

ANNUAL REPORT & 2022 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Registered Company Name Meath Women's Aid

Housing Association CLG

CRA No. 20021634

Registered Charity No. CHY 8685

CRO No. 127494

Website www.dvservicesmeath.ie

General Number 046 90 22 393

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A Note from our Chairperson
A Note from our CEO
A Snapshot of 2022
Strategic Plan 2022-26: Our Ambition for Change
Our Purpose
Strategic Goal - Sustainable Organisation
Strategic Goal - Development of People and Services
Strategic Goal - Technology, Infrastructure and Space
Strategic Goal - Advocacy and Profile
Accounts 2022







It is a privilege to present our Annual Report for 2022 in what was another busy and positive period for the organisation. We are proud of what we have achieved this year, and this report illustrates the innovative approaches we developed to ensure that we are not just reactive but proactive in supporting women and children. We have endeavoured to do this by:

- Completing work on a new 5-year strategic plan 2022-2026 to realise our ambition to work towards a
 Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence in Co. Meath.
- Delivering two new strategies on Fundraising and Communications, including recruiting a new parttime fundraising and development manager in September 2022. This new role is a recognition of the challenges we face to ensure we can maintain sustainable funding to deliver on our mission and the importance of fundraising in realising our new strategic plan.
- Accessing additional funding in December 2022 from Tusla to implement our business plan to upgrade
 the role of manager to that of a CEO; recruitment of a new middle management team to manage
 our frontline services, funding to open community offices and additional resources to support the
 overhead costs of running the organisation.
- Continuing work on the development on our new Refuge and Ancillary Services building project. We
 hope to be positioned to submit a Stage 2 application for funding to the Department of Housing at
 the start of Quarter 3 in 2023.

Finally, we would like to thank our dedicated staff, board of directors, funders, and supporters, without whom we could not fulfil our mission. We were delighted to cap the year off with the recognition of our work at the Meath Business and Tourism Awards, where we were selected as the Best Non-Profit in Co. Meath for 2022.

Sinéad Gogan

Chairperson



Board Director **Sinéad Christian** & Fundraising and Development manager **Frances Haworth** at the Meath Business & Tourism Awards



The year 2022 was a pivotal one for those of us working with survivors of domestic abuse with the culmination of the launch of the new 3rd National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence-Zero Tolerance in June. The strategy has given renewed focus and direction from the government on how the state will tackle what is a huge societal issue over the next five years.

Indeed, in developing our own strategic plan for the next five years we considered and reflected much of the national ambition in the local context of Co. Meath. The success of the national plan will impact on the success of local strategies. This new approach from government was pertinent to our work in 2022, with three particularly relevant actions we view as relevant outlined below:

- 1. A new national service development plan investment in local support services is required if we are to be positioned to meet not just the needs of women and children today but in terms of 'future proofing' our work to be ready for new service demands, using evidence-based support services. As demonstrated throughout this report, much of our supports to women and children is resourced though fundraising from donors, grants and groups who fundraise for us and this is not sustainable for modern specialist domestic violence support services.
- 2. Community responses and a localised approach to reducing and preventing gender-based violence will be pillar of the new national strategy. This is something the organisation welcomes and has been calling for, alongside our colleagues in Safe Ireland and we believe it is vital to the strategy's success. We will work in 2023 to explore our contribution to bringing this to fruition in Co. Meath.
- 3. The lack of refuge space and step-down or move-on accommodation for women and children continues to be an acute issue in Meath and Ireland. While we will have a new purpose-built refuge for Co. Meath completed in the middle of 2025, the stark number of 300 unmet requests for refuge that we could accommodate due to being full in 2022, represents a 24% increase in unmet needs compared to 242 women in 2021. We are determined to work with other domestic violence services in the Eastern Region, local government, and the Department of Housing to identify solutions to this challenge over the next two years.

We continue to learn from women and children we work with and to be led by their needs, to identify and ensure that they get the best evidenced based supports to recover from domestic violence. The case studies in this report not only present the challenges they face but illustrate the positive outcomes for women and children who come reach out for support to a specialist domestic violence support service.

We hope readers of our Annual Report will glean a better understanding and analysis of what we do and that our work inspires a commitment to the role that we all have to play in creating a Zero Tolerance to domestic violence in Co. Meath.

Sinéad Smith

CEO

Demand for services and supports across the organisation increased in 2022.



We provided refuge accommodation to 57 women and 74 children, a total of 131 individuals compared to 118 in 2021 - an increase of 11% of families in refuge in 2022. We were unable to accommodate 300 women and 184 children in 2022 when refuge was full - an overall increase of 11% in unmet requests in 2022 compared to 2021.



We worked with 131 children in refuge and in the community compared to 92 in 2021 - an increase of 42% of children were supported in 2022.



We worked with 482 women through our outreach programme in the community including one-to-one support, court accompaniment and advocacy in 2022 compared to 454 in 2021 - an increase of 6% of women supported.



We managed 5178 calls in 2022 across the organisation for crisis, information and support, court accompaniment, follow-on supports, advocacy and the needs of children and parents. Our Helpline took a total of 1,131 service referrals. In 2021 we managed 4889 calls. This resulted in an increase of 5.9% in support calls between 2021 and 2022.



Our support group and power to change programme worked with 34 women.



Recovery: we increased our counselling services providing online and phone counselling to women. We provided 525 sessions to 164 women funded through donations and grants. We provided 76 sessions of play and music therapy to 12 children. In terms of individuals supported this is an increase from 107 women and children in 2021 to 173 women and children in 2023 - a 62% increase in therapeutic services provided in 2022 compared to 2021.



We were excited to launch our new strategic plan on the 31st of May 2022 with the support of the All-Ireland Ladies Gaelic Football Champions Meath at their training ground. The new plan is a culmination of work over an 8-month period between 2021 and 2022 overseen by a core working group made up of our staff and board representatives with the support of an external consultant. This work was funded by the Community Foundation of Ireland under the Comic Relief Fund. Two associated strategies were developed and completed during the year, namely a fundraising strategy resourced by the Community Foundation of Ireland and a Communications Strategy self-funded by the organisation. Both strategies will facilitate the successful implementation of our overall strategic plan.

Our four core values are set out in the new strategy.

Women and Child Centered

All our work is led by the needs of women and children, and we bring their voice to everything we do. We are committed and passionate about women and children's human rights.

Inclusive

We embrace diversity and strive to be a fully inclusive organisation in who we work with, who works for us and how we do our work.

Accountable

We strive to always achieve the highest standards across the organisation.

Trustworthy

We act with empathy, compassion, and integrity.



Launch of MWRSS Strategic Plan with board, staff, and members of the Co. Meath All-Ireland Football Champions



MWRSS' reason for being is twofold. We exist to fulfil a greater purpose to:

- Provide a space where women and children can take time to explore the options available to them to
 ensure their future safety.
- Support, advocate for and alongside women dealing with abuse of themselves and their children.

Our strategy house below illustrates our values, purpose, key priorities, and enablers to deliver our strategy over the next five years. Our four strategic goals are described in detail below:

- 1. Sustainability: This goal is focused on sustainable approaches to funding and governance to enable the achievement of our vision.
- 2. Development of people and services: We will work to develop and grow our teams and enhance and expand the services we provide.
- 3. Technology, infrastructure, and space: We will build our physical and digital infrastructure to support the development of our services.
- 4. Advocacy and profile: To amplify our profile as advocates for women and children.

To live in a society where all forms of abuse against women and children are not tolerated.

To empower women and children who experience domestic violence and abuse on their journey towards safety, wellbeing, and recovery. We do this by providing woman and child centred specialist support services.

To provide a space where women and children can take time to look at the options available to ensure their future safety.

To support and advocate for women dealing with the experience of abuse on themselves and their children.

WOMEN AND CHILD CENTRED

All our work is led by the needs of women and children, and we bring their voice to everything we do. We are committed and passionate about women and children's human rights.

INCLUSIVE

We embrace diversity and strive to be a fully inclusive organisation in who we work with, who works for us, and how we do our work.

ACCOUNTABLE

We strive to always achieve the highest standards across the organisation.

TRUSTWORTHY

We act with empathy, compassion, and integrity.

SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION

Sustainable approaches to funding and governance to enable the achievement of our vision.

DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE AND SERVICES

Develop and grow our teams and enhance/expand the services we provide.

TECHNOLOGY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SPACE

Build our physical and digital infrastructure to support the development of our services.

ADVOCACY AND PROFILE

Amplify our profile as advocates for women and children.

Technology

People & Organisation

Our Way of Working

Buildings & Spaces

Stakeholders & External Environments



The management and staff team provide a multi-disciplinary range of supports in order to deliver our strategic goals. In addition to our core staff, five sub-contractors provide therapeutic services on our behalf in terms of counselling, play therapy and music therapy. Our core team includes a CEO, Team Leader in refuge, key workers in refuge, overnight and weekend refuge support workers, relief refuge support workers, outreach workers, children's programme workers, housekeeping, and maintenance. Our staff team numbers were roughly stable in 2022.

The remainder of this Annual Report is structured under the four goals of our Strategy House, and we report on our achievements to date in implementing the plan.



1 - Governance

Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG (known generally as Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services) is constituted as a company limited by guarantee as set out under parts 1-15 of the Companies Act 2014. Its purpose and objectives are set out in its Memorandum of Association and how it conducts its business is set out in its Articles of Association. Both documents (now the Constitution) are publicly available from the Companies Registration Office website (www.cro.ie).

Our Constitution and Charitable Purpose

Our strategic plan was developed in line with our charitable purpose which is contained in our Governing Constitution. The objectives and subsidiary objects outlined below are the purpose of the organisation's existence and are core to who we are and what we do.

Main Objective

To provide emergency crisis accommodation and supports to women and children who must leave home due to domestic abuse within the family. To also provide outreach support services (including information on their options), to women in the community that are experiencing domestic abuse. To provide these services and supports in a caring and non-judgemental environment.

Subsidiary Objectives

As objects incidental and ancillary to the attainment of the main objective, the Company has the following subsidiary objects:

- **A.** To provide educational programmes that promote self-esteem, safety, and confidence to women and children who are or have experienced domestic abuse.
- **B.** To provide a range of supports and individual counselling, where appropriate, to women who are or have experienced domestic abuse.
- **C.** To provide awareness of domestic violence within the community. To promote a zero tolerance of domestic violence and violence against women in our society.



- D. To engage with other agencies on behalf of women and children experiencing domestic abuse.
- E. To advocate on behalf of women and children who have or who are experiencing domestic abuse.

Governance Developments

Our annual report to the Charities Regulator was submitted in October 2022 as fully compliant. As part of ensuring our compliance we developed a new strategic plan, plus a fundraising and communication strategy. In addition, we carried out an external board review with a consultant in September and a report and recommendations on the review and the implementation process for the recommendations began in December 2022. In December, the board ratified a new Board of Directors Handbook. In addition, we updated or developed eight internal policies and all directors were added to the Register of Business Owners (RBO) in January 2022.

2 - Board of Directors

Management Team

CEO

Team Leader Refuge

Multi-Disciplinary Team

Keyworkers

Outreach Workers

Children's Programme Workers

Refuge Support Workers (weekend, overnight and relief)

Ancillary Services Team

Housekeeper

Maintenance

Therapeutic Services (Subcontractors)

Play Therapist

Counsellors

The Directors of our Board offer their services on a voluntary basis. All Board directors are independent and bring a range of expertise across core areas like finance, HR, non-profit management, communications, and fundraising. They oversee the direction of the work and the affairs of the organisation ensuring the organisation is meeting the needs of women and children and is working to its charitable objects and complying with all necessary legislation and regulation.

Board directors do not receive remuneration in respect to their services to the charity. In 2022, there have been no contracts or arrangements entered into during the financial year in which a director was materially interested or which were significant in relation to the charity's activities. The CEO of the organisation reports into the Board at Directors' meetings and supports their activities. The CEO is not a member of the Board. The board met five times in 2022 and all meetings record conflict of interests. In 2022 no conflicts of interest were recorded.



In 2022, one change took place at board level in terms of directorships. One director resigned and their replacement was advertised through Boardmatch.ie and their replacement was accepted by the board in December 2022. All prospective candidates provided CVs and were interviewed by one to two directors of the board with a nomination brought forward for discussion at the following meeting.

Board Subgroups: Finance, Governance and Risk Subgroup

The finance and risk subgroup met on four occasions in 2022 in March, May, September, and November. The committee monitors and reviews the financial performance of the organisation. It also reviews business risk and health and safety risks as part of its risk function. In addition, this group is overseeing the capital spend on the new refuge building development. It provides independent and expert oversight and review of annual budgets, returns to funders, projected cash flows, monthly management accounts and the annual financial statements and reports. Recommendations from the committee are brought to the main Board for decision making.

The title and remit of this group was expanded in December 2022 following a review and updated board of directors' handbook which included a review of the terms of reference of the group to include the word governance in its title and remit, so it is now the finance, risk, and governance subgroup.

Risk Management

Quarterly reviews were undertaken by the finance, governance, and risk subgroup of the key identified risks and mitigants identified in the risk register and a summary of the areas worked on are outlined below:

Governance

- CRA report was submitted on October 31st, 2022, as fully compliant and CRA compliance report completed and we reported as fully compliant.
- Annual Report & Audited Accounts completed.
- Recruitment of new directors continued & Board review with external consultant.

Strategic Risk

- Strategic Plan was completed in May 2022.
- Staffing recruitment and retention is an ongoing issue in terms of the labour market and terms and conditions in the community and voluntary sector.

Compliance Risk

- The Annual report to the now statutory Approved Housing Regulatory Body submitted.
- The Health and Safety subgroup (which is an internal staffing group made up of senior and middle management; the health and safety officers and fire officer) met on 6 occasions during the year. This group's work is directed by the health and safety statement and health and safety risk assessment which is reviewed at every meeting and updates on their progress is given.
- The main Risk Register in place and was reviewed quarterly by the finance, risk and governance subgroup and fed back to the board through the CEO reports.



Operational Risk

- Cyber security: A new IT contractor commenced to manage our systems security.
- Data protection: Record of Processing Activities (ROPA) was completed by year end.
- On-call and out-of-hours: Overnight on-call team reviewed the on-call policy which was updated and reviewed by the board in December 2022.
- Community Houses Continued Availability: This was agreed with Tuath Housing and Meath County council to ensure ongoing access to community-based refuge.
- Staff well-being: Dignity at work training took place with a new charter to be developed in 2023.

Environmental

New building: Continued work on moving this project on in line with deadlines set out and this
was an agenda item at every board meeting with a board director attending meetings with the
Department of Housing and the Design Team to ensure a direct link between the board and
the project.

Financial Risk

- Recruitment of a part-time fundraising development manager from our reserves given rising costs and impact of inflation on the organisation and the need to maintain and grow our fundraising capacity
- We updated our business plan to our core funder as requested and we achieved 81% of the funding request we applied for.

Human Resources and Staffing Subgroup

This is an ad-hoc group that meets as and when required and is made up of Directors with Human Resources expertise and focuses on providing advice on the development, review and monitoring of HR policies and procedures. Recommendations from the committee are brought to the main Board for decision making. Two online subgroup meetings took place in 2022. This group reviewed policies on remuneration, with a new pay scale developed for the organisation, a pay review undertaken and a new redundancy policy was developed in 2022. No staff member earned above €65,000 in 2022.

Communications and Fundraising Subgroup

This group which is made up of directors with relevant expertise met twice in 2022, in March and September to review work on the new communications and fundraising strategies and assisted in the review process for these strategies in advance of them being brought forward to the main board.



MWRSS Board Meetings in 2022

Board Director	Board Meeting	Finance & Risk Subgroup	HR Subgroup	Comms & Fundraising	Retired/Appointed as per CRO
Frank Long	5/5	3/4			
Michele Sweeney	4/5				
Sinéad Christian	4/5			2	
Claire Sheeran	5/5			2	
Sinéad Gogan	5/5		2		
Richelle Manning	5/5	4/4			
Meabh Smith	3/5			2	
Liam Keane	4/5	3/4			
Charlene Trenier	2/5		1		Retired June 2022

3. Fundraising & Development

With over 35 years' service provision in Co. Meath, we are very fortunate to have deep rooted support from the local community as well as partnerships with national funders and philanthropic donors. We are very grateful for this support which pays for our ongoing running costs and enables our programme supports and development such as counselling, play and art therapy for children and individual survivor assistance such as food, legal aid, and home security adaptations.

Overall Income Increased by 17%

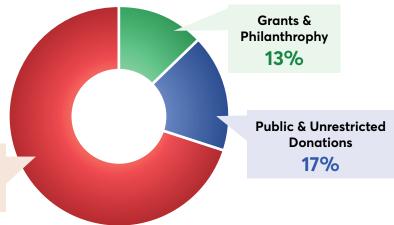
In 2022, our organisation income grew from €898,539 to €1,052,939 – a 17% increase. We achieved a 16% increase in core funding and 55% increase in unrestricted donations which is very heartening given the uncertain economic environment during the year.

Source of Income	2022	2021	Difference	% Difference
Tusla & Victims of Crime Funding	€733,045	€630,855	€102,190	+16%
Public & Unrestricted Donations	€185,496	€119,814	€65,682	+55%
Other Grant and Philanthropic Income	€134,398	€147,870	-€13,472	-9%

Diversity of Funding Sources

Of the funds generated 70% is core statutory funding from Tusla and Victims of Crime, 17% is public and unrestricted donations and 13% is grant and philanthropic income.







Strategic Developments and Investment

Thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation Ireland's *RTÉ Does Comic Relief* fund we were able to commission external consultants to develop a Communications Strategy and Fundraising Strategy in early 2022. These strategies were approved by the board of directors and set out how our organisation will invest in and increase activity in these two key areas over the coming years.

An important decision taken in 2022 was to resource our fundraising capacity further and Frances Haworth was appointed as a part-time Fundraising & Development Manager in September 2022. This is the first role of its kind for Meath Women's Refuge & Support Services, and we look forward to sustaining and increasing our voluntary income over time with this additional capacity.

Head of Community Development META **Aoife Flynn** with MWRSS staff



Public & Unrestricted Donations

We recognise the vital importance of community and public giving which not only provides a reliable ongoing income stream every year but enables local communities to be a part of their local domestic violence support service. We were delighted to have been selected as the charity partner for several key fundraising events during the year. Our three key public campaigns to raise awareness and funds are:

International Women's Day (8th March)

Meath Women's Refuge & Support Services were delighted to speak at Boliden Tara Mines to mark International Women's Day and grateful to receive a generous donation of €5,000. A fantastic committee of female entrepreneurs in Meath - Women Who Wow - organised a high-profile event at the Newgrange Hotel on 8th April which raised an incredible €11,246.50 towards our work.

Go Purple Day (29th April)

Another successful Go Purple Day took place on 29th April 2022 in partnership with An Garda Síochána, with a launch in Navan attended by Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee. Several innovative Go Purple Day events took place around Meath, with a special mention to Tara Court estate in Navan whose residents donned purple and raised €2,225 for Meath Women's Refuge & Support Service and Men's Aid.

Christmas Appeal

Our Christmas Appeal is our biggest fundraising campaign of the year, and 2022 was no different with just over €50,000 donated in December alone. December also saw the launch of two new corporate partnerships with CU Plus Credit Union and Meath County Chamber Mi Meath card offering ways for their customers to donate to MWRSS.



Other fantastic community events during the year included the 'Stroll for Joey' in memory of the late counsellor Joe Reilly which raised over €5,000, Navan Rotary Golf Classic, and Ballymacan Sheep Dog Trials which took place in July 2022.

A very successful 'Afternoon Tea' led by our Ambassador Áine Duff in her role as Miss Meath took place in the Ardboyne Hotel in August 2022. Áine raised an incredible €6,000 by hosting a thoroughly enjoyable event with guest speakers, including Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD. In addition, Áine supported our Christmas Appeal launch as part of her ambassador role. The launch was also supported by Meath footballer Emma Duggan.

Ms Meath **Áine Duff** launching our Christmas Appeal



We continue to receive much needed contributions from the Courts with €16,950 awarded in 2022 in relation to court directed payments which helps fund our ongoing Court Accompaniment costs.

Grants & Philanthropic Income

We were fortunate to secure a number of key grants during the year to help grow our organisation and reach more women and children in need of support.

Meta

€36,000 was awarded to fund vital counselling support for women survivors, as well as funding a brand-new digital campaign called #RelationshipQuestions to reach younger women across Meath to be rolled out in Quarter 1 of 2023.

Community Foundation Ireland

€43,000 was awarded from the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal to continue funding our dedicated 'Where I'm At' programme for children in refuge. This essential funding means that children in refuge have a key worker to support them with play, creative engagement, and emotional regulation during a challenging time in their lives.

Survivors' Fund

€25,315 was awarded to us from Women's Aid, Safe Ireland, and Protestant Aid as a significant contribution to our Survivors Fund, enabling individual grants to women to pay for expenses like legal aid, home security, transport and essential items that enable them to move to a safe and secure place more quickly after leaving an abusive relationship.

HSE National Lottery

€9,100 was awarded to fund a range of holistic therapies for women and children staying in refuge, as well as a purchasing a library of books for residents.



Meath County Council

We were grateful for support from local councillors' discretionary funds in 2022, including Cllr. Alan Lawes, Cllr. Nick Killian, Cllr. Eimear Tobin, and Cllr. Paul McCabe. Meath County Council has additionally funded an upgrade to our windows in our building through the Community Activities Fund under the Community Enhancement Programme.

The Ireland Funds

We were delighted to partner with The Ireland Funds for the first time in 2022 and received a grant of €5,000 towards our counselling service from their 'Heart of the Community' fund.



Credit Union Plus Christmas Donation

Go Purple Day



Volunteers in Action

Tara Mines have been a long-time supporter of our work through donating to our annual Christmas Appeal and marking International Women's Day each year. In September through their corporate social responsibility strategy, Tara Mines allocated a group of workers with a range of expertise to undertake volunteer work in our refuge building. This included clearing our garden area, painting work and general maintenance work.

Tara Mines Volunteers September 2022





Financial Management and Sustainability

The audited accounts for Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services are presented in the final section of this Annual Report (p32). Financial management in the organisation is overseen by the finance, risk and governance subgroup of the board and then fed into the main board for decision making. The operational financial management work is implemented by the CEO and the finance and administration team on a day-to-day basis, with monthly management accounts prepared for the board.

As outlined in the fundraising and development section on the previous page the organisation worked exceptionally hard to achieve our fundraising targets in 2022. While we increased our overall income by 17% through core funding, grants, fundraising and philanthropy, we are still heavily reliant on unrestricted fundraising to meet the basic running costs of the organisation which up to now have not been resourced by the state.

Given our ambition to grow and expand our services which includes staffing through the implementation of our strategic plan, we are conscious that our business plans submitted to the core funders over the next two years require substantial additional resourcing.

We will be managing the largest infrastructure project in our history with a new refuge building that will require additional resources to maintain, matched by additional staffing and services to manage this increased service capacity.

We submitted our updated Business Plan to Tusla in early December 2022 and we have been granted additional resources for 2023 which will increase our core funding by 52%. In total, 81% of the activities we applied for will be funded in 2023. The increased allocation will resource, three new worker roles, a contribution towards our running costs (which we never previously had) and funding for areas such as out-of-hours on-call system, and sleeping shift costs, which was self-funded by the organisation in the past.

This is a really welcome development but we know one of the biggest challenges we faced in 2022 and will again experience in 2023 is meeting our day-to-day running costs which have soared as a result of inflation.

Given the above, we are presenting this year's accounts with a deficit of €33,326 which reflects the cost-of-living issues highlighted above. In spite of increasing our unrestricted donations by 55%, the organisation needs to consolidate core funding for its running costs, particularly in the context of our business plan goals which are reflected in our new strategic plan.

The board of directors alongside the CEO will continue to focus on our sustainability on an ongoing basis in 2023 and we have identified this as an area of risk to be managed.





Strategic Goal 2:

Development of People and Services

This section of the report focuses of the delivery of our frontline services and also the new initiatives we have undertaken to implement this strategic goal over the course of the year. We exceeded key performance indicators we set across all programme areas as set out in our Service Level Agreement (SLA) with our funder Tusla. We undertook new innovations in developing new services which will be implemented in 2023. A summary of service deliverables achieved are documented below are in line with our strategic goal in this area.

- ✓ Increased the number of emergency refuge accommodation units from 7 to 8.
- ✓ Provided refuge to 131 people in 2022 in comparison to 118 in 2021 an increase of 11% on 2021 figures.
- ✓ Implemented a new client management system to create one centralised cloud-based recording system for our work with women and children across the organisation called E-Safe.
- ✓ Implemented a new VOIP Phone System moving from one static phone line to a new split phone line system with an app system linked to each programme area so teams can take direct phone calls, thus supporting the helpline.
- ✓ We experienced an increase of 5.9% in the number of support calls managed by the organisation in 2022 compared to 2021.
- ✓ Mainstreamed our key working system to 100% 2-worker coverage between 9am and 10pm Monday to Friday.
- ✓ We were successful in accessing year 2 funding for a children's worker in refuge through the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal which increased our capacity to work with 131 children across the children's programme in 2022 compared to 92 in 2021 - a 42% increase.
- ✓ We provided 525 counselling sessions to 164 women and 76 sessions of play therapy to 12 children an increase of 62% in therapeutic services in 2022 compared to 2021.
- ✓ We signed an agreement with Women's Aid to deliver a new project in 2023 to women at high risk in Co. Meath.
- ✓ We will partner with Rape Crisis Northeast to deliver a new sexual violence counselling service in Co. Meath in 2023 following a successful funding application to Tusla.
- ✓ We received approval to increase the number of days we are in court for 2023 through additional funding secured through Victims of Crime under the Department of Justice.
- √ The Outreach Team, again in 2022 saw an increased demand in services from 454 women in 2021 to
 482 in 2022, or a 6% increase. Since its inception, the Outreach programme has grown year-on-year
 exponentially.
- ✓ We submitted an updated Business Plan to our core funder Tusla in late 2022 which was accepted and will increase our core funding in 2023 by 52%. The submitted plan was accepted by our funders and 81% of the activities we sought to fund were allocated.



Further detail on key service achievements and deliverables is outlined in the next section of this document.

1. Refuge

Helpline

We have experienced calls across all services in the organization with an increase in calls for supports increasing from 4889 calls¹ in 2021 to 5178 calls in 2022 (an increase of 5.9% in calls).

In 2022 we had 1,131 referrals directly through our Helpline.² We supported 422 women directly on our Helpline requesting support or information (602 phone calls) and were unfortunately unable to meet 300 requests for refuge accommodation due to the refuge being full. This is an increase of 24% of unmet requests from women of 242 in 2021. We were able to offer refuge to 57 women and 74 children. We took a total of 486 crisis calls.

Strategic Developments

In response to the demand on our service, we installed a new VOIP phone service with an automated attendant that now can direct our calls to the various internal services, and it now leaves space for information and crisis calls to come through to our Helpline. It also allows us to gather statistics about the number of calls received and missed, which is important for our quality control and to identify improvements.

This year saw the start of the process of improving our Helpline to make it more accessible to callers, and more efficient internally to facilitate us to filter calls to the relevant programme areas. Prior to September 2022, all our calls for Helpline and for our various internal services (e.g., our Outreach & Court Accompaniment Service, Children's Service, Administration and Fundraising, and calls to our Refuge Keyworkers), all came through the one phone line.

With the assistance of our Housekeeping and Maintenance Team we have developed quiet spaces for the Helpline Staff to answer calls in our building. We are looking forward to making new improvements over the upcoming year (2023), to include a freephone number and our client record management system (E-Safe) integration, an increase in training for staff and a web text option to name but a few initiatives.

Refuge

We provided crisis refuge to **57 women** and **74 children** in the past year (excluding the families carried over from December 2021). This is a total of 131 individuals compared to 118 in 2021 or an increase of 11% in the numbers of women and children in refuge. From a total of 57 women, 36 came to refuge with dependent children, with 19 single women. Of the 19 women who were single, a number of them were expecting babies. Refuge was provided to women for up to 8 weeks, excluding a small number of families who had exceptional circumstances who stayed up to 12-14 weeks (see Figure 1). From the period of April – December 2022³ adult residents received 928 support sessions via phone or in person, providing advice and guidance around topics such as housing, finance, legal linking with immigration supports, healthcare, parenting and with external statutory supports such as Tusla. This displays an intensive level of support to our Residents. The children in refuge were supported by the Children's programme assisting them process the trauma of their experience. The age of profile of women in 2022 was young with more than half of the women staying in refuge under the age of 40 (64%), while the majority of the children were also young were under the age of 9 years old (65%) (see figure 2&3). We had 300 unmet requests for refuge, plus 43 general homelessness requests.

¹Including multiple calls relating to one case, both incoming and outgoing.

² Excludes multiple calls relating to the one case, and calls are incoming.

³ E-Safe: Computer system recording began in April 2022.



Our Refuge accommodation provision consists of 8 units, four on-site and four houses in the community in various locations in Meath. We provided accommodation to 33 families/single persons on-site, and 24 families in the community. We expanded our refuge accommodation in September 2022, to include an extra onsite unit to assist tackle the extra demand for refuge, moving from 7 to 8 units. We received additional core funding to create a full-time housekeeper role and expanded our maintenance persons' hours by 4 per week to assist us in having a quicker turnover of units for new families coming into refuge.

For 36 families following their stay in refuge, 2 families moved into independent accommodation, 7 returned to the family home, and 3 moved in with friends/family. This resulted in 45 families/singles moving into emergency/homeless service/transitional accommodation.

Figure 1: Length of Stay

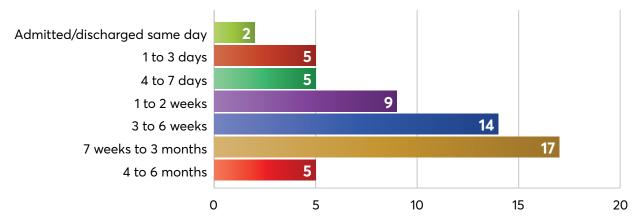
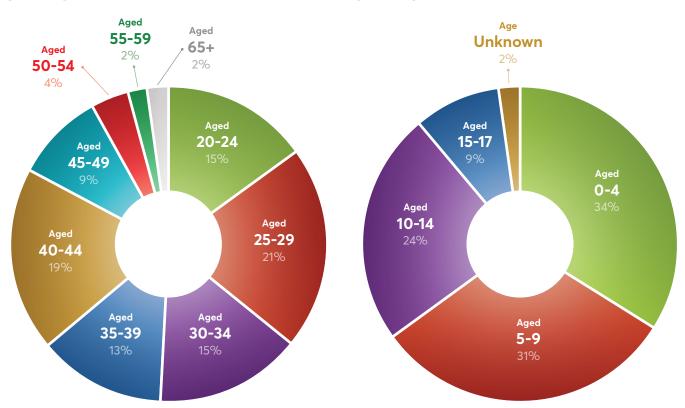


Figure 2: Age of Adult Residents

Figure 3: Age of Child Residents





Case Study

Julie⁴ was referred into refuge by the Gardai late one night after an incident where her partner physically assaulted her, smashed her phone screen, and threatened her. Julie stated she has been with her partner for 2 years and was 12 weeks pregnant. Julie presented with bruising to her face, bumps on her head and a broken arm. Julie stated she stayed in another refuge 3 years ago. Julie was medically assessed in hospital directly after the incident to ensure she and the baby were okay. Julie stated she previously had another partner who was physically abusive to her which prompted her to leave this relationship and come into refuge. Julie and her partner both share a rented property. Julie works as an administrator in a local office and the stress of her abusive relationship caused her to take some time off, which her employer has supported her to do.

When Julie arrived at refuge, she was very upset and crying, she received listening support and reassurance from staff. Julie was concerned about her belongings she left behind her in the house and arrived with a small bag of belongings and essential documents. Julie said she continued to receive messages from her partner asking her to come home and threatening her.

During her stay in refuge, Julie attended court and received a barring order. Julie also attended counselling. On discharge from refuge Julie returned home with her barring order, safety plan and house alarms funded through our Survivors Fund⁵ in place after her ex-partner left the area and returned to his family home.

Gaps and Future Development

Our new refuge building, due to be completed in 2025, will expand our accommodation provision from 8 units to 12 units which will be self-contained. This cutting-edge facility is being developed with a trauma informed design in mind. It will cater for a wide range of support needs.

As reflected in our statistics, the number of requests from women for refuge we cannot accommodate increased from 242 in 2021 to 300 in 2022 (a 24% increase), while the number of children we couldn't accommodate was slightly lower, down from 195 in 2021 to 184 in 2022 (a reduction of 6% on 2021 figures.) This means we could not provide refuge to 484 women and children in 2022 compared to 437 in 2021 - an 11% increase in unmet needs. We envisage that these numbers will remain high in 2023. Coupled with this, the number of families moving into emergency accommodation post-refuge in 2022 was the highest we have seen in our work since 2016.

Many families are moving into emergency accommodation that has limited private family space, shared facilities and at times no cooking facilities to cook for children. This can often impair the strides they have made while in refuge and for vulnerable families e.g., children with disabilities, women with mental health needs etc.

Given the above, we are working towards piloting a step down and move on accommodation project in Co. Meath in 2024. We believe that women and children who experience the trauma of domestic abuse should be moving from supportive residential environments into their own homes or other appropriate step-down accommodation with reduced supports. We will work with our local authority, approved housing bodies and the Department of Housing to explore solutions and identity potential models for step down and safe homes in Co. Meath.

⁴Not her real name.

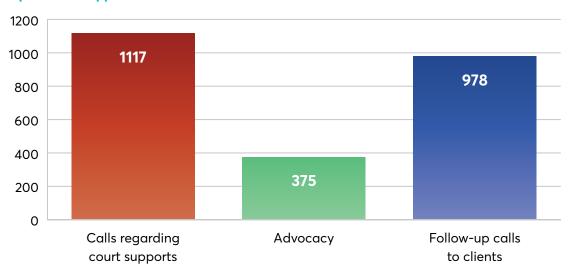
⁵MWRSS Survivor funds are resources that go directly to women and children in the form of grants and are resourced through a number of funds such as Protestant Aid, Women's Aid and Safe Ireland.



2. The Outreach Programme

The Outreach programme works in the community across the county and provides a range of supports to women. It has grown exponentially year-on-year since its initiation and is a key area of development for the service. We saw an overall increase of 6% in the numbers of women supported in 2022 compared to 2021. Indeed, the increased awareness of domestic abuse that now exists in society following the pandemic means the expectations of women and service providers in the community have grown and have become more complex. The number of calls managed by the programme is outlined in the chart below.

Outreach Helpline and Support Calls



Additionally, the housing crisis and cost of living crisis has further exacerbated these complexities, with women forced to choose between remaining in an abusive relationship or increasing their risk of poverty and homelessness. While there was an increase in women seeking support from the Outreach programme across majority of areas, there was a decrease in the number of women seeking court orders in 2022 compared to 2021 (14%), with a significant decrease in women applying and being granted barring orders (38%). This is a cause of concern for us in our work and more investigation would be required to assess why the number of applications for barring orders has reduced.

The outreach programme provides face to face one to one support, phone support, educational group programmes, a support group, court accompaniment and assistance with DV order applications.

The Support group worked with 21 women in 2022 and the Power to Change, a 12-week psycho-social education programme worked with 13 women.

The total number of services provided to women in terms of engagement is outlined below:

Outreach Programme	Engagements
Total no. of women supported	482
Face-to-face sessions in the community	87
Face-to-face sessions with women going to court	373
Referrals to counselling services	48

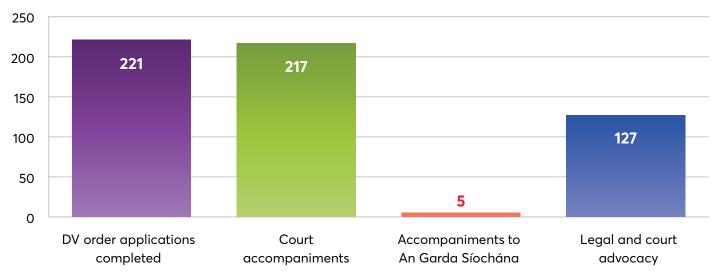


The Court Accompaniment Service

We attended court in Trim and Navan three days a week in 2022, and in between we complete applications for court and provided support, advice and guidance about domestic violence orders, the court and legal process. We also provide legal advocacy through engagement with solicitors, An Garda Síochána, and court staff. Our new phone system has helped streamline service users accessing this service and requesting court accompaniment. The team also takes direct calls through their mobile phone support system.

The court accompaniment work is funded by the Victims of Crime Office in the Department of Justice. In 2022, we made 221 applications for domestic violence orders and undertook 217 court accompaniments with women. We provided 127 services for legal and court advocacy.

Court Support Programme



Gaps and Future Development 2023

Due to the current housing crisis and the lack of refuge accommodation in Ireland, outreach services will be required to support women remaining at home. In addition, an increased awareness and expectation on specialist domestic violence support services means it is imperative that we focus on the development of the Outreach programme to provide a high level of support to women in the community and support their long-term safety.

We have an ambition to double the current staff compliment of the programme to meet these growing needs and to establish a community office to support the growing team. We also plan to establish community office bases in areas with large population growth to increase our presence and accessibility in local communities in Meath.

Increasing our staffing compliment will facilitate us to establish a case management and support structure to help guide and support our work with women, with a particular focus on those who are at high risk of domestic violence and/or have high/complex needs. Our new Central Relationship System E-Safe which is a Salesforce system will assist, support, structure, and document this work.

Additionally, we will expand our court accompaniment service to provide court accompaniment four days a week for DV order applications and accompaniment for high-risk cases on their return date to court. In late 2022, we applied for additional resources to expand our provision on a Wednesday afternoon and all-day Thursday in the courts in Meath plus additional court support hours for the service to commence in 2023.



In order to reach those experiencing high levels of domestic violence, we need to build awareness of the Outreach programme and supports provided beyond court support. We hope to do so by further utilising social media, hosting awareness events, and building on relationships with key agencies in the community.

To further develop knowledge and community responses to domestic violence and establish zero tolerance of gender-based violence in Meath, we are working to develop a community development project within the Outreach programme, given our focus on community. This three-year pilot project will have a focus on prevention of gender-based violence working with a range of stakeholders on education and prevention training, policy, and



organisational responses by organisations to gender-based violence. At its core it will be centred on bringing the voice and leadership of those who are affected by domestic abuse in shaping the responses of the state to this issue.

The Outreach team delivered a workshop to the HSE Certificate Course in Sexual Violence Participants about our work on Domestic violence.

Case Study - Outreach

Hannah (56)⁶ had been married to her ex-partner for 30 years and experienced severe physical, psychological, financial, and emotional abuse. Hannah left her home and was couch surfing with a friend in shared accommodation. She had left home with none of her belongings. Hannah met with a solicitor and was advised to contact the Outreach service for support. A member of the Outreach Team met with Hannah and provided emotional support and discussed options available to her to support her safety. Hannah did not want to come into refuge due to concerns about where she might go afterwards due to the housing crisis. She decided to stay with her friend who was a good support to her and would find her own accommodation.

Hannah had a job and so did not qualify for Legal Aid. She was concerned about being able to pay for a solicitor for a court return date if she applied for a domestic violence order. The Outreach Worker was able to support Hannah through our Survivors Fund⁷. The Outreach team were also able to provide Hannah with vouchers for food and clothing⁸. At this point Hannah felt she could apply for an order to support her safety, however she was worried about retaliation from her ex-partner due to ongoing threats she was receiving from him. We provided Hannah with emotional support, advice, and safety planning so Hannah felt comfortable and secure to apply for an order. The Outreach team supported her with completing the court paperwork and accompanied her to court for the application. The Outreach worker was also in court on the day of her return date and provided emotional support as Hannah was terrified of facing her ex-partner. Hannah was then granted a five-year safety order.

⁶ Not her real name.

⁷ MWRSS Survivor funds are resources that go directly to women and children in the form of grants and are resourced through a number of funds such as Protestant Aid, Women's Aid and Safe Ireland.

⁸ These supports are resourced through donations and fundraising.



Although Hannah had left her home, her name was still on all the bills in the house. Hannah continued to pay these due to concerns of retaliation against her, leaving her with no money to support herself or find her own accommodation. Through multiple one-to-one support sessions, we were able to support Hannah to take her names off these bills and cancel accounts.

Hannah's experience of domestic violence had a severe impact on her mental and physical health. We supported Hannah to engage with her GP and referred her to counselling provided by MWRSS.

Due to the housing crisis, Hannah struggled to find suitable and affordable accommodation. She eventually found accommodation, and the Outreach Worker advocated on her behalf to the community welfare officer for financial support with her move. At the end of Hannah's engagement with the Outreach team, Hannah was more financially stable and able to invest in a door camera for her home and through our Survivors' Fund⁹ sourced funding for security equipment for her home.

2. The Children's Programme

The Children's Programme worked with 131 children in refuge and in the community. This was an increase of 42% in the numbers of children supported in 2022 compared to 2021. This large increase in service provision is due to additional funding for a specific children's worker in refuge which doubled our staffing in the children's programme from one to two staff. Across our Children's Programme a total of 154 parent meetings took place, 904 parent contacts, 198 one-to-one sessions, 195 informal play sessions, 62 risk assessments and support plans and 16 safety plans took place in 2022.

Children in Refuge

The "Where I'm At" Project funded by the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal Programme which is managed by the Community Foundation of Ireland continued into 2022 and the project engaged with 80 children this year. The work in this project has continued to support children in many ways some of which include the transition into and out of refuge, emotional regulation, referrals and advocating with external agencies e.g., schools, GPs and providing activities externally for families to share some quality time together outside of refuge. The project is being evaluated by the Department of Nursing and Midwifery in Trinity College Dublin and encompasses inputs from women and children, the children's worker, and our key working team in refuge. We envisage the evaluation field work completing in June 2023 and the report presented and disseminated in the Autumn in line with the project completion date.

In total 87 one-to-one sessions were carried out with children while they were residing in refuge. These sessions were planned pieces of work where the need arose from developing support plans for children while in refuge. Sessions included supporting children to regulate their emotions and to offer a safe space.

To facilitate children with the transition into refuge and to also enable mothers to attend key working sessions, counselling sessions and other appointments, 147 child-led creative play sessions took place.

The Children's Refuge Worker designed a welcome booklet for families coming into refuge which details the different staff they will see while here, their names and roles, and pictures of the playroom. They also developed a staff wall display to help mothers and children familiarise themselves with the different staff and having this display in reception means families can point to the picture of the person they need to speak to if they cannot remember their name.

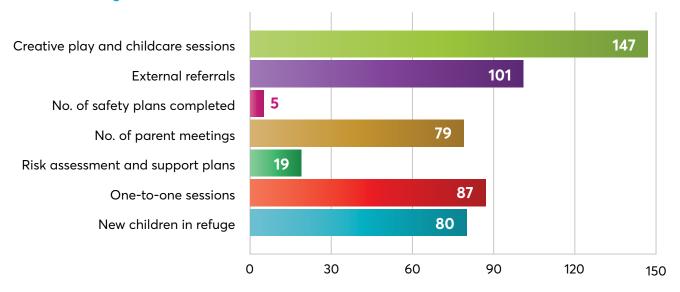
⁹ Ibid.



The refuge has also become a more inviting space for children with children's art displayed on the walls. Children enjoy having conversations with their mother and staff about the pictures and like to put their pictures on the wall which makes them feel heard and comfortable.

During this settling in period, family activities are organised in the community to encourage a sense of structure, normality and respite for mother and child. Weekend activities such as trips to cinema, bowling and adventure centres were organised as well as bigger seasonal events such as Halloween and Christmas trips. One-to-one activities with mother and child were organised to give children dedicated time with mum away from refuge such as trips to the nail salon together. The Children's Worker ensures they families sitting room is comfortable and has necessary games and books for the family to enjoy.

Children in Refuge



Creative Engagement and Play

The Toy Show Project Where I'm At provides financial resources that enables us to plan and book external play and creative activities for families such as the cinema, adventure centre, play centres, and other fun and creative activities which take place on site in refuge.

Last year in total, 8 families including 16 children attended the cinema, 3 families (7 children) were supported to go to the adventure centre, 2 children were supported with attending the circus, the play centre was organised for 3 children, some of the young people in refuge (3 young people) were able to get their nails done and 4 families (6 children) were able to go to a local panto show. During the summer, two families (3 children) were supported to attend a summer camp locally. One child was also supported to join a local soccer club.

Some families received more than one activity due to their length of stay in refuge.

These activities provided a space where families could spend some quality time together outside of our service. This valuable funding resource for children is valued by women and children and the feedback has been positive.

¹⁰ Funded through the Toy Show Appeal.



Case Study: Where I'm At Project

Anne¹¹ is a 14-year-old girl who stayed with us in community-based refuge, with her Mum and 6-year-old sister Kate¹².

After spending time with the family and working on building a relationship it was identified that Anne was not getting a lot of time with Mum, and both felt this too. Kate, the younger child, had certain support needs which meant that mum was not able to spend as much time with Anne as they both would have liked.

Anne was feeling isolated and bored in community and was missing going out and doing things as she would have when she lived in Dublin. The Children's Resource Worker wanted to carve out time for the family to do fun activities together and for Mum and Anne to have quality time. Mum felt that things were so stressful at the moment that she was not getting time with the children – they had no car, were in an unfamiliar county and area and money was an issue.

Throughout their stay in refuge, we organised activities for the family to do together including bowling, arcades, and a trip to an adventure centre. The children are 6 and 14 so trying to find something they both wanted to do was difficult and finding something that was not too far away was a challenge. The worker, through their engagement with 6-year-old Kate, knew that she was enjoying the activities more than Anne. As the family had no car, we organised taxis funded by the organisation to enable the family to access the different events organised with the family.

A plan was developed with Mum to support both girls. The Children's Resource Worker would complete one-to-one sessions with Kate every Thursday at the same time and this in turn would give Mum and Anne time together to go do things. Mum found Kate was struggling with emotional regulation and feeling uncertain about everything happening in her world at the moment. Through meeting with Mum and the child we all felt that one-to-one time for Kate with her key worker would be very helpful. The playroom provided her with a safe space to process difficult feelings and emotions and express herself through music, art, messy play, sensory play, roleplay, etc. We did this for a number of weeks and while Kate had her one-to-one sessions, Mum and Anne would go get food and look around the shops together.

Towards the time before they left refuge, Anne told the children's resource worker "that hour went by so quick, I liked it, but it went by fast." In consultation with Mum and Anne about their interests, the children's worker booked an appointment to get their nails done and gave them a 2-hour slot. At the same time, they planned lots of activities they could do with Kate during this time that she really enjoyed.

¹¹Not her real name.

¹² Not her real name.



Children in the Community

This year was the first full year where there was a dedicated children's worker for children in the community. Previously, one worker worked with children in refuge and the community. The work included continuing to offer one-to-one sessions for children, running a summer programme and engaging with external agencies through projects such as Empower Kids.

The community programme supported 57 children in total. 111 one-to-one sessions were offered to 12 children and there were 48 informal play sessions provided to 16 children in refuge during this time also. An observation from the work this year is that children engaging in the one-to-one sessions appeared to need much more support in the initial sessions in terms of regulating and being ready to engage with the content of the one-to-one sessions. This meant that the duration of one-to-one sessions was extended in most cases to allow children a chance to settle into the space.

Being able to refer children onto therapeutic supports such as play, and music therapy has meant that children are receiving wrap-around support which meets all their needs and enhances their overall recovery from domestic violence. A total number of 41 play and 35 music therapy sessions were carried out last year. An additional 30 play therapy sessions were provided by a student play therapist. This meant that 10 children availed of this service.

A summer programme was also carried out for children, and we had 5 children attend a weeklong programme of activities which included creative arts, yoga, mindfulness, reptile visit, and activities which supported emotional literacy, keeping safe and positive coping mechanisms.

Our involvement with Empower Kids continued into 2022 and children took part in different consultation projects throughout the year. In November 2022, The Empower Kids Project showcased the lived experiences of children and young people through the exhibition IT HURTS: LISTEN TO US. The children were asked to take a picture or paint a picture to represent "their life now". Our Children's Worker presented at this event on the experience of being involved in the Empower Kids project to date.

The children also worked on the Me2U project which aimed for children to share their advice with other children living with domestic violence.

The Children's programme also developed the children's section of the new Domestic Abuse Resource Pack for Louth and Meath. This resource pack is aimed at professionals and others concerned about Domestic Abuse in the community with guidance on support services, what is Domestic Abuse and the needs of children too.

Katie Carry from the Children's Team speaking at the summer launch of the Louth Meath CYPSC Domestic abuse Resource Pack



Children in the Community (two staff working in 2022 in comparison to one staff in 2021)	Statistics
New children in community	51
Children carried forward from 2021	7
One-to-one sessions	111
Informal play sessions	48
Risk assessment and support plans	43
Parent meetings and check-ins	75
No. of safety plans completed	11
Play and music therapy referrals	12
Referrals to counselling for parents	5
Referrals to Outreach Programme for parents	9
Incoming phone calls to the Children's Programme	170
Outgoing phone calls to the Children's Programme	302
External referrals	7
It's Good to Be Me Programme	4

Case Study: Children in the Community

Sarah¹³ became engaged with the Children's Programme when her mum got in contact to say she would like to explore the types of supports we offer to children. A parent meeting took place, and a support plan was developed based around Sarah's experience of domestic violence. One-to-one sessions were offered and they began straight away. The first two sessions were spent getting to know Sarah and naming that the space we provide is for working with children where there had been shouting and hurting at home. Sarah was supported to ask any questions and confidentiality was discussed and the worker made sure Sarah understood this. Sarah really thrived in this space and the sessions concluded after 10 weeks.

Mum got back in contact after a few weeks and explained to the children's worker that issues were arising for her youngest child at home, Sarah's sibling, and would like to investigate supports for this. The Children's Worker completed a parent meeting on this, and it was decided that a support called Filial Therapy¹⁴ may be the most suitable due to the age of the child. Filial Therapy is a support which looks to strengthen the relationship between parent and child. Often with domestic violence, the perpetrator can target the mother and child's relationship and it is important that there is an opportunity to support the repair of this. Mum was really open to this and understood that it would also provide her with some skills and tools to use at home to support both of her children in their recovery of domestic violence.

¹³ Not her real name.

¹⁴ Therapeutic supports are funded through donations and grants. The organisation receives no state funding for this work.



A few months after both the one-to-one sessions had concluded and Filial Therapy had ended, mum contacted the service for some advice and information. Mum explained that there had been issues ongoing around access due to the continuation of abuse in the post-separation period and it seemed to be impacting Sarah negatively in terms of her emotional wellbeing. The Children's Worker explored this with mum, and it was decided that play therapy could be offered to Sarah due to the nature of the issues that were presenting. Sarah completed 12 weeks of play therapy and at the same time mum engaged with the counselling service provided by MWRSS as she needed a space for herself to explore her experience of domestic violence.

"We Feel it Too" - A Child's Experience of Domestic Violence"

In 2022, The Children's Team applied for funding through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs Grant Programme: What Works Sharing Knowledge Initiative and were successful in their application. The team organised a seminar which aimed to raise awareness of childhood domestic violence and support practitioners in building their understanding of the child's lived experience.

The event took place in the Newgrange Hotel on the 18th of November and was attended by 70 professionals who work with families across Meath. Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD opened the event, and we had guest speakers including Dr. Stephanie Holt TCD, Dr. Eleanor Hollywood and Dr. Sonam Banka TCD, Denise Charlton CEO of the Community Foundation of Ireland and Emer McDonagh, play therapist.



Group photo: MWRSS staff, **Dr. Stephanie Holt TCD**, **Dr. Eleanor Hollywood** and **Dr. Sonam Banka TCD**, **Emer McDonagh**, play therapist and Minister for Justice **Helen McEntee T.D.**



Feedback from the participants on the day included some of the following comments:

"The use of Lego to convey the threat around DV and the number of services and individuals who may be in a position to help a child & or a family"

"It was very child focused, informative and insightful"

"I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation by Dr Stephanie Holt, I felt it resonated with some of the work we do, and I would love to speak with her further regarding access. The piece with the play therapist at the end was very insightful and practical"

"The building block exercise, it really gave you a sense of what it might feel like for a child"

"Yes, I learned a lot of how all of the abuse can filter into every part of a child's life"

"Great to view things from child's perspective which is too often overlooked"

The day provided an opportunity for the organisation to raise awareness of childhood domestic violence and share some of the experiences children and young people have had in our local area. We ensured that the voice of the child was key to each piece on the day, and we created a space where collaboration between services could take place.





TLC Kidz Project - A Joint Initiative with Drogheda Women and Children's Refuge Centre

Post Covid-19 in late November 2021, we reinstated the TLC Kidz project. The programme is a 12-week recovery programme for children who have experienced domestic abuse within their family. There is a 12-week mothers programme that runs at the same time as the children's programme. However, post Covid-19, re-establishing the project has proved very challenging with child and family services outlining the challenges facing families who are living in crisis/post crisis engaging with a group programme like TLC Kidz without undertaking the relevant pre-support one-to-one work. A decision was made in late 2022 that given the difficulties facing the programme it would be put on hold with a follow up review in 2023 regarding the next steps.

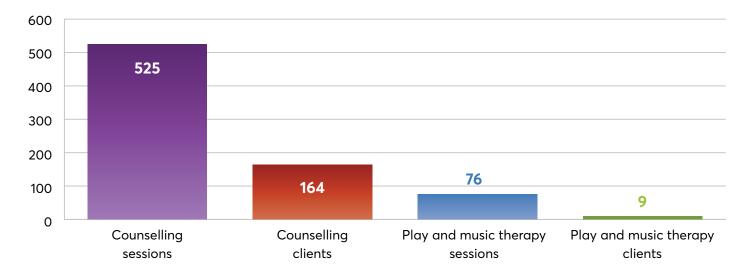


Therapeutic Recovery for Women and Children

Over the last number of years, we have increased our capacity to deliver therapeutic recovery supports to women and children. In 2022, these supports were fully funded via donations and grants received from philanthropic funding, including from companies such as META, local community organisations and local public representatives through the Municipal District Funds. In 2022, we saw an increase in the numbers of women and children accessing therapeutic services rise from 107 individuals in 2021 to 173 individuals in 2022 - an increase of 62%.

The organisation receives no core funding for therapeutic services from the state for these supports, but we believe in order for women and children to be able to move on and away from domestic abuse that therapeutic interventions are central to recovery alongside other service supports. We ask families where possible to make a \leq 10 donation per session, but this is not a block to support, and services are provided without it.

We spent just over €30,000 on these interventions in 2022 and we believe that low cost or free counselling/play and music therapy are an integral part of what we do. As can been seen below we worked with 175 clients and provided 601 sessions of support for women and children.



New Initiatives and Services

Joint Initiative with Women's Aid

In November 2022, we reinstated our joint initiative with Women's Aid and signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a project to be managed between Women's Aid and ourselves which will be managed on a day-to-day basis by our Outreach Team, entitled the High Support Project, an initiative with An Garda Síochána to provide additional supports to women at risk of harm post-separation as a result of domestic abuse. This joint initiative will begin to roll out in mid-year 2023.

Rape Crisis Northeast Joint Initiative

We began work with Rape Crisis Northeast in October to explore a joint project to establish a sexual violence counselling service in Co. Meath as currently there is no service on the ground. Those seeking counselling from Meath have travel to Co. Louth if they require face-to-face supports. In our work with women, we are noting an increase in sexual violence as part of the intimate partner violence experience, historical partner or childhood sexual violence experienced by women we are working with. The joint application submitted in December to the Tusla Child and Family Agency was successful and the new counselling service will support women, men, and children over the age of 14 years over a four-day week in Co. Meath and will be rolled out in mid-2023.

¹⁵ All therapeutic supports are funded through donations, grants, and fundraising.





Strategic Goal 3:

Technology, Infrastructure and Space

New Refuge Building

The organisation's project to develop a new purpose-built refuge and ancillary services building began in 2017 with a feasibility study and culminated in a funding application Capital Assistance Scheme or CAS application to the Department of Housing and Local Government in June 2019 which was approved in May 2020 initially for 8 units of emergency accommodation. Over the course of 2020 and 2021, we received approval to expand this project to 12 units of accommodation plus an ancillary services building.

Following recruitment of a project manager for the building in November 2021 we continued to develop the detailed design for the new building and began work on seeking finance via social financing to manage the costs. In terms of board oversight, a director of the board who is a qualified architect attends regular design team and project management meetings and reports into the board alongside the CEO on project developments.

The scale of the building which will be funded by the Department of Housing has changed and developed post-Covid-19 and we now have Department approval to include an ancillary services building. During the year significant time was spent updating the design plans and liaising with the Design Team disciplines and the Department on this.

We hope to submit a Stage 2 CAS application in the middle of 2023 for a funding allocation for the new building, which is due to be completed in 2025. This project will be the largest funded project taken on by the organisation and will take up a large focus of our work in 2024 and 2025.



This goal relates to the organisation amplifying our profile, our work and being advocates for women and children. We focused on development new digital tools to do this alongside joining up with other specialised services who were doing similar work in this regard.

Digital Developments

The organisation implemented three new digital tools to transform our way of working towards creating more accessible services and supports to women and children. Through the generous ongoing support of META, we resourced two large projects. In addition, we resourced two other digital developments to firstly increase our digital footprint and secondly to enhance cyber security.

Strategic Goal - Advocacy and Profile



E-Safe

We have worked over the last two years to bring on a new Client Relationship Management System (CRM) alongside our colleagues in other specialist domestic violence services and we moved over to this system on the 7th of March 2022 following core training across all our frontline service teams. In addition to resources from Tusla, the organisation self-funded an E-Safe administrator over a 6-month period to establish our systems with guidebooks, set up and on-site organisational training. The organisation also funded additional Salesforce licences. This new system will facilitate us to move towards a paperless client facing service with a shared system across the organisation.

VOIP Service

In September through funding via a grant from META we installed new hardware and apps to allow us to split calls across the organisation so clients and agencies could speak directly to programme areas. This had an impact on our helpline reducing the level of calls for court and outreach services with calls between 9am and 5pm going directly to the outreach team for women in the community to access. Additionally, callers were able to speak to our finance and administration team about making donations and general administration calls, thus reducing these calls coming through the helpline. In 2023, we will focus on the development of a freephone number to continue to build on accessibility to our services.

Website

Through funding from the Community Foundation of Ireland through the Comic Relief Fund for Digital Demand, we updated our website in terms of its content and its functionality through new photo images and design. We will continue to build on this in 2023, through the development of a web text function, new donation options and updating our information sources.

Cyber Security

In late July 2022, following a cyber security review, the board of directors decided to contract an IT consultant to manage and monitor our systems. Given the increased use of technology in our work it was deemed necessary to ensure that our systems are fit for purpose. The organisation will continue this work in 2023 and will begin a cyber security compliance process over the next 12 months.

Domestic Violence Accommodation Forum

Meath Women's Refuge and Support Services is a member of the Domestic Violence Accommodation Forum. The forum is a network space for domestic violence support services in the Eastern Region and a space to increase collaboration, share learning and resources. In 2022, the group met monthly, and a key highlight for 2022 was the roll out of the **Safe Space App** which is an app which shares information on the refuge spaces available in Dublin, Wicklow, Meath, and Kildare between organisations in real time and has reduced the time it takes to make referrals for refuge space in the region and has increased collaboration. The forum also developed a policy paper for the Minister for Housing on the development of step down and safe housing for women and children moving on from refuge. This was a response to the high levels of women and children moving from refuge into emergency homeless accommodation. The paper presented a nine-point plan, and we will progress the actions in 2023.



Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

(Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account)

For the Financial Year Ended 31st December 2022

Income	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
		2022 €	2022 €	2022 €	2021 €	2021 €	2021 €
CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES							
Charitable Activities (Grants from Governments and other co-founders)	3.1	183,968	868,971	1,052,939	128,244	770,295	898,539
Other Income	3.2	85	-	85	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOME		184,053	868,971	1,053,024	128,244	770,295	898,539
EXPENDITURE							
Charitable Activities	4.1	128,052	958,298	1,086,350	93,327	738,062	831,389
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		56,001	(89,327)	(33,326)	34,917	32,233	67,150
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR		56,001	(89,327)	(33,326)	34,917	32,233	67,150
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS							
Balances brought forward at 1st January 2022	14	939,303	170,020	1,109,323	904,386	137,787	1,042,173
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31ST DECEMBER 2022		995,304	80,693	1,075,997	939,303	170,020	1,109,323

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year. All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 19th May 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Richelle Manning	Sinéad Gogan
Director	Director



Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG BALANCE SHEET

As at 31st December 2022

FIXED ASSETS	Notes	2022 €	2021 €
Tangible Assets	9	733,022	738,748
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	10	30,709	13,524
Cash at bank and in hand		365,448	401,738
CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	11	(53,182)	(44,687)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		342,975	370,575
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,075,997	1,109,323
FUNDS	;		
Restricted trust funds		80,693	170,020
General fund (unrestricted)		995,304	939,303
TOTAL FUNDS	14	1,075,997	1,109,323

The total unrestricted funds includes a revaluation reserve of €(465,981) (2021 - €(465,981))

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime and in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", applying Section 1A of that Standard.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 19th May 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Richelle Manning	Sinéad Gogan
Director	Director



Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the Financial Year Ended 31st December 2022

	Notes	2021 €	2020 €
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Net movement in funds		(33,326)	67,150
Adjustments for Depreciation		5,726	20,182
Movements in working capital		(27,600)	87,332
Movement in debtors		(17,185)	48,073
Movement in creditors		8,495	(737)
Cash generated from operations		(36,290)	134,668
		,	
NET INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		(36,290)	134,668
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT 1ST JANUARY 2022		401,738	267,070
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2022	19	365,448	401,738

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

to the Members of Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the charity financial statements of Meath Women's Aid Housing Association CLG for the financial year ended 31 December 2022 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", applying Section 1A of that Standard and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the charity as at 31 December 2022 and of its deficit for the financial year then ended;
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland", as applied in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 2014 and having regard to the Charities SORP; and



Have been properly 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 described below in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) 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 charity'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.

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 course of 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

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- The information given in the Directors' Annual Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- We have obtained all the information and explanations which, to the best of our knowledge and belief, are necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the charity 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 charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified any material misstatements in the Directors' Annual Report. The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not complied with by the company. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Directors for the Financial Statements

As explained more fully in the Directors' Responsibilities Statement set out on page 8, the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework that give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as they 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 directors are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, if applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or has 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 aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Further Information Regarding the Scope of our Responsibilities as Auditor

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (Ireland), we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due
 to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit
 evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting
 a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may
 involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures
 that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the
 effectiveness of the charity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by directors.



- Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our Auditor's Report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our Auditor's Report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the
 disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events
 in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The Purpose of Our Audit Work and to Whom We Owe Our Responsibilities

Our report is made solely to the charity'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 charity'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 any responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the charity's members, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Sean Whelan FCA

For and on behalf of

WHELAN DOWLING & ASSOCIATES

Block 1, Unit 1 & 4, Northwood Court Santry Dublin 9 Ireland

