have a number of committed volunteers who are a part of the Women's Aid Charity Shop team.

The amazing volunteer contribution for 2021 amounted to **1,622.5 hours on the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and National Instant Message Support Service,** and **798 hours** in the Women's Aid **Charity Shop** in Dundrum, Dublin 14. During what was a very challenging year for many, our volunteers remained committed to supporting women subjected to domestic violence and abuse. We are truly grateful for all of their hard work and commitment. THANK YOU!



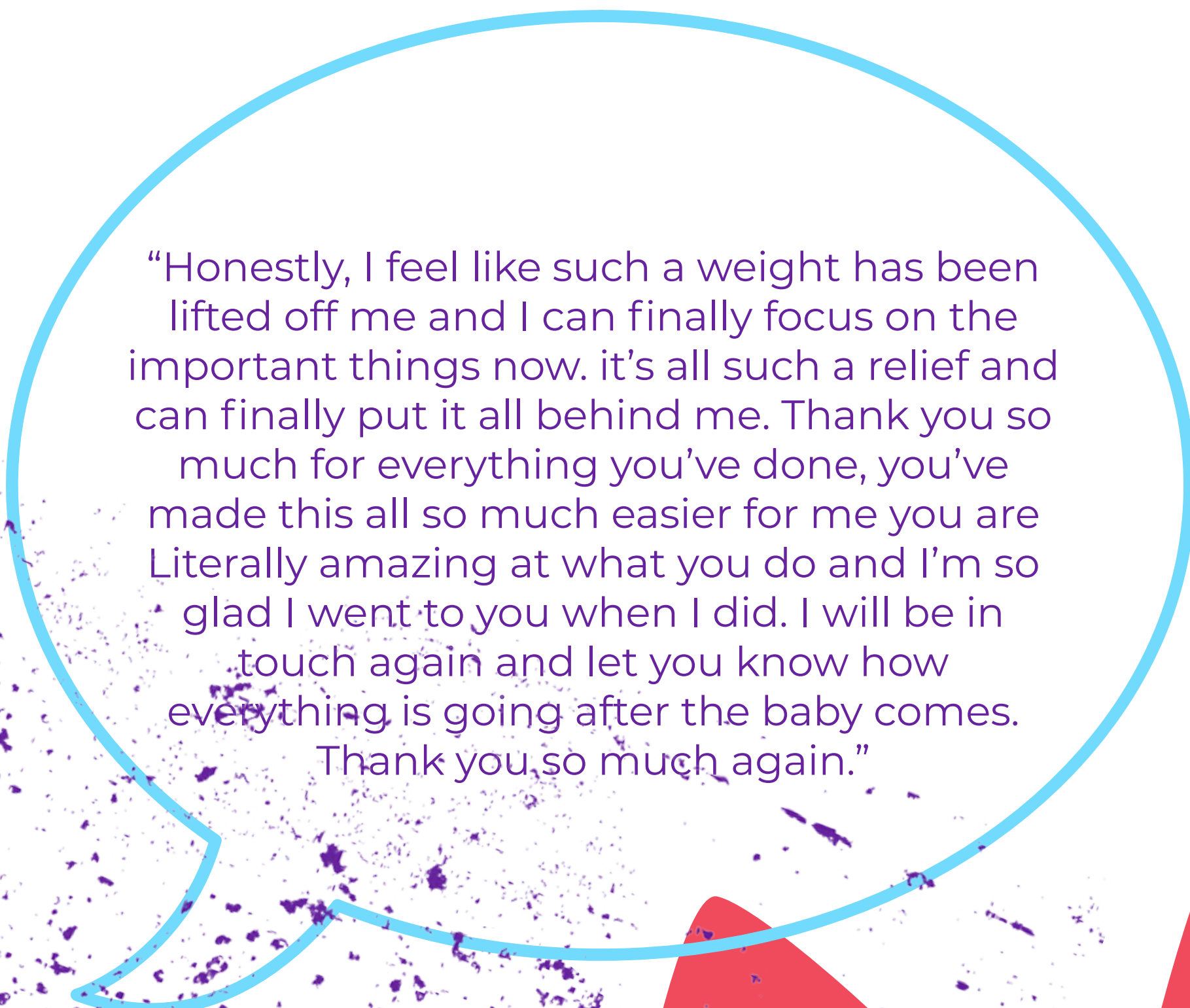
## 2.2 Domestic Abuse Maternity Project

In 2021, **Women's Aid and four of Ireland's leading maternity hospitals began working together to support women** subjected to domestic violence and abuse including coercive control with a three-year pilot programme. The partnership is between Women's Aid and:

- The Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital
- The Rotunda Hospital
- The National Maternity Hospital
- Ireland South Women and Infants Directorate (primarily Cork University Maternity Hospital).

The pilot project enhances the maternity hospitals response to domestic abuse through a jointly created training, awareness and referral programme.

A **dedicated domestic abuse support worker** was employed by Women's Aid specifically for this pilot and is assigned to the three Dublin maternity hospitals and receives referrals directly from these hospitals. In late May 2021, our maternity support worker began to take referrals. **31 women were supported by the end of the year during 151 support sessions.**



“Honestly, I feel like such a weight has been lifted off me and I can finally focus on the important things now. it's all such a relief and can finally put it all behind me. Thank you so much for everything you've done, you've made this all so much easier for me you are Literally amazing at what you do and I'm so glad I went to you when I did. I will be in touch again and let you know how everything is going after the baby comes. Thank you so much again.”



During the **16 Days of Action 2021**, we launched an awareness campaign with the four leading hospitals and their regional counterparts and created unique pregnancy and domestic abuse resources.

We also organised a webinar: **Pregnancy and Domestic Abuse - Prevalence, Impacts & Responses**. Speakers included Sarah Benson, CEO of Women's Aid. Dr. Lorna Jane O'Doherty, Associate Professor Institute for Health and Wellbeing Coventry University presented on global perspectives on prevalence, impacts and intervention for domestic abuse during pregnancy. Siobán O'Brien Green, PhD, Trinity College Dublin, spoke about 'Pregnancy & Domestic Violence: findings from recent Irish research'. Gillian Dennehy, Maternity Project Co-ordinator, Women's Aid, outlined the Pregnancy and Domestic Violence public awareness campaign and Dr. Sally Prezaro joined the panel to discuss her research.





## 2.3 Too Into You: Intimate Relationship Abuse Among Young People

In 2021, Women's Aid continued to invest in the further development of our Too Into You work to raise awareness and build connections with young people, aged 18-25. This age group is often overlooked in the work to address and prevent male violence against women.

### 2.3.1 Building the Campaign

We recruited a **new Project Leader, Mary Hayes**, to build the awareness and engagement campaign and make links with diverse groups of young people, and those who work with them.

### 2.3.2 Building Awareness

Between Valentine's Day and International Women's Day in March, Women's Aid highlighted the **link between gender inequality and violence against women** and expressed our concern about the prevalence of intimate relationship abuse against young women in particular, through a targeted social media awareness campaign.

In November, we ran a second campaign to raise awareness of intimate relationship abuse. Women's Aid distributed its new free **Help a Friend tool** and **Online Safety Guide** as part of the Too Into You campaign. Women's Aid continued to promote its instant messaging service to provide support online. The Too Into You campaign helped young women to understand new and important legislation including the Harassment & Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 (Coco's law), provided information on the prevalence of abuse, and provided advice on supporting a friend if they are experiencing abuse.



Launch of the November Too Into You campaign, 2021.



### 2.3.3 Building Knowledge: Young People and Relationship Abuse Research

Women's Aid commissioned new research on intimate relationship abuse against young people as part of the Too Into You project. The research built on the findings from the 2020 One in Five study which found that 3 in 5 young people aged 18-25 have experienced or know someone who has experienced abuse by a current or former partner.

The new research looked at young people's understanding of intimate relationship abuse and their attitudes to intervening if they were worried someone they knew might be experiencing abuse. The research included a nationwide survey conducted with 500 young men and women across Ireland and a number of in-depth focus groups.

The main research found that **4 in 5 young people believe those experiencing abuse do so in silence and do not seek help.** While young people feel a responsibility to intervene if they are worried a close friend might be experiencing intimate relationship abuse, they have a number of concerns, which might prevent them from doing so. The research also found that while many did clearly recognise the cause and effect of intimate relationship abuse, a significant proportion of young people surveyed had a number of misconceptions around the causes of intimate relationship abuse.

The research findings were launched on 25th November 2021 at our **UN Day Opposing Violence against Women webinar.** Speakers at the event President Michael D. Higgins, Minister Helen McEntee, T.D., Sarah Benson, CEO of Women's Aid, Juliana Shiel, survivor of intimate relationship abuse, Jackson Katz, Co-Founder, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) who is a leader in the global movement of men working to promote gender equality and prevent gender violence. Suzanne Jacob OBE, Chief Executive of Safe Lives UK explored Safe Lives work with young people and research they have carried out as part of their Safe Young Lives 'Verge of Harm(ing)' project. Ngozi Fulani, CEO, Sistah Space, spoke about their work with African and Caribbean heritage women and girls who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse and sexual abuse. Sarah McInerney, journalist and broadcaster, chaired the event.





The **European Parliament awarded the European Citizen's Prize to Women's Aid Too Into You campaign**. The prize is awarded for projects the Chancellery deem to have 'displayed exceptional achievements and/or outstanding commitment'.



*Mary Hayes (centre) with the creative team at Language, Lauren, Amy and Katy and Frances Fitzgerald MEP and Deirdre Clune MEP at the Dublin award ceremony.*

### 2.3.4 Building Connections and Resources

In 2022, the Too Into You work will continue to build more relationships with young women from diverse backgrounds. We will launch a fantastic new website, which will be a critical information and support hub for anyone affected by intimate relationship abuse. We are making new connections with key groups of individuals working with young adults, and crucially, with under 18s.

We will continue to seek out strategic opportunities for collaboration to raise awareness, educate and support young people of all ages subjected to intimate relationship abuse.



## 2.4 National Emergency Fund for Women and Children 2021

Thanks to **unprecedented public generosity**, Women's Aid was in a position, for the first time ever, to extend our emergency funds (see 1.2.7) to benefit women and children nationally via a scheme offered to our colleagues in local domestic violence services throughout the country. **We distributed €300,000 in €10,000 allocations across 30 different specialist services** for the direct benefit of women and children. A full impact report on this fund will be presented in late 2022.

**€300,000**

to women & children via local domestic violence specialist services.

"It has allowed us [local support service] to support women in ways that we previously could not always. While the physical safety of the women is always the most significant piece of work we do, being able to support women financially in areas that have enabled them to potentially leave the abusive relationship, or rebuild their lives after the abuse, has been hugely positive".

## 2.5 The Power to Change Programme

In 2021, Women's Aid ran the **Power to Change Programme for the second time. Power to Change is a free formal psychoeducational group process for survivors of domestic abuse.** The sessions ran weekly for 2 hours over a period of 12 weeks. The empowerment programme is available to women who have left an abusive relationship and are recovering from the trauma of that experience. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we delivered the programme via Zoom, which also facilitated women from outside Dublin take part.





## 2.6 Training and Development

The Women's Aid Training and Development Department delivers specialist domestic violence and abuse training to organisations throughout Ireland. All Women's Aid training is informed by our decades of experience supporting women and by models of best practice.

We support organisations and individuals in the statutory sector, the community and voluntary sector and corporate bodies to improve responses to domestic violence and abuse. Knowing how to respond appropriately can make a significant difference to reducing the isolation and risks to women and children living with the dangers of domestic abuse.

"I gained a lot of insight in regards to the topic and the training has enriched my learning as a therapist."

### 2.6.1 Training Delivery in 2021

During 2021, Women's Aid delivered **60** training events to **600** participants online. **Twenty-six organisations availed of bespoke training** and representatives of **143 organisations participated in mixed group trainings.**

There was a wide range of work roles who availed of Women's Aid training including **social workers, midwives, nurses, family support workers, community development workers, domestic violence support workers, home school community liaison teachers, adult education tutors, addiction support workers, housing support workers, HR executives and people managers.**

Additionally, the Training and Development department delivered **15 inputs and awareness sessions** to **500** people during 2021.

"Very worthwhile informative training, well delivered in a comfortable environment. Would highly recommend it to my colleagues and others."



## 2.6.2 Development of the Employer Response to Domestic Abuse Training Package

“The fact that the workplace can potentially be the only safe place remaining for victims of domestic abuse really hit home because of the training.”

Businesses and organisations are increasingly recognising that domestic violence and abuse is an issue, which directly affects employees' participation at work and the workplace itself. The cost of domestic abuse to companies can be considerable.

In 2021, Women's Aid started the development of our new **Employer Engagement Project**: a specialist service for employers. As part of the project Women's Aid offers the *Employer Response to Domestic Abuse Training* package which focuses on three areas – training, policy, and awareness – with the aim of creating a supportive, understanding, and safe workplace environment for victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Last year we provided training and awareness sessions to staff from companies in the **financial services, telecommunications, management consultancy and tech sectors**. This project commenced mid 2021 and will be fully rolled out in 2022 and thereafter.



*Hannah Wayte*  
*Project Lead Trainer*

Employers who are interested in finding out more should contact **[hannah.wayte@womensaid.ie](mailto:hannah.wayte@womensaid.ie)**

### 2.6.3 Helpline Volunteer Training

In 2021, we also ran our online training with a group of prospective volunteers for the Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline. All nine of the Helpline training modules were converted to an online delivery format. One advantage of the online format is that participants can access the training from different parts of the country without the need to travel and this gives Women's Aid a wider reach in volunteer recruitment.

## 2.7 Strategic Communications and Campaigns

In 2021, Women's Aid continued to lead the way in raising awareness and providing information on domestic violence and abuse to victims and survivors, their families and friends and their wider communities. **Our annual public awareness campaigns and communications activity are a vital way to highlight the prevalence, nature and impact of domestic violence/intimate relationship abuse in Ireland. We also engage with the media to promote the 24hr National Freephone Helpline and other specialist support services.** Women's Aid featured in over **350 media items** in 2021 including on national TV, local and national radio, national and local newspapers and on many online news sites.

In June, we launched the **Women's Aid Annual Impact Report 2020**, which **highlighted that the family law system is failing women and children subjected to abuse.** The launch was held via Zoom and was very well attended with over 400 participants, many of whom are important stakeholders in Ireland's continuing work to prevent and combat domestic abuse including: survivors, politicians, policy-makers, health and legal professionals, academics, policing and other experts. Speakers included: Sarah Benson (CEO, Women's Aid), Dr. Adrienne Barnett (Senior Lecturer in Law, Brunel University London), Mary-Louise



Lynch (Founder, SISI - a collective of women survivors of intimate abuse), Dr. Niall Muldoon (Ombudsman for Children), Hildegarde Naughton, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Justice (Temporary) with special responsibility for Civil and Criminal Justice.



*Sarah Benson launches the Impact Report 2020 highlighting failings in the family law system and the impact of Covid-19 on women subjected to domestic violence.*

In November, Women's Aid launched **a new partnership with the Hair and Beauty Industry Confederation (HABIC)** that saw domestic abuse support resources rolled out to over 2,500 hair and beauty salons across the country. The new partnership built a greater understanding and knowledge of domestic violence and abuse among hair and beauty professionals and created awareness with salon customers and employees on the prevalence, nature of domestic abuse and support pathways that are available.



*Linda Smith from Women's Aid and Margaret O'Rourke Doherty from HABIC launch the awareness campaign.*





Also in November, Allianz & Women's Aid launched **World's Strongest Women campaign** on the theme of domestic abuse across television, digital and radio. This high profile campaign raised awareness of domestic abuse and the resources and services available for women across Ireland who may be experiencing it.



### 2.7.3 Femicide Watch

In 2021, we continued our Femicide Watch project by tracking the killing of girls and women by men in Ireland, in order to illustrate the dangers of domestic violence and abuse and to increase protections for women and children. **In 2021, 7 women died violently.** This means that since we began tracking figures in 1996 until the end of December 2021, 244 women have died in violent circumstances. In the resolved cases, 88% of women knew the perpetrator with 55% of killers being male partners or ex-partners.

In 2022, we will continue this work to bring to light the extent and impact of men's fatal violence against women in Irish society.

### 2.7.4 Women's Aid Online

There were **213,206 visits to the Women's Aid website** in 2021. With a monthly average of **17,767 visits**. Our stand-alone website on intimate relationship abuse ToolIntoYou.ie received **17,122 visits.**<sup>6</sup>

We continued to use social media to highlight the issues of domestic violence and abuse and engage with supporters. By the end of 2021, we had a community of 21,132 followers on Twitter and 41,134 followers on Facebook. We also had 11,209 followers on our Instagram account and 10,085 followers on LinkedIn.

<sup>6</sup> As we operate on the basis of an opt-in data collection policy (cookies) the true number of visitors may be significantly higher.



## 2.8 Advocacy and Representation

Women's Aid works with Government to share our frontline expertise and provide recommendations on improving systemic responses and protections for women and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

### Women's Aid made the following submissions in 2021:

1. Submission to the Consultation on the Review of the Equality Acts, December 2021
2. Submission to the SPHE Curriculum Redevelopment, November 2021
3. Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice on Women's Shelters and Domestic Abuse Refuges, August 2021
4. Submission to the Judicial Planning Working Group, July 2021
5. Submission to the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, June 2021
6. Submission to the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality, June 2021
7. Submission to the Review Group on Child Maintenance, March 2021

8. Submission to the General Scheme of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill, March 2021
9. Submission to the Consultation on Domestic Violence Leave, March 2021
10. Submission to the Family Court Bill General Scheme, February 2021
11. Children and Domestic Violence Group Submission to the Family Justice Oversight Group Consultation, February 2021.

Copies of all submissions are available on [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie).

In addition, Women's Aid continued to bring the concerns and issues of women experiencing domestic violence and abuse to a number of national and local fora.

### In 2021, we continued our representation roles at:

- Barnardos' Childhood Domestic Violence Project: Advisory Committee
- Children and Young People's Services Committee
- Consultation on Training for Prosecutors in Relation to Vulnerable Victims
- Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group
- Familicide and Domestic Homicide Review Study: Advisory Group
- Legal Aid Board External Consultative Panel



- National Monitoring Committee on the Strategy to Combat Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence
- The SAVE Forum
- Steering Group on Education and Learning for Domestic Violence Workers
- Tusla Accommodation Review Advisory 2020 – 2021
- Tusla Service-user Consultation Advisory

**In addition, we continued our membership of:**

- Irish Observatory on Violence against Women and Girls
- The National Women's Council of Ireland
- SAFE Ireland
- St. Mary's Community Employment Project
- Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)
- The Wheel
- Children's Rights Alliance





## 2.9 Fundraising

Women's Aid was overwhelmed in 2021 by generous support from **individuals, groups and companies** who responded to the call to help women and children subjected to domestic violence and abuse. We successfully ran two virtual walking challenges in February and July with over 5,000 people across the country walking 80KM in their own time and in their own way to raise vital funds and awareness of our 24hr National Freephone Helpline and other work to combat domestic violence and abuse.

The annual VHI Women's Mini Marathon still went ahead, albeit virtually, and as always, we had amazing supporters participating for Women's Aid.

We were honoured to receive a number of **legacy** donations and are moved by the fact that a number of people chose Women's Aid to entrust a portion of their estate to after their death, in order to support our ongoing work to increase safety and protection for women and children.

**Once-off and regular donations and grants by individuals, companies, foundations and groups of people in the community** continue to be the backbone of our organisation. Their commitment and generosity make a huge difference.

**To every supporter we say a huge THANK YOU.**





## Section 3

# Creating an equal Ireland with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women

## 3.1 Introduction

In 2021, Women's Aid set out our Strategic Plan for the three-year period 2022-2024. The plan provides a robust framework for Women's Aid to continue working towards our vision. The contents of the plan reflect the concerns and interests of key stakeholders. The process employed a wide and extensive consultation, with the staff and volunteers who support our activity every day, peer organisations in our sector, our funders, statutory authorities, donors and - most importantly of all - the women who have used our services.

Women's Aid is an organisation, which has been working on the issue of violence against women for almost 50 years since our foundation in 1974. We developed our new Strategic Plan during an unprecedented period of global upheaval. The current operating environment presents both challenges but also opportunities. This plan will guide us in the coming three years from 2022 to 2024, to work strategically and with purpose. We aim to make an effective contribution towards achieving an equal Ireland, with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations in the world. It is present in every country, cutting across national, cultural, economic, social and political boundaries. It takes many forms and its causes are not individualised,





but are located in a complex interweaving of political, cultural and social factors that both stem from, and lead to, unequal power relations between men and women.

As a feminist organisation Women's Aid recognises the links between all forms of oppression, abuse and violence against women and the interconnection between forms of discrimination, which women experience due to poverty, disability, immigration status, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and educational disadvantage.

We acknowledge that while all women share similar experiences of discrimination, harassment, sexism, inequality and oppression on the basis of their sex and gender, not all women are equally or similarly disadvantaged nor have equal access to resources, power and privilege.



## Our Vision

Women's Aid vision is an equal Ireland, with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.

## Our Purpose

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse.

## We do this by

Advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland.

*and*

Providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services.



## 3.3 Our Values

**Courage**

**Cooperation**

**Inclusivity**

**Empowerment**

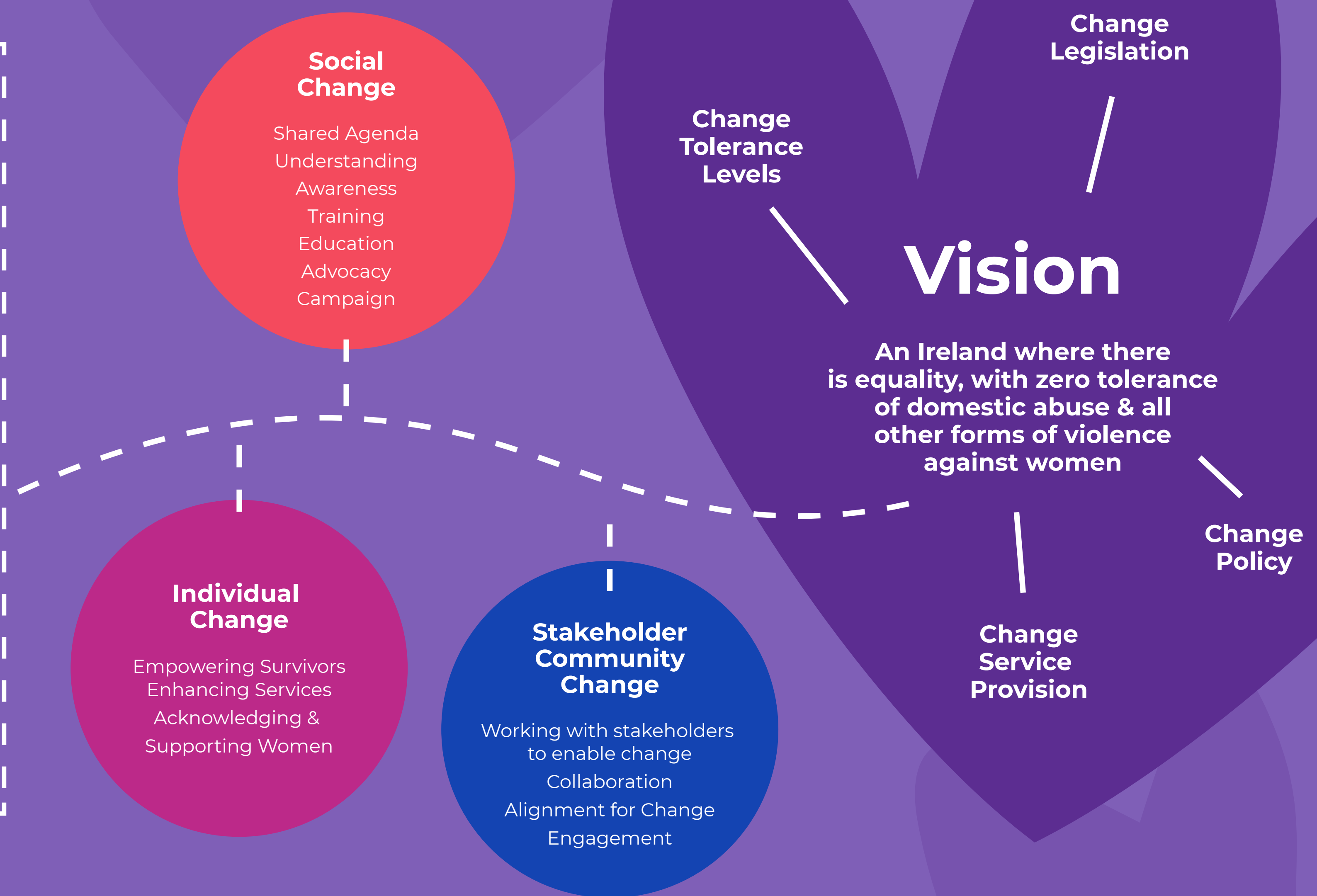
**Equality**

**Change**



# 3.4 Our Theory of Change

<p><b>Enablers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating awareness</li> <li>Educating audiences</li> <li>Influencing audiences</li> <li>Contributing to national service provision</li> <li>Service outcomes</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Valuing and developing Staff and Volunteers</li> <li>The Survivor voice</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff</li> <li>Volunteers</li> <li>Expertise</li> <li>Resources</li> <li>Collaboration</li> <li>Donor Funding</li> <li>Peer Organisation</li> <li>Survivors/Survivor Voice</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assumptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Society is capable of change</li> <li>Building and drawing attention to the impacts of DVA builds a platform for change</li> <li>Survivors must be heard</li> <li>Empowering survivors is the centre of society change</li> <li>Working with our stakeholders enable a social change</li> <li>Change is rooted in a feminist analysis of DVA</li> <li>Resources will be available to support our theory of change</li> </ul>	<p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p><i>Working for the prevention of domestic violence and abuse by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influencing, educating and advocating for effective responses, to reduce the scale and Impacts of domestic abuse</li> <li>and</li> <li>Providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services</li> </ul>





## 3.5 Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities are based on a strong dedication to the women we serve and an unwavering focus on bringing about the social changes in Ireland that will deliver our vision. During the period 2022-24, we have framed our plan around 3 strategic priorities:



## 3.6 Conclusion

In order to be effective, **our work to address violence against women must challenge all forms of discrimination that women experience. While our work remains focused on preventing and responding to violence experienced by women and their children, we support the work of others whose primary focus is addressing other forms of oppression, and we work collaboratively to address all violence against women.** This includes working with **men as allies** to promote healthy and respectful relationships, to foster a positive masculinity for boys, and to challenge and prevent gender-based violence.

We know we cannot achieve success alone. We must be a part of a cooperative community alongside our colleagues in civil society and community organisations, and with statutory partners and survivors. We will work steadily with our partners, survivors, funders and peers across the sector, collaborating where our interests are aligned and working to bring about the fundamental social change that is expressed in our vision.

**We are committed to listening to, believing and supporting women and children in Ireland, subjected to domestic abuse – past, present and future.** We will play our part to create a more equal world that is a safer and better place for everyone.





## Section 4

# Financial and Administration Information

## 4.1 Objectives and Activities

### **The main object for which the company is established is:**

Women's Aid is a leading national organisation that has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974. We work to make women and children safe from domestic violence by offering support to women and their families and friends, providing hope to those affected by abuse and working towards justice and social change.

### **The Women's Aid Constitution sets out the main objectives for which the Company was established:**

1. To provide a range of high quality, specialized, integrated, domestic violence services to protect and assist women and children experiencing domestic violence. These high quality specialised services to include but not limited to the operation of a helpline, a court accompaniment service, a training unit and a one to one service enabling women experiencing domestic violence to attend for a meeting with a staff member of Women's Aid.
2. To be a centre of excellence for the provision of training to frontline responders to the issue of domestic violence.
3. To bring the experiences, needs, concerns and requirements



of women and children experiencing domestic violence to the legislative and policy making fora and to continue to lobby for changes in domestic violence legislation in order to keep in step with ever changing social and political times.

4. To be a centre of excellence for the development of professional and organisational responses to women and children experiencing domestic violence.
5. To articulate the reality of domestic violence, the impact of domestic violence on women and children and the community and the need and opportunities for change.
6. To use the expertise, knowledge and experience of the organisation to promote the protection and welfare of children of all ages and teenagers living with or at risk of domestic violence.
7. To be an informed organisation responsive to the needs and interests of women and children experiencing domestic violence.
8. To hold fundraising events for the purpose of raising money for the organisation in order to assist it in achieving its stated objectives and goals.

In 2021 Women's Aid developed its new Strategic Plan 2022-2024 which further sets out the organisations Vision, Purpose and Values as follows:

### Vision

Women's Aid vision is an equal Ireland, with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all other forms of violence against women.

### Purpose

Women's Aid is a national, feminist organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse.

We do this by:

- Advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland.

and

- Providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services.

### Values

Our organisational values of Courage, Co-Operation, Inclusivity, Empowerment, Equality and Change express the ideals and beliefs that sustain and guide us in every aspect of our work.





## 4.1.2 Financial Summary 2021

Women's Aid is a company limited by Guarantee not having share capital.

Income and Expenditure	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>		
Tusla Child and Family Agency	813,255	744,114
Department of Justice	217,580	126,895
Department of Rural and Community Development	89,975	89,975
Other Non Statutory Grant Income	464,323	219,698
Other Activities (Charity Shop and Training)	147,615	104,241
Donations & Fundraising	1,977,137	2,257,964
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>3,709,885</b>	<b>3,542,887</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>(3,380,091)</b>	<b>(1,896,245)</b>
<b>Operating Surplus for the year ****</b>	<b>329,794</b>	<b>1,646,642</b>

Balance Sheet	2021	2020
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible Assets	604,074	618,078
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Debtors	157,636	207,332
Cash at Bank and in hand	3,467,268	3,032,410
	<b>3,624,904</b>	<b>3,239,742</b>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year</b>	(398,053)	(356,689)
<b>Net current assets</b>	<b>3,226,851</b>	<b>2,883,053</b>
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>	<b>3,830,925</b>	<b>3,501,131</b>
<b>Funds of the charity:</b>		
Restricted Reserves	-	19,214
Unrestricted funds - designated	2,828,086	2,611,974
Unrestricted funds - general	1,002,839	869,943
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>3,830,925</b>	<b>3,501,131</b>





Unrestricted funds - Designated	2021	2020
6 months operational costs plus costs of closure	1,772,388	1,258,788
Essential works to Women's Aid head office	40,000	398,068
New HR System	10,500	
Website and strategic planning	8,897	37,500
Women's Aid Emergency Fund (External)	-	300,000
Women's Aid Legal, Security and Emergency Fund (Internal)	107,000	102,000
Maternity Outreach Project (year 2 & 3 Costs)	318,500	269,000
Too Into You Project costs (2 year costs)	173,077	121,894
Survivor Engagement /Survivory Advocacy (2 year costs)	124,724	124,724
Research Project	125,000	
Employer Engagement Project (2 year costs)	148,000	
<b>Total Designated Funds</b>	<b>2,828,086</b>	<b>2,611,974</b>

**Important Note on 2021 surplus\*\*\*\*:**

While the surplus indicated in the Statement of Income and Expenditure is €329,794, it is important to note that in 2021 the Board have designated an additional **€1,069,600** of our unrestricted reserves to designated funds. Designated funds at the end of the year 2021 total €2,828,086. (2020 €2,611,974) which are funds designated by the Board for the purposes set out in the table above. Covid-19 has continued to affect both demand and funding for the charity sector. Women's Aid continues to face increases in demands for our services. There is reason to believe that this demand will continue to increase in the coming months. Based on the Board's consideration of the current economic situation due to Covid 19, and the effects this and other external environmental factors may have on the future funding of Women's Aid, the Board believe that the level of unrestricted reserves after designation is satisfactory and will approach the next year with caution. The Board will continue to monitor the reserves on a monthly basis.



### 4.1.3 Sources of Funding

Women's Aid received 29% (statutory funding accounted for 28.89% of expenditure in 2021) of its income from statutory sources during 2021, to support the organisation in the delivery of frontline services, training delivery and strategic public awareness raising. The statutory sources of income were as follows:

- Tusla, Child and Family Agency
- The Department of Justice (Victims of Crime Scheme)
- The Department of Rural and Community Development (Administered by Pobal)

### 4.1.4 Remuneration of Staff

Numbers of staff in receipt of in excess of €60,000 per annum

€60,000 - €70,000: 3 people

€70,000 -€80,000: n/a

€80,000 - €90,000: 1 person

### 4.1.5 Independent Auditors Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Women's Aid Company Limited by Guarantee for the year ended 31 December 2021 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, Statement of Comprehensive Income, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows and the related notes. The relevant financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is the Companies Act 2014 and FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 December 2021 and of its surplus for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

#### Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's





responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate. Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the Company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue. Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

### Other information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.



## Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that in our opinion:

- the information given in the Director’s Report is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Director’s Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

### Matters on which we are required to report by exception.

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the directors’ report.

We have nothing to report in respect of our obligation under the Companies Act 2014 to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of director’s remuneration and transactions specified by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made.

## 4.1.6 Respective Responsibilities

### Responsibilities of director for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Director’s Responsibilities Statement, the director is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the director is responsible for assessing the company’s ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the director either intend to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

### Auditor’s responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor’s report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected





to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA's website at:[http://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/Auditing-standards/International-Standards-on-Auditing-for-use-in-Ire/International-Standards-on-Auditing-\(Ireland\)/ISA-700-\(Ireland\)](http://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/Auditing-standards/International-Standards-on-Auditing-for-use-in-Ire/International-Standards-on-Auditing-(Ireland)/ISA-700-(Ireland)). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

The purpose of our audit work and to whom we owe our responsibilities

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

**Ian Lawlor for and on behalf of JPA Brenson Lawlor 18 May 2022**

Chartered Accountants  
Statutory Audit Firm  
Argyle Square  
Morehampton Road  
Donnybrook  
Dublin 4  
D04 W9W7

## 4.2 Governance and Other Information

### 4.2.1 Board Members in 2021

Ailbhe Smyth	
Temenuzhka Raycheva Yonkova	(Resigned 17 February 2021)
Rachel Mullen	(Resigned 15 December 2021)
Maura McLaughlin	(Resigned 15 December 2021)
Jennie O'Reilly	(Resigned 13 August 2021)
Niamh Ní Dhomhnaill	
Suzanne Handley	
Rosaleen McDonagh	(Appointed 15 September 2021)
Salome Mbugua	(Appointed 15 September 2021)
Golda Hession	(Appointed 15 December 2021)
Martina Quinn	(Appointed 15 December 2021)



## 4.2.2 Governance

The company conducts an annual appraisal of its own performance, that of its Board and other Committees, and that of individual Board members. Particular emphasis is given to delegation of responsibilities, communication channels and methods, skill sets and skill gaps, training needs and relevant external factors (such as changes in legislation and regulatory frameworks).

A comprehensive Governance Document is in place to support the operations of the Board, in conjunction with the Women's Aid Constitution.

### Other Information

During 2021 Women's Aid completed a compliance report in accordance with the Charities Governance Code.

Women's Aid is a company limited by Guarantee with a registered office at 5 Wilton Place, Dublin 2, D02 RR27.

Women's Aid is also a charity (Charity Reg No. 20012045).

The Company Registration Officer number is 58035 and the CHY number is 6491.







An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

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