

## What You Can Do To Help Us Reduce Domestic Abuse in West Clare!

The West Clare Women's Forum have produced a short drama entitled *Break the Silence* depicting several areas of abuse experienced in the home. We also got funding from the Health Service Executive - Mid West Region to produce a video of the drama and tapes are available for purchase. We have performed the drama on several occasions for various groups around the country. Amongst these was an event hosted by the Carlow Local Network on Violence Against Women. The following is an excerpt taken from their report on our performance:

"Perhaps the lasting legacy of the event will be those 10 minutes when the drama unfolded, in vivid and explosive detail, the reality for so many women and their children of emotional, physical and sexual violence in the home, as well as isolation and financial deprivation. It truly was a remarkable and a thought provoking presentation and will undoubtedly lead to greater awareness and action on the ground."

**You can help us in our efforts to reduce domestic abuse in West Clare by inviting us to perform the drama for your work colleagues, your community group, your parish council, your GAA Club, a group of friends, a group of neighbours - any group of people at all, in almost any location. We also have a video of the drama which you can buy or borrow from the EIRÍ office in Kilkee. For more information contact Mary Farren on 065 905 6611.**

## Please, break the silence!

If you, or someone you know is living with any of type of abuse, please talk about it. Talk to a friend, a relative, or a professional. Whichever is easiest, but please talk to someone... As soon as you can!

### Where to get help:

**Women's Aid  
Freephone 1800 341 900**

Open 7 days a week 10am—10pm, except Christmas Day.

**Clare Haven Services  
065 682 2435**

- Support and Information to look at your options.
- A safe place to stay.

Outreach Clinics operates in **Kilkee - Kilrush** - every other Thursday.

**Phone for an appointment**

**Kilrush Gardaí - 065 908 0550**

**Your Doctor.**

- The West Clare Women's Forum is distressed by the lack of awareness about the levels of domestic abuse being endured in West Clare.
- West Clare Women's Forum  
c/o EIRÍ  
Community Centre,  
Circular Road, Kilkee, Co. Clare



The West Clare Women's Forum believes that all people should have equal opportunity to maximise their potential.

West Clare  
Women's  
Forum

# HOW DOMESTIC ABUSE AFFECTS CHILDREN IN WEST CLARE.



The West Clare Women's Forum believes in the right to challenge inequality in our society.

***Have you ever felt fear? Real fear?  
Have you ever been afraid of  
someone who is close to you? Are  
you afraid of someone who shares  
your home, your bed, your life?  
If the answer is 'yes' and you have  
children, you need to know how it  
can affect them...***

Children who witness regular acts of domestic violence have greater emotional and behavioural problems than other children. Even very young children can be profoundly frightened and affected. Contrary to popular belief, young children do have the ability to remember, and won't just 'forget' about an episode of violence.

### **Short term effects of domestic violence**

A child's response to repeated domestic violence depends on a number of factors, including their age, gender, personality and family role. Some of the immediate effects may include:

- ◆ Blaming themselves for the violence
- ◆ Sleeping difficulties, such as nightmares
- ◆ Regression to an earlier stage of development, such as thumb sucking
- ◆ Bed wetting
- ◆ Increased anxiety or fearfulness
- ◆ Aggressive or destructive behaviour
- ◆ Withdrawal from people and events
- ◆ Bullying at school
- ◆ Cruelty to animals
- ◆ Stress related illnesses, such as headache or stomach pain
- ◆ Speech difficulties, such as stuttering
- ◆ Drug or alcohol abuse.

### **Long term effects of domestic violence**

A child growing up in an abusive household learns to handle problems with violence. Some of the long term effects may include copying their parental role models and behaving in much the same destructive ways in their adult relationships. For example, a boy who witnessed his father regularly abusing his mother may feel that violence towards a partner is acceptable. However, not all children who grow up in abusive homes will grow up to abuse others.

### **Drug and alcohol abuse**

Around one third of parents who misuse drugs or alcohol also abuse their children. Not all parents with a drug addiction intentionally hurt their children. For some, the addiction is so overwhelming that it takes priority over everything else, including looking after their children's needs. Any parent who uses drugs will exhibit unpredictable behaviours, and children need consistency if they are to develop trust and a sense of security. Some of the effects of parental drug and alcohol abuse on the child may include:

- ◆ Failure to thrive
- ◆ School and learning problems
- ◆ Emotional problems such as anxiety or stress
- ◆ Loss of trust in adults
- ◆ Increased risk of mental illness or suicide in later life
- ◆ Increased risk of substance abuse.

### **Take action to stop the violence**

Domestic violence does not resolve itself. If you take action against domestic violence, it shows your child that abuse is not acceptable and should be stopped. There are professional organisations that can help both partners confront and change their destructive behaviours. If the abused partner fears for their safety, or for the safety of their children, it is important to take time away from home as soon as possible. See your doctor for

advice and referral, or call a parenting or domestic violence helpline. A parent with a substance addiction needs professional treatment, including counselling or medical detoxification. In the meantime, keep all harmful substances out of the reach of children.

### **How to help your child**

You can help your child emotionally recover from domestic violence in many ways, including:

- ◆ Protect them from violence by taking them out of home if necessary.
- ◆ Tell them that abusive behaviour is wrong.
- ◆ Reassure them that none of the violent episodes were their fault in any way.
- ◆ Tell them how much you love them and cuddle them often.
- ◆ Encourage them to talk openly about their feelings. Get extra help for their schooling.
- ◆ Enlist a trusted adult to provide your child with emotional support.
- ◆ Seek professional help, such as counselling.

### **Things to remember**

- ◆ Children who witness regular acts of domestic violence have greater emotional and behavioural problems than other children. Some of the immediate effects may include nightmares, anxiety, withdrawal and bed wetting.
- ◆ Taking action against domestic violence shows your child that abuse is not acceptable and should be stopped.
- ◆ There is a helpline just for children called Childline. It is free and confidential. Freephone 1800 666 666

The West Clare Women's Forum is Supported by:

EIRI Corca Baiscinn



**HSE Regional Planning  
Committee**