



Laura*, domestic abuse and pregnancy case study, Women's Aid, November 2024.

“I was so frightened when I found out I was pregnant. I knew he would blame me for the pregnancy. We had 3 other kids, and he didn't want me to work. This meant that even though he had a good job, I had no access to my own money, except what he gave me, when he felt like it. He was always angry at me and the kids. He had hit me in the past and I knew he could do it again - or something worse. I felt so ashamed and just completely trapped. He blamed me for everything. I had never spoken to anyone about what was going on, but I knew it wasn't right.

It wasn't until I was directly asked about domestic abuse at my hospital appointment that I realised that I could tell somebody. I was referred to Women's Aid by the Medical Social Worker and was contacted that day by their outreach worker. She immediately put me at ease, didn't judge me and helped me look at what my options were. So much has happened over the last few months.

The outreach worker supported me to apply for a domestic violence order and accompanied me to court. She helped me to get a solicitor. I got the order, but my husband kept breaching it, we were still living in fear. She encouraged me to call the Gardai and even came to the station with me to make a statement.

It was really hard because I wasn't able to get legal aid - he earned too much money. Women's Aid helped me with the cost of a solicitor. I was also sent vouchers by my outreach worker to buy food and essential supplies for the kids and the new baby.

My outreach and medical social workers supported me throughout my pregnancy, which was a really hard time, emotionally and physically. They helped me understand that it wasn't my fault, and I had options.

Despite everything, I had a healthy baby boy. My outreach worker continued to support me in the months after until they could link me in with a local counsellor. They even helped me pay towards the counselling costs. Although, I am still dealing with the ongoing abuse from my husband, I feel stronger, and I know the shame is not mine.”

**Name and some details changed to protect identity and safety.*