



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



## Foreword from the Chairperson

*It is with great pride we present the 2021 Annual Report for Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women.*

*Ascend continues in its work to support women affected by domestic abuse. This year we opened our first Safe House in North Tipperary. This has provided an option for women experiencing domestic abuse to stay in their locality and receive the ongoing support of Ascend NTDC. We would like to thank Tipperary County Council and Tusla for being partners on this important project..*

*I would like to commend the team of Ascend NTDC who continue to support women during the COVID -19 pandemic.. Their dedication and commitment is the central to the success of the programme.*

*Finally, I would like to thank our funders—Tusla and the Victims of Crime Commission for their ongoing support of the project.*

*Jim Finn*

*Chairperson NTDC*



## Welcome

*Welcome to our Annual Report for 2021. The effects of COVID-19 are still impacting our lives and more so in the lives of victims of domestic abuse. We have seen an overall increase in contacts in the service. We have had a number of new developments this year.*

*We have opened our new Safe House here in North Tipperary. This does not by any means fully address the emergency housing situation for women seeking refuge/safety fleeing domestic abuse. We look forward to the publishing of the Tusla Accommodation Review in 2022.*

*We have also launched our new Personal Development Group—Own My Life which has been run in April and September of 2021 and was a resounding success. We have also implemented a new CRM System called eSafe a collaboration with Enclude and Safe Ireland. We also look forward to the culmination of our One Million Stars Campaign which was launched during the 16 Days of Action campaign.*

*We look forward to another year of advocating on behalf of our clients and assisting them to move forward in their lives.*

*Kathleen Maher*

*Co-Ordinator*

*Ascend Domestic Abuse Services*

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## Service Overview



**2,207**

Contacts with  
Professionals

**94**

Helpline  
Calls

**4,459**

Total Contacts

**1,924**

Total Telephone  
Contacts

**218**

Total Outreach  
Appointments

**16**

General  
Accompaniments

**155**

New Referrals

**192**

Court Accompaniments

## **Introduction History/Mission**

Ascend Domestic Abuse Service offers confidential support services and information to women who have or are experiencing domestic abuse in their intimate relationships. Services include one to one support, a helpline, court accompaniment, provision of a safe house, information and outreach support. The service is available throughout North Tipperary including Roscrea, Nenagh and Thurles.

Ascend's primary purpose is to ensure that women have support and information about the dynamics of domestic abuse and of relevant services available so that they can make informed choices. The Service is committed to ensuring that every woman will live a life without coercive control and reclaim the power to fulfil her potential. Ascend aims to work collectively and collaboratively with women, families, communities and agencies to promote a clearer societal acknowledgement of the unacceptability of domestic abuse. Ascend aims to put the safety of women and children at the centre of our work, to empower women in their lives, and to advocate on their behalf where appropriate.

## **Governance Arrangements**

The service is a service of North Tipperary Development Company (NTDC) which is a local development company responsible for the delivery of a range of rural enterprise, social inclusion, and community development initiatives in the Tipperary North County area.

The purpose of NTDC is "to act as a voluntary, non-profit making, private limited company with a mission to promote social inclusion, promote economic development, increase employment and enterprise opportunities and promote wider participation in voluntary activity for the people of the area". Many of the programmes that form part of NTDC work collaboratively with Ascend Domestic Abuse Service such as the Traveller Programme, SICAP Programme, Family Support Project, Youth Project, Community Childcare, Jobs Club with many clients referred from these projects and likewise signposted to these services also by Ascend staff. It is a source of great reassurance to have so many resources on hand to assist our service users in matters other than support for Domestic Abuse. We are also a member of Safe Ireland which is a network of thirty eight member services across Ireland providing support to female victims of domestic abuse.

## **Services offered by Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women**

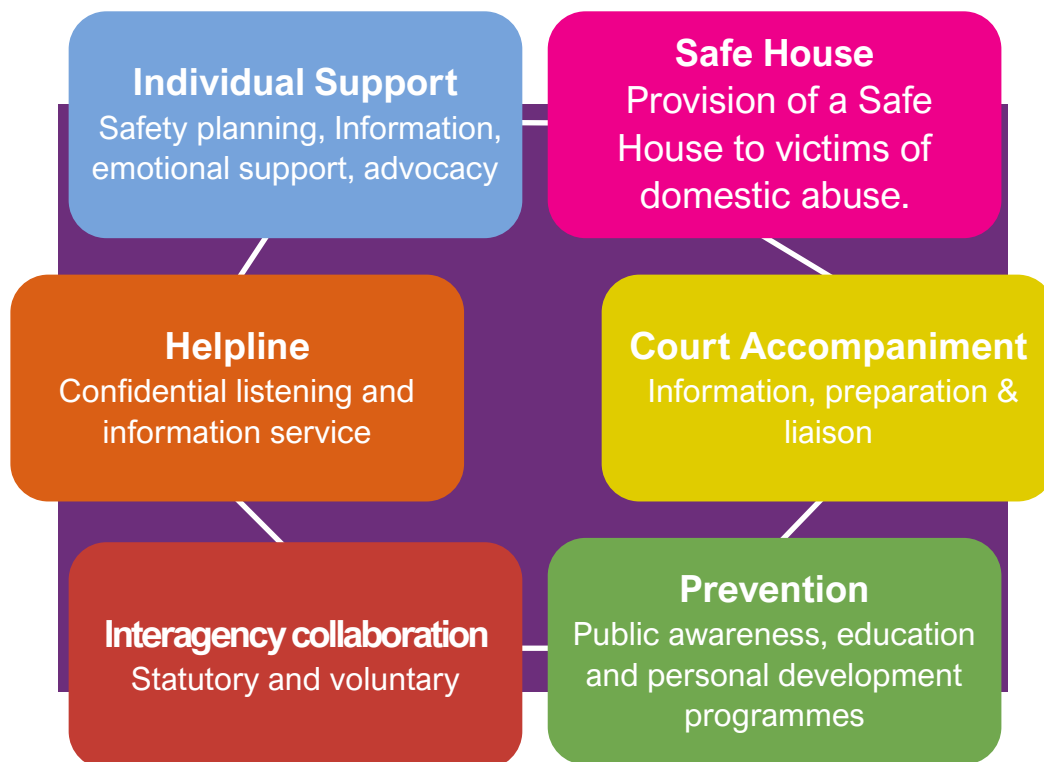
Ascend supported three hundred and thirty four women in 2021. Cases are reviewed every quarter and cases closed as deemed appropriate. One hundred and fifty five new clients contacted the service in 2021. Most new clients seek information on their options, about court, housing and children's supports. Many women require more understanding in relation to the issue and wish to develop their coping strategies.

Ascend offers a confidential listening and information telephone service where women have the opportunity to discuss their circumstances. The ADAPT Services Helpline number is available on the Ascend answering machine for clients who need support outside of our working hours. All calls are responded to in a timely fashion. In 2021, Ascend offered telephone support on 1,924 occasions; and received 94 calls on our helpline numbers. There were 218 outreach appointments and 2,207 contacts made with professionals regarding clients' issues. We accompanied clients on 16 occasions (excluding court) to meet with professionals and agencies such as Barnardos, Child Protection, Court Clerk, Estate

Agents, Family Support, Gardaí, GP's, Housing, Legal Aid, Solicitors, and Social Work. We provide a translation service for those who's first language is not English.

If women wish to discuss their situation in person they can make an appointment with Ascend to meet anywhere in North Tipperary. Ascend staff meet service users at an appropriate safe location apart from the service users' home. Ascend provides emotional support to women with a support service that listens to them and believes them. The Service helps women get clarity on their situation. Service users are given information about their options. Every service user receives a safety and risk assessment with specific questions. A safety plan is created in consultation with them. This is done either in person or during initial contact which can be made over the phone.

If Ascend staff have concerns about a woman's safety or that of their children, they make a referral to specialised services within Tusla. Staff at Ascend do not provide legal advice or counselling services. Ascend also accompany women and participate in child welfare conferences and other relevant meetings as requested by service users and agencies. Ascend makes referrals to TLC Kidz, Barnardos, counselling services, Pieta House and any other relevant agencies according to the service users' needs. They also provide support with regard to the following agencies: referral to a refuge, or alternative temporary housing through Social Work, Social Welfare, Housing and Homeless Services, Child Protection, Gardaí, Legal Aid, St. Vincent de Paul, family support and many others. Ascend staff liaise with an average of four professionals per case whilst also providing clients with many other interagency contacts to explore their options. Ascend offers service users the opportunity to participate in a Personal Development course where they can meet other women in a similar situation.



## Court Accompaniment

Ascend offer a Court accompaniment service through which the staff accompany the service user in court. This service can provide the following to women:

- ♦ give women a clear understanding of the procedures of court
- ♦ accompany women to appointments with solicitors at service users request
- ♦ explain the different court orders to women
- ♦ explain what is required of women by the Courts when Orders are granted
- ♦ provide on-going service to women throughout their court history and follow-up at their request.
- ♦ Attending domestic abuse hearings with the woman.

Ascend supports women in court on matters relating to domestic violence, maintenance, child access, separation and divorce.

There were 192 court accompaniments in 2021. Ascend NTDC staff attended court/provided support to clients in court on 75 occasions last year. Staff members were in court over 110 hours in total. 67 Clients received court accompaniment in 2021 with some availing of the service once and many being accompanied to court several times over the course of the year.

Women attended court for a range of needs including applying for protection, safety and barring orders under the Domestic Violence Act 2018, and maintenance and child access. The service continues to engage with solicitors and court staff to get better outcomes for clients.

Court work continues to be a vital and critical support to women accessing the Ascend service.

Service Users have given personal testimonies of the value they put on this service.

*"Only for the people of Ascend, I don't really know if I would be here today."*

*""Always made themselves ,available providing honest constant support . I knew I was listened to and I was never doubted ."*

Under the Victim's Directive clients of Ascend have access to a separate room for District and Circuit Court Hearings in Nenagh and Thurles Courthouses whilst waiting for their hearing/applications. A support person can also go into the courtroom with the service user on foot of a domestic violence application. They will be able to remain at the judge's discretion.

## Data Collection

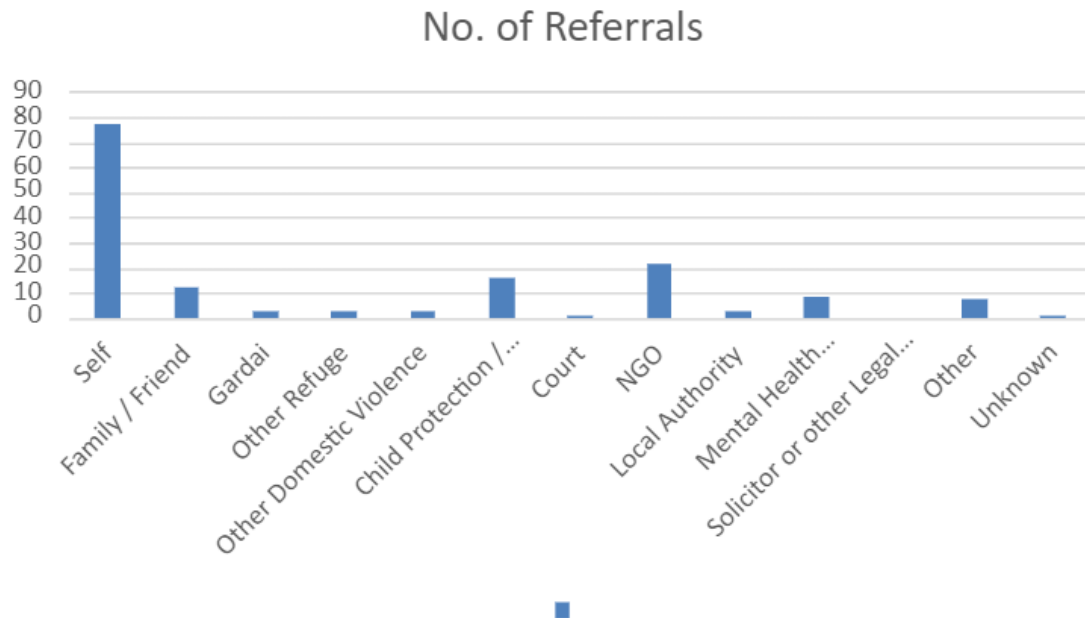
Ascend has engaged with the eSafe programme (a collaboration with Safe Ireland and Enclude) which is an integrated information solution led by Safe Ireland and we have the database in place since November 2021. We are excited for this new development to reflect the diversity and trends of our work and help determine future direction and needs.



## Referrals

We received 155 referrals in 2021.

We received 16 referrals from Tusla Social Work Department in 2021. Ascend have liaised with various social workers and team leaders throughout 2021 in relation to mutual cases and have found this networking to be of benefit.



## Funding

Ascend receives core funding from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The service also receives funding from the Victims Commission and Healthy Ireland. We received two small donations this year from Nenagh CBS and Roscrea Youth Service. We also got a grant from Mid West Drug Task Force of €1,000 to run the Personal Development Course.

## SAFE Ireland

Ascend is a member of SAFE Ireland, the national umbrella body for Domestic Abuse services. We continue to attend regular Manager Meetings and collaborate on issues relating to domestic abuse.

## Ascend Advisory Group

This group was created as a response to Ascend's Strategic Plan to inform the work of Ascend through interagency collaboration. This group has met four times in 2021 and meetings were well attended. Representatives attended regularly from the MWDAF (Mid West Drug Alcohol Forum), Silver Arch Family Resource Centre, North Tipperary Housing Department, HSE Mental Health Services, Gardaí, NTDC, HSE Primary Health Care, Mid West Rape Crisis Centre, Citizens Information Centre, Barnardos, Courts Service, Tusla Social Work and the Legal Aid Board.

## Committee Participation

Ascend has worked in partnership with Tusla Social Work, Housing, Court Services, Gardaí, Social Protection and other local services in supporting clients and raising awareness of Ascend's work in 2021.

Ascend participated in the TLC Kidz Steering Group meetings in 2021. Ascend has worked to strengthen and develop their interagency work with other local Domestic Abuse Services – Adapt and Cuan Saor through participation, engagement and training.

We also sit on two CYSPC Sub – Groups. CYSPC is the Young People Services Committee for Tipperary.

We also attend all Homeless Action Team meetings held twice a month.

We also sit on the North Tipperary Connecting For Life Sub Group which was established in 2021

## Awareness Raising

Every opportunity was taken to provide various professionals with information on the nature and complexity of domestic abuse while also responding appropriately to clients concerns and situations. Ascend literature was distributed at each event.

- Presentation to TLC Kidz Barnardos Mothers Group– on our Personal Development Group and Coercive Control (group request).
- Presentation to TLC Kidz Teenage Group on Sexting.
- Presentation to Jigsaw North Tipperary.
- Presentation to Roscrea Community Area Partnership.
- Three appearances on Tipp FM – 06/01, 25/11.
- Newspaper Article in Nenagh Guardian – 19/04/21 for Go Purple Day.
- Newspaper Article for One Million Stars Project—24/11/21. Nenagh Guardian, Tipperary Star and Midland Tribune.
- Presentation to CARMHA Nenagh on Ascend service.
- Presentation to Borrisokane Health Centre.
- Presentation to Coolmine Mid West.

## Drug Education and Awareness Sessions with Staff in 2021

In late 2020, a number of agencies made presentations in 2020—CSMT, Saoirse, Ana Liffey and HSE Drug and Alcohol Service. Also in 2021, we had a presentation with Coolmine where they told us about their service too. Following from that, we updated our Drug and Alcohol Policy to accommodate our new service—the Safe House. This was done in consultation with Anna O'Neill, Education Worker (HSE) and Rionach Power, (MWDAF-Mid West Drug Alcohol Forum).

## Go Purple Day

Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> was designated as Go Purple Day, a national day of awareness for local domestic violence services, including Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women (NTDC) in North Tipperary. People, businesses, and schools were encouraged to wear purple, bake purple, grow purple, paint purple, whatever they like to show their support for their local domestic violence service. This Awareness Day was promoted via Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women through social media channels. “This Go Purple Day has given people another easy, fun way to continue to support our work in keeping women and children safe here in Tipperary.”



- Our social media presence is as follows:



**399**  
followers



**492**  
followers

**3,377**  
website visits



**3,373**  
followers

## Image Based Sexual Abuse Webinar with Caroline West

Ascend Domestic Abuse Services – North Tipperary were delighted to be able to host the webinar – “*Image Based Sexual Abuse Webinar*” - facilitated by Dr. Caroline West in collaboration with our SICAP Department in NTDC. We were delighted with the overwhelming attendance with over 100 individuals registering for the event.

Dr. Caroline West [Dr. Caroline West \(iamcarolinewest.com\)](http://iamcarolinewest.com). has taught this topic at UL, NUIG, DKIT, UCD, DCU, Maynooth, IT Sligo, AIT, as well as with an NHS trust in Northern Ireland.. The workshop was of interest to **teenagers (over 16)**, their parents and professionals working in the area.

The topics covered were as follows:

What revenge porn is, why we need to rename it, what the new legislation says, and how we can support victims emotionally and practically. This is an issue that is on the rise rapidly in Ireland and we need to work to ensure people understand that this act can have very damaging consequences. Rape culture and victim blaming was also discussed, and participants explored how they can take steps to build a consent culture.

Feedback included as follows:

*“A very informative, clear webinar is happening now about Image Based Sexual Abuse, Consent...well done to Ascend for hosting this. Great step.”*

**IMAGE BASED SEXUAL ABUSE WEBINAR**

- New Coco's Law explained
- Rape Culture & Victim Blaming
- Building a Consent Culture
- Webinar Format - opportunity for anonymous Q&A afterwards

With Dr. Caroline West

**APRIL 20TH @ 7PM**

**NTDC**  
North Tipperary  
Development Company

**SICAP**  
Social Inclusion & Community Activation  
Programme

**Ascend**



## 16 Days of Action—Webinar

Ascend Domestic Abuse Services – North Tipperary were delighted to be able to host the webinar – “*Responding to Coercive Control*” - facilitated by Dr. Emma Katz in collaboration with Tusla and Barnardos. We were delighted with the overwhelming attendance with over 500 individuals registering for the event. Feedback included as follows:

*“I found the webinar very useful and helpful in bringing recent research to the audience. Dr. Katz is a wonderful presenter with very useful presentation material. I will make webinar link and presentation slides available to my work colleagues.”*

*Thank you and your team for making the webinar happen. Much appreciated.”*

*“Thanks so much for this invaluable resource for staff. I attended the presentation and was so impressed with the validation of all that we do and a little bit more knowledge and some impacts and issues were definitely contextualised. Please pass on my gratitude to Kathleen and all in Ascend yourselves in North Tipperary Development Company for arranging this workshop.”*

# RESPONDING TO COERCIVE CONTROL WITH DR. EMMA KATZ

For Professionals in  
North Tipperary &  
beyond.

- What is coercive control?
- How can we respond as professionals?
- How Coercive Control continues to harm children and mothers post-separation.



Friday 26th November, 2021 @ 2PM  
Info: [ascend@ntdc.ie](mailto:ascend@ntdc.ie)



## TLC Kidz

TLC Kidz is a 12-week Group work Programme for Children and their Mothers who have experienced Domestic Abuse. The emphasis is to support women in the knowledge of how to best help their child in healing from the impact of abuse. It is a multi-agency programme with participation from Barnardos, Ascend Domestic Abuse service, Tusla - Child and Family agency, Silver Arch Family Resource Centre, School completion programme and Youth Work Ireland – Tipperary. During the 12-week group work programme, the children's and mother's group run concurrently. It is open to children between the ages of 5-16 (in appropriate age groups) depending on availability, children who live in North Tipperary and those for whom separation has occurred and the perpetrator no longer resides at the family home. Ascend sits on the TLC Kidz steering group and makes referrals to the programme. Also, one staff member co-facilitates the children's group on a weekly basis.

More information is available on [www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-with-families/tlc-kidz](http://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-with-families/tlc-kidz).

## Healthy Relationships Programme

According to Awareness Raising of Domestic and Sexual Violence: A Survey of Post-Primary Schools in Ireland research carried out by COSC<sup>1</sup>, the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence in 2012, the second level curriculum in Ireland does not cover the issue of relationships and safe dating.

Ascend delivers a Healthy Relationships programme for Transition Year students, girls and boys, to promote self-esteem, help them identify abusive behaviour and signpost services. The sessions are interactive and engaging for the young people, promoting discussion and reflective learning. The topics covered include: recognising the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship, consent and communication in relationships, examining the role of

## Healthy Relationships Programme

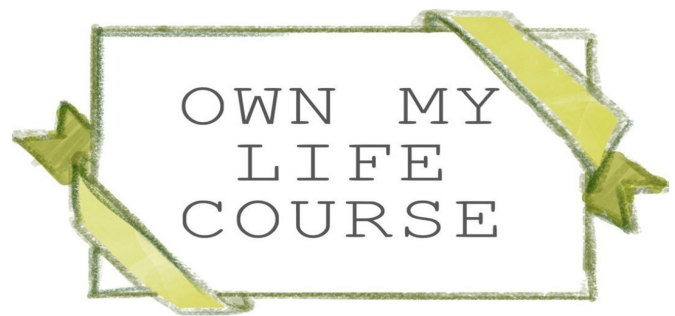


media and pornography in shaping their perception of relationships, how to keep safe on social media, and how to help a friend.

The programme runs over a six week period. In 2021/2022 academic year, this programme was delivered to 681 TY (transition year) students in Youthreach Thurles, Our Lady's Templemore, St. Joseph's Borrisoleigh, Borrisokane Community College, Newport Community College, Convent of Mercy Newport, Nenagh CBS, Thurles CBS, Presentation Thurles, Nenagh College, Colaiste Phobal Roscrea, Cistercians Roscrea.

### **Personal Development Group**

Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women have unveiled a new Personal Development Group in 2021. We have ran this programme twice this year—in April and September. Both of these groups were delivered online via zoom. The programme is [www.ownmylifecourse.org](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org). This is a 12 week online or in-person course to help women who have been subjected to abuse to regain ownership of their lives. We have produced a youtube video promoting the course.



<https://youtu.be/DcTFf6DBH0k>

### **Safe House**

We are delighted that our Safe House has opened since July 2021. We have also employed a part-time Safe House Support Worker on a pilot basis. We are hoping that this position will be made a more permanent basis in 2022. Since we opened in July, one woman stayed in the house and was successful in getting accommodation. A new family have now moved in and we are assisting the family to find a more permanent home along with ongoing support for the family.

### **Supervised Access Study**

There is a need for a supervised access centre in North Tipperary, a place for families to meet during access times which is safe, can reduce conflict and improve trust and communication. This results in improved bonding and a better relationship between child and the non resident parent. A feasibility study was recently completed and published called the Child Handover Access Needs & Feasibility Study for North Tipperary. Tipperary CYPSC contributed funding towards the cost of this feasibility study.



## Launch of One Million Stars Campaign

**Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women & Cuan Saor Women's Refuge & Support Services Clg come together to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Supports across the County.**

Cuan Saor and Ascend Domestic Abuse Service marked the 16 days of Activism of Violence Against Women by launching a joint all-county awareness raising initiative 'One Million Stars Project' on 25th November 2021.

### One Million Stars: The Story

The One Million Stars to End Violence Project was established by Maryann Talia Pau, a Samoan-Australian artist, in response to the rape and murder of an Irish Woman in Melbourne Australia. In Samoan culture, the star is a symbol of light, hope and solidarity. The project used star weaving to rebuild trust within the community. In 2020 Siobhan McQuillan working with Amber Women's Refuge, brought the project to Kilkenny. Since then, it has been extended to many counties and in 2021 both Ascend and Cuan Saor felt it was a project that would raise awareness of both services in Co. Tipperary ensuring that women who are experiencing domestic violence are fully aware that there is help within their community. Secondary Schools across the county have embraced the project with great energy and are coming up with creative ideas on how to display the stars on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (International Women's Day).





# Covid-19 - Other Service Developments

The COVID-19 Pandemic has seen new policy and new funds available to help women who are experiencing domestic abuse.

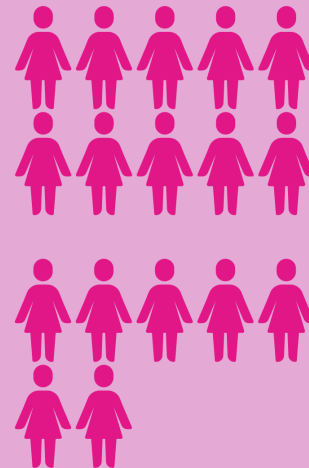


## SAFE IRELAND SURVIVOR FUND

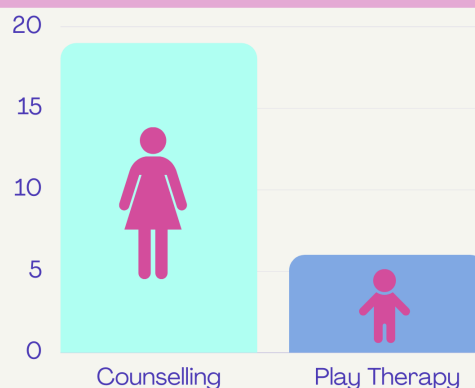
individual women who need immediate practical assistance such as transport, clothes, food which statutory bodies would have already refused. Ten women benefitted €9,258.43 total fund distributed amongst these women.

### BOBF-CYPSC Grant

Seven women and their children benefitted from this grant giving practical assistance e.g. vouchers total received - €1,985.74



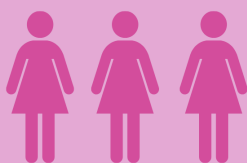
## THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS



*19 women accessed counselling through our service and 6 children accessed play therapy.*

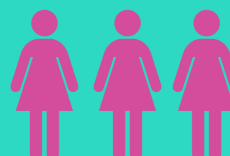
## AIRBNB SCHEME

3 women and their families accessed emergency Airbnb accommodation



## DV RENT SUPPLEMENT

3 women and their families were approved and took up the DV Rent Supplement scheme.



## Testimonials

*"Thanks to all the good, caring people in Ascend and the people, like myself, who were so fortunate to have found ASCEND. I would never have got through the tough times without all of you. Feel free to post this where it will be seen and to let people know that there is HOPE along the way."*

*"My work colleagues advised me to contact Ascend and when I did I was seen within minutes of my call. I haven't looked back since. Kathleen greeted me in a very kind and caring manner ... the staff of Ascend have the tools to help me move forward in a non-judgemental way. This organisation is now part of my life for the rest of my life and one day I may be able to give back and will gladly do so."*

*"They gave me a place to feel safe until I sorted out issues I had going on in my life...They were always there for me. I was believed right from get go and supported throughout"*

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following:

The CEO and Staff of North Tipperary Development Company for their ongoing collaboration and support.

The Board of Management of North Tipperary Development Company for their guidance and assistance.

Dairine Cross, Tusla Co-ordinator for her ongoing support and assistance.

The Ascend Advisory Group who give the time and input into our organisation.

The volunteers of Ascend Domestic Abuse whose commitment is much appreciated.

Those who fundraise for Ascend—we are very thankful.

To our partners in the statutory, community and voluntary sector locally in North Tipperary and nationally.

To Safe Ireland with whom we collaborate with so they can advocate for us on a national level.

Finally, to the women who engage with Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women. Thank you for choosing us to journey with you at this time.



## Appendix One—Training Attended 2021

- eSafe Workshops and Training
- Trauma Informed Training – for all staff team. Trauma Informed Care Ireland.
- In house training sessions on Microsoft Teams and Zoom.
- Own My Life Facilitator Training – two staff members.
- Inhouse training session on Social Media hosted by an external specialist. – Red PR.
- NTDC Induction Training
- NTDC Covid Training
- In house website training.
- Domestic Violence Awareness Training – Women’s Aid.
- Non-Violent Resistance Training
- Trauma through a DV lens – ADAPT Training
- Domestic Violence Awareness Training – Adapt.
- Child Protection Training and Designated Liaison Person Training – Barnardos
- First Aid Training – refresher
- Understanding Self Harm
- UL Housing Law Module
- Unpacking Coercive Control – Safe Ireland
- Traveller Culture Workshop – Tusla.
- Domestic Violence and Child Protection Training for Professionals - TCD

## Appendix 2—Webinars Attended 2021

- Webinar on Alcohol as a response to Childhood Trauma. – Alcohol Forum.
- Building A Family Law System for Children Webinar – One Family
- Community of Practice – Barnardos and Webinar Empowering Children – June 2021.
- Stalking Webinar – 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- One in Four Lunch Time Series on - Barriers Clients who have experienced Sexual Abuse face.
- Supporting parents with Intellectual Disabilities – Barnardos – Jim Gogarty.
- One in Four Lunch time Webinar – Felicity Kennedy 30mins – Barriers to Clients who have experienced CSA attending therapy.
- Empowering Children Webinar – Barnardos
- DAHLIA-19 – DOMESTIC ABUSE: Harnessing Learning Internationally under COVID-19.
- Community of Practice. *“Engaging with fathers who are abusive in their intimate partner relationships”*
- Community of Practice – Barnardos and Webinar Supporting Children’s Rights – November 2021.
- Family Law Webinar – Migrant Rights Ireland.
- The Separation Network Series of webinars on Family Law.
- Culture Reframed Conference – the reality of the pornography industry.
- Tusla Child Protection e-learning briefing for professionals.

## Appendix 3—References

- <http://www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/Cosc%20Report%20-%20Awareness%20Raising%20of%20Domestic%20and%20Sexual%20Violence%20-%20A%20Survey%20of%20Post-primary%20Schools%20in%20Ireland.pdf/Files/Cosc%20Report%20-%20Awareness%20Raising%20of%20Domestic%20and%20Sexual%20Violence%20-%20A%20Survey%20of%20Post-primary%20Schools%20in%20Ireland.pdf>