Changing Culture and Transforming the Response to Domestic Violence in Ireland

A Vision Strategy & Strategic Priorities

2015-2020
OUR CORE VISION
Towards a SAFE & VIBRANT Ireland for all
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Foreword

SAFE Ireland has a clear ambition. We want to change culture and transform the response to Domestic Violence in Ireland. We believe that Ireland can be the safest country in the world for women and children.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations (UN) explicitly define Domestic Violence as a gender based violence, which is driven by cultures of gender inequality and gender bias across society and which disproportionately affects women and children. Domestic Violence occurs in every culture, among all age groups and relationships.

Domestic violence is a largely unprosecuted, under reported and undocumented crime in Ireland. 79% of victims in Ireland have never disclosed to anyone about serious physical or sexual violence by a partner. Domestic Violence is pervasive in our country and it needs to be stopped.

Our current whole system response to victims is fragmented and falls significantly short of what victims need to increase their safety and well being.

If we want an Ireland free of violence against women and their children, we have to challenge and change our current whole system response.

Over the last 10 years SAFE Ireland and its members has brought about significant beneficial changes for victims in frontline practice, awareness raising, legislation and policy relating to Domestic Violence.

SAFE Ireland and its members working with key allies have the capacity, knowledge, knowhow and credibility to change culture, prevent violence and transform the whole system response to the safety and well being needs of the hundreds of thousands of women and children experiencing Domestic Violence in Ireland.

There have been welcome developments in policy, legislation, awareness and recognition of the complexity of Domestic Violence. This work must continue. Ireland’s commitments under the Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women and the EU Victims Directive must be met. This strategy will play a key role in helping to deliver on those commitments.

Over the next 5 years SAFE Ireland will work in collaboration with our members, allies, government departments, state agencies and relevant stakeholders to progress our change and transformation agenda.

SAFE Ireland will achieve this transformation by changing social behaviour and attitudes, securing a whole system response to the issue of domestic violence, cultivating leadership through champions at all levels in Irish society and by deepening and communicating our understanding of the problem and enhancing all our capacity to respond.

It is a human right of every single individual to live free from violence. It is only by working together that we can transform the response to violence against women and their children in this country.
Introduction

SAFE Ireland believes that Ireland can be the safest country in the world for women and children.

SAFE Ireland has a clear ambition.

We want to change dramatically the way we all listen to, think about, acknowledge, support and respond to the thousands of women and children who are living every day with violence and abuse in their homes.

Over the next five years we want to inspire new leadership and new champions to work with us to prevent and eliminate Domestic Violence (DV) in Ireland.
The Story So Far…

Determined Ambition - SAFE Ireland has a clear ambition. That ambition is all encompassing. It can be transformative. It is all too urgent and it is all too important.

We want to change dramatically the way we all listen to, think about, acknowledge, support and respond to the thousands of women and children who are living every day with violence and abuse in their own homes. We want to inspire new leadership and new Champions to work with us to prevent and eliminate Domestic Violence. Our focus is on impact – all of our work will be measured and evaluated to determine that it raises awareness, prevents abuse, influences progressive policies and systems, and changes hearts and minds so that violence is no longer tolerated.

The Safest Country for Women and Children… SAFE Ireland believes that Ireland can be the safest country in the world for women and children.

We are a small country with huge potential. We thrive on connections. We pride ourselves on community. We face challenges with innovation, intelligence and resourcefulness. We can use these enormous national strengths to stand together against domestic violence.
About Us

SAFE Ireland is the National Social Change Agency working on Domestic Violence in Ireland. We are working innovatively and strategically to transform culture and the response to gender based violence (GBV) in Ireland. Our particular GBV focus is on male violence against women and children in intimate/close relationships.

We have evolved from a network of service providers to a leading social change agency working in close collaboration with 40 frontline domestic violence services across communities in Ireland. We have invested in leadership, governance, research and organisational development in order to respond to the complexities of addressing domestic violence in Ireland. We continue to develop links and relationships with key thinkers and innovators, nationally and internationally.

We are directly linked to women and children who experience Domestic Violence. We respond to thousands of women and children affected by Domestic Violence in Ireland annually. We work to bring public voice and understanding to the causes and impact of Domestic Violence.

We understand that it is a human right of every single individual to live free from violence. It is only by working together and developing key strategic partnerships that we can transform the response to violence against women in this country. We absolutely believe that Ireland has the potential to be one of the safest countries in the world for women and children.

The Role of SAFE Ireland is…. 

- To work with frontline domestic violence services across Ireland to provide state of the art and sustainable responses to women and children.

- To identify and understand what drives and contributes to domestic violence and violence against women in Ireland.

- To provide evidence-based guidance to government, the private sector, civil society and communities on how to strategically and effectively lead, co-ordinate, resource and support prevention efforts across Ireland.

- To inform and support the development of policy and legislation, prevention strategies, programming and advocacy that targets and seeks to reduce the drivers of domestic violence and violence against women.
Organisational Strengths

The Board of Directors of SAFE Ireland (SI) holds a strong vision to transform the response to Domestic Violence in Ireland … ‘leaving no stone unturned.’

The Board shows key leadership abilities in working with and maintaining a diverse membership in a strategic change process.

The Board is courageous in questioning its organisational structure - ‘what organisation best holds a transformative change agenda.’

The Board is efficient and effective in managing resources.

SI is accountable, value for money with strong governance structures and procedures in place within the organisation.

SI has a strong, creative and flexible staff team and an innovative consultancy panel working on various projects.

SI is an enquiring organisation which is developing a body of knowledge about the causes, impacts and consequences of Domestic Violence. This body of knowledge is enabling us to develop innovative strategies that prioritise prevention of Domestic Violence in the first instance.

SI has a proven track record in achieving social change.

SI has established a strong national social movement for change with 40 community based Domestic Violence Services across 26 counties in Ireland. Our transformative vision for a safe Ireland is at the core of this social movement.

SI is responsible for a significant increase in public awareness of the prevalence of Domestic Violence in Ireland. In the past 3 years the Man Up Campaign has achieved extensive reach across the country and SI’s work has gained consistent and impactful attention in the media including the launch in March 2015 of the ‘Lawlessness of the Home’ report.

SI has an emerging reputation in delivering research which sets the agenda for policy change and systems reform. Through our capacity to centre stage women and children’s experiences, and through strong collaborations with leading academics we have produced groundbreaking research relating to women’s needs, legal system failings, and the impact of trauma.

SI has driven clear shifts in getting the issue of Domestic Violence onto the political and statutory agenda through extensive lobbying and submissions of evidence based recommendations.
Examples of SAFE Ireland’s achievements in the last 3 years include:

| An Taoiseach has committed to a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Domestic Violence following a series of engagements with SI. |
| Domestic Violence law reform and the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention are now prioritised by the Minister for Justice and Equality. |
| The Irish government now has a statutory duty to protect and care for victims of Domestic Violence through the establishment of Tusla (2014). |
| There is now more streamlining and ring fencing of Domestic Violence funding to reduce the duplication of administrative work for frontline services. |
| Changes were made to legislation to remove the eligibility barrier for women who already own a property but who cannot safely live there (2014). |
| Influencing the Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality to produce their first report and recommendations on Domestic Violence. |
| Changes in legislation to include exposure to Domestic Violence as a criterion for determining abusive parent’s access and custody rights. |
| Negotiation of national public awareness guidelines which have been mainstreamed by the Department of Justice and Equality. |
| Approval of 34 recommendations by the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women to progress reform of the legal system’s response to Domestic Violence. |
| SI has increased the capacity of its network of community based organisations to centre stage women and children in awareness raising campaigns in their local communities, bringing a greater visibility and consistent message in many parts of the country. This is most recently demonstrated in the powerful impacts of rolling out the Man Up campaign across communities in Ireland. |
| SI with its members developed a framework for and a set of nationally agreed principles and standards for Domestic Violence service delivery. |
| We have developed strong international relationships with policy makers, researchers, national NGOs and global corporations who are interested in driving change at a national and international level with us. In 2014, we hosted the US White House Advisor on Violence Against Women and through her visit we held a series of engagements with An Taoiseach, Tánaiste and the Minister for Justice and Equality. |
| We have developed clear ways and processes of working based on dialogue, relationship, trust and integrity. We have engaged and worked with ‘resistance’ rather than ignoring it and over time we have gained support through engaging with tough questions and creating spaces for dialogue. |
The 2014 European Study Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) gives the first robust reported prevalence data on Domestic Violence in Ireland. (1,500 face to face interviews with women in Ireland).

- Of these 1 in 3 reported some form of psychological violence by a male partner and 1 in 4 reported some form of physical and sexual violence by a partner or non partner.

- 79% of women never reported a serious physical or sexual assault by a partner or non partner to anyone.

- In 2014, 9,448 women and 3,088 children received support from a Domestic Violence service in Ireland - According to the FRA only between 8% and 12% of women report to DV services.

- Tusla established with a statutory responsibility to protect and support victims of Domestic Violence.

- Strong cohesion across DV sector for SI’s role as a national change agent.

- Board of SAFE Ireland holding vision for a total transformation of the response to Domestic Violence.

- Irish government has signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

- The EU Directive on Victims Rights requires Ireland to make a wide range of provisions to strengthen Victim’s rights and supports.
• More political leadership than in previous governments. An Taoiseach has met with SAFE Ireland and committed to establishing a Cabinet Sub-Committee, he has shown his public support on a number of occasions for Man Up.

• First Oireachtas Committee report on Domestic Violence which also attempted to grasp the complexity of the issue.

• Minister for Justice and Equality naming DV as a priority area.

• Garda Inspectorate Report showed huge failings in Gardaí – SAFE Ireland has increased its relationship with the Gardaí and has a lot to build on. The Garda Commissioner has recently announced significant restructuring in the An Garda Síochána which aim to address the deficiencies highlighted in the various reports.

• Man Up campaign has shifted SAFE Ireland’s public awareness focus to prevention, engaging men and bystanders and shifting the focus from victim blaming to perpetrator accountability. A recent survey of 1,000 people in Ireland found that 40% were aware of the Man Up campaign.

• SAFE Ireland’s emerging body of research gives new insights into gross failings of the legal system, the nature and effect of Domestic Violence trauma and ways to heal, the needs and outcomes for women accessing DV services, an annual national one day count of the number of women and children who access DV services in Ireland, and annual statistics of the number of women and children who access DV services.

• With our members, SAFE Ireland has developed national standards which have improved the quality and safety of women and children using services.
The Current Context
An Emerging Knowledge Base on the Extent and Impact of Domestic Violence in Ireland

Extent of Domestic Violence in Ireland

Annual Statistics - Approx 12,500 women and children access DV services annually.

€2.2 Billion per annum - The estimated cost of Domestic Violence to the Irish Economy.

EU FRA Study - 1 in 3 women disclosed that they experienced psychological violence by a male partner and 1 in 4 disclosed that they experienced physical and sexual violence from a partner or non partner.

As the EU FRA study was a stratified sample of 1,500 women across Ireland, for our population size we can extrapolate national data from the study results. According to the CSO, the total population of women 18+ in Ireland in 2011 is 1,754,648.

Therefore we can estimate that at least 580,000 women living in Ireland will have experienced psychological violence from a partner or non partner and at least 440,000 will have experienced physical and sexual violence from a partner or non partner.

National One Day Count - Counting since 2008, different days of the week every year. In just one day in 2014, 475 women and 301 children - nearly 800 people - were receiving accommodation and support from a DV service in Ireland.

79% not reporting to anyone - According to EU FRA study the highest level of reporting by women about a serious physical or sexual assault by a partner was to the Gardaí in Ireland but only 21% had ever reported the crime to the Gardaí meaning that 79% had never reported this to anyone.
Impact of domestic violence

● A vast body of research has unequivocally established the impacts of intimate partner violence and sexual assault on women’s physical and mental health and well-being (Garcia-Moreno and Watts, 2000; Duvvury, et al., 2001; Bacchus, et al., 2004; Campbell et al, 2008; Duvvury, et al., 2012; WHO, 2013).

● Research has also established that women and girls experiencing violence utilise health services more frequently, including emergency department, outpatient care, primary care services, counselling services, and are more likely to report worse health status than those who do not experience violence (Bonomi et al., 2006). However, there has been insufficient attention to other social and economic consequences. In other words the full costs (including health, social and economic costs) for women, families, communities and society largely remain invisible.

● DV is costing the global economy an estimated $8 trillion annually (Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2014). There has been no cost of violence study conducted in Ireland, however based on other country studies, it is estimated that DV is costing the Irish Economy €2.2 billion annually (Cosc 2010). SAFE Ireland has been actively seeking funding to conduct a ‘Cost of Violence Study in Ireland’ in partnership with Dr Nata Duvvury in NUI Galway.

● We know from research too that Domestic Violence and Poverty are intricately interwoven. Significant numbers of low-income women experience domestic violence, and the violence they experience can make the journey out of poverty impossible. Poverty, in turn, makes it more difficult to end domestic violence and heal from its effects. Women also leave relationships and walk into poverty and homelessness for the first time in their lives. Domestic Violence directly results in homelessness for women and children.

● From our Healing Trauma research led by Professor Denise Saint Arnault we know that ANY FORM of abuse and violence has EFFECTS on the brain, mind, body, social systems and society. The lasting effects of this trauma cause chronic physical problems throughout life. Undergoing trauma or witnessing trauma are associated with a significant unadjusted risk for cardiovascular disease, arteriosclerosis or hypertension, gastrointestinal (GI) disease, diabetes, arthritis, and obesity. Abused women are twice as likely to experience chronic physical health conditions. Women who have been abused spend 42% more on health care than non-abused women (APA, 2011; NPIPC, 2003; SWHR, 2013).

● The 79% ...Why are they not reporting? ... Our trauma research points to 3 possible reasons: Women cannot report violence because of the effects of trauma - Freeze to protect system AND/OR social and cultural norms make it unacceptable to talk to others about their experiences AND/OR the levels of gender inequality are too high for them to feel safe and heard.

● Multigenerational Impacts - ‘Child exposure to Domestic Violence as witnesses’ - ‘I once was that child’ - ‘DV strongly linked with Child abuse.’

● Workplace Impacts - Loss of productivity, employees reaching their full potential, workplace harassment and links with DV.
SAFE Ireland’s Vision Strategy 2015-2020

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<td>To Eliminate Domestic Violence in Ireland</td>
<td>To change Culture and Transform the Response to Domestic Violence in Ireland</td>
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What needs to be Transformed

SAFE Ireland’s goal is to achieve a total transformation of the response to Domestic Violence in Ireland so that Ireland can become the safest country in the world for women and children.

What we want to Transform

1. Culture – Social Behaviour and Attitudes
2. Whole System Response to Women and Children
3. Leadership
4. Understanding & Capacity
SAFE Ireland’s Strategic Priorities for 2015-2020

Strategic Priority 1:
Transform Culture - Social Behaviour and Attitudes

What is Needed

Domestic Violence is a crime in Ireland, it is pervasive and it needs to be stopped. We need to transform culture, so that men’s and women’s attitudes and behaviours reflect a culture where Domestic Violence is not tolerated in our communities, where current harmful belief systems are not inherited by our current generation of boys and girls and where we have eliminated the stigma that is currently focused on the victim/woman. We want to see a culture where offenders are made accountable for their actions and deterred by social penalties for their behaviour.

In the next 5 years we want to achieve a critical mass of awareness and behaviour change, where adults regardless of gender, age and ethnicity are engaging with Domestic Violence as a pervasive social problem and where they are informed on how they can take action to help eradicate this violence. We want to get the message across that “we all have a role to play” and that “Domestic Violence is a crime” and we can eradicate it from our communities. We want to change culture so Ireland becomes a society where women are more confident to disclose abuse to a relevant professional, a society where she isn’t blamed and where the stigma is shifted to the offender for his behaviour.

Current Context

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (Istanbul convention) has been signed by the Irish government in November 2015. This convention places a due diligence on states to provide the means to protect, prevent, punish and implement integrated policies to address violence against women. In relation to prevention, the convention has a number of articles which require governments to cooperate with NGO’s and private sector agencies to reach out to the public to change attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes that make violence against women acceptable amongst other requirements.

Research tells us that most men hold a false belief about other men’s behaviours and attitudes to violence against women, including intimate partner violence. These false social norms can prevent men from speaking out and challenging intimate partner violence because they think other men accept the offending behaviour and consequently they stay silent and do not express their true beliefs that the offending behaviour is wrong. Further research has found that bystanders who want to stand up to offending behaviour do not know what to do. In 2013, SAFE Ireland conducted an attitudinal survey of 1000 women and men, which found that Irish men are less conscious of the prevalence of domestic abuse than Irish women and were not
confident in ways to intervene to prevent violence. The EU FRA Study found that 79% of women in Ireland did not disclose serious physical or sexual violence to anyone. The Irish data also showed that women’s reasons for not disclosing severe violence by a partner were mainly linked to shame, stigma and fear and that women in Ireland were the least satisfied by the response from agencies when they sought assistance.

The Istanbul Convention on Violence Against Women commits the Irish government to support civic society organisations such as SAFE Ireland.

Progress to date
For the past seven years SAFE Ireland has been working in collaboration with its members to increase public awareness of the issue of domestic violence and to engage bystanders (particularly men) to take action to help prevent domestic violence in Ireland. Man Up is a social marketing campaign which has reached extensively into communities across Ireland. A recent survey of 1,000 people found that 40% of respondents were aware of the Man Up campaign. The campaign has successfully been working to achieve a cultural shift in Ireland to create the conditions where these false social norms are disrupted so that more men can feel confident to speak out against male violence against women. The campaign is also working to help break the isolation that prevents women from seeking help and creating awareness which ‘de-normalises’ the offending behaviour and warped rationale that some men use as an excuse for abusing their partners.

The first phase of the campaign focused on exposing the warped rationale that perpetrators hold to excuse their behaviour. Based on the evaluation of the first phase, Phase 2 worked to engage men with positive messages about men’s role in society particularly to challenge restricting stereotypes of men.

SAFE Ireland supported by the National Women’s Council of Ireland and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched phase 2 of Man Up in November 2014. During this phase, the campaign achieved the support of leading sports stars, the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and a number of senior Ministers, TDs, and Senators, local Councillors, artists, civil society and community-based organisations across Ireland. A groundbreaking web film achieved 80,000 views over a 2 week paid advertising campaign. The campaign was picked up in other countries and a group in Sweden worked with SAFE Ireland to translate the web film and website into Swedish. There is interest with leading groups in the US and Italy to also roll out the campaign.

What’s Next 2015-2020
SAFE Ireland will build on the success of Man Up by further developing the brand, focus and campaign reach. We will develop new follow-on campaign materials for ethnic minorities, schools/colleges, communities, sports and cultural organisations and businesses. We will continue to work with our members to build awareness and prevention strategies locally through developing and mobilising communities for change.
Project Deliverables 2015-2020

- Design, market testing and production of a suite of follow-on campaign materials for ethnic minorities, schools/colleges, community, sports and cultural organisations and businesses.
- Annual roll-out of extensive national campaigns using mixed media targeted at the key audiences of men, women and young people to include cinema, radio, online, ambient and outdoor advertising.
- Further development of the Man Up website and development of a Man Up blog and interactive capacity profiling the campaign, its targets, its champions, and activity.
- Continued development of Man Up as an international flag bearer for engaging bystanders and particularly men.
- Targeted roll-out of SI campaigns to key audiences and influencers.
- Tailored roll-out of SI campaigns in all counties with local messaging, radio ads, local strategic launches, local partnerships and local photocalls and events.
- Sign-up and participation of key national organisations and their constituent groups across Ireland as well as regional groups and other civil society collaborators.
- 2,000,000 adults living in Ireland will be aware of SI campaigns.
- 200,000 adults and young people will be actively participating in SI campaigns.
- Extensive use of social media tools to drive SI campaigns to a wide and diverse audience.
- Creative use of advertising channels that are noticed by the key target audience.
- Active engagement of employees across a diverse range of employment locations in promoting campaign messages.
- Active engagement of students across a range of secondary and third level institutions.
- Active visible participation of sports organisations and other civil society organisations in signing up to Man Up and other SI campaigns.
- Vocal support from appropriate well-known champions at national and local level supporting Man Up and other SI campaigns – champions that are admired by the target audiences.
- Coordination and distribution of shared resources across participating organisations and communities.
- Delivery of significant ‘value for money’ campaigns with added value from promotion and transferability across constituent groups of all collaborating national organisations.
- Ongoing evaluation of SI’s campaigns, activities and impact.
- National market research to measure SI’s campaigns reach and impact.

Outcomes and Impacts 2015-2020

- A measured change in social attitudes and beliefs which shifts the focus from victim blaming to perpetrator accountability.
- Increased number of adults and young people aware of appropriate behaviour in relationships.
- Increased engagement in addressing Domestic Violence by businesses, state agencies, politicians and sporting, cultural and community organisations.
- Increased number of men and boys participating in local events and strategic site specific events.
Increased advocacy of Man Up by sporting organisations and civil society organisations that have so far supported the campaign e.g. Gaelic Athlete Association (GAA), Football Association of Ireland (FAI), etc.

Increased traffic to the Man Up website and member/partner organisations websites and social media platforms.

Increased visibility for the Man Up campaign and recognition that it is a leading bystander campaign in Ireland and internationally.

Active discussion of Man Up and other SI campaigns on social media and in traditional media.

Increased awareness nationally and in local communities of Man Up and other SI campaigns.

Increased awareness that Domestic Violence can only be tackled meaningfully when men and women work together.

Increased understanding by bystanders and support organisations of the strategies and supports available in Ireland to prevent Domestic Violence.

Greater capacity of bystanders to appropriately challenge offending behaviour.

Increased number of adults and young people equipped to speak out about and challenge offending behaviour.

Increased awareness about the effects of negative gender stereotyping.

Greater awareness of the potential of bystanders, including men in preventing Domestic Violence.

Greater awareness of the power of early intervention and prevention in stopping Domestic Violence from starting.

Increased understanding of perpetrator behaviour and its impact.

Increased information about the supports available for women experiencing abuse.

Increased awareness of the ongoing prevalence and seriousness of Domestic Violence.

Positive recognition for Ireland as leading innovative campaigns which builds global traction.

**Project Benefits**

- Greater understanding of the importance of early intervention and prevention.
- Greater awareness of the powerful role of men and boys as bystanders.
- Deeper engagement with key target audiences in settings where they work, live, go to school or college, play and socialise.
- Greater awareness of the prevalence of Domestic Violence, its impact on all aspects of life and the need to make Ireland the safest country for women and children.
- Greater isolation of perpetrator behaviour as unacceptable and inexcusable behaviour.
- Collaboration across different sectors with unity of message and purpose.
- Increased and efficient sharing of resources and value for money through economies of scale.
- A quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the impacts of SI’s campaigns.
- Evidence based innovative campaigns with ease of transferability in Ireland and Internationally.
Strategic Priority 2: Transforming the Whole System Response

What is Needed

A state of the art whole system response to women and children which understands the lasting trauma impacts of Domestic Violence and the importance of early and effective interventions which work to centre stage the protection and recovery needs of women and children.

There are extensive research recommendations detailing what the Irish government can do to achieve this transformation. SAFE Ireland has a key role in advising and monitoring the implementation of these recommendations across Government to ensure that they are operationalised and applied in the best interest of women and children. SAFE Ireland will prioritise achieving key reforms in coordinated community responses to women and children including homelessness and social work practice, radical changes to the legal system’s response, and strategic service development in collaboration with specialist domestic violence services and Tusla. In addition to this we will work with local practitioners and other experts to design and deliver continued professional development programmes to frontline responders across state and NGO agencies.

This whole system transformation programme will be underpinned by our parallel work to change social attitudes and beliefs.

Current Context

There is currently a lack of effective inter-departmental co-operation and limited communication from national to local and local to national of policies and operational challenges across the state system. More than ever there is a need for joined up thinking and mutual respect and commitment of all stakeholders to radically improve our country’s response to the protection of victims and the prevention of further violence.

When a woman or her children show signs of being abused there are a range of first responders who can have an important impact on her help seeking, safety and confidence to disclose. These include family and friends, Gardaí, frontline domestic violence services including helplines and refuges, community-based women’s groups, A&E, maternity services, GPs, public health nurses, social workers, family support workers, court clerks, housing officers, homeless services, social welfare services, faith groups, Judges and 999 operators.

Ireland currently has a very fragmented state system response to women and children, and while there are small pockets of good practice there is a prevalent culture of minimising the violence, blaming the women and misunderstanding the dynamics of Domestic Violence and the agenda of the perpetrator to use the state systems to further control and abuse the woman.


Where there is understanding and the will to do things well, the benefits are huge for women and children. There are pockets of good practice around the country where the system is cohesive and works. These are pockets
where stereotypes and preconceptions about Domestic Violence are trumped by solid evidence based data and where the default position is the physical wellbeing and welfare of the vulnerable until such a time as the issue can be and is resolved. These small pockets of good practice need to become what all women and children in Ireland can expect. The solution is in understanding and the will to make a change.

Domestic Violence is one of the most undocumented, under reported and unprosecuted crimes in Ireland. Research has highlighted systematic failings to implement current protections in legislation and policy. In addition, there is no criminal code to define the offence of Domestic Violence and administrative deficiencies in the current application of the law.

We have heard from women that Gardaí minimise the crimes committed against them, that legal professionals silence their clients before they even step foot in court, and that judges refuse to hear women’s evidence and the evidence of experts that could assist the court in making its decision.

The legal system often will not name what has happened to these women as crimes or even as sufficient enough to get a civil protection order. Women face homelessness and poverty and do not feel supported in leaving.

The ‘Lawlessness of the Home’ research report only breaks the surface of the issue of Domestic Violence in Ireland and the legal system. SAFE Ireland wants to scale up our advocacy campaign for cultural change and reform of how the legal system deals with Domestic Violence. SAFE Ireland will be, where needed, a catalyst for that change.

A common reaction to Domestic Violence can be summarised by the phrase often used in police forces around the world: “They’re having a domestic.” This phenomenon makes society and those in our institutions blind to behaviour that would be punished if it happened in public, or between two people not in an intimate relationship. In other words, it effects how we see the crime.

We need to change the effect that this minimising has on those who represent our society - on legal professionals, medical professionals, on judges, and on An Garda Síochána. The continued treatment of Domestic Violence as a lesser crime feeds into our incomplete and dangerous understanding of abusive relationships. What has been described as “the lawlessness of the home” comes in part from the fact that those who meet it at the front line are not adequately educated, trained or supported in this work.

Progress to date

Over the past 3 years SAFE Ireland has documented many of the barriers that women meet when seeking safety. We have presented a series of evidence based submissions to Government Departments, Oireachtas Committees, and key decision makers. We have focused on getting Domestic Violence higher on the political and policy agenda. We have lobbied for many changes to the implementation of infrastructure and coordination of whole of government policy. We have advocated for changes to legislation relating to DV service provision, housing, child access and custody, access to social welfare and criminal and civil legislative change. We have also advocated for the ratification of the Council of Europe convention on Violence Against Women and the transposition of the EU Victims Rights Directive.

In the past 12 months some of these recommendations have been implemented by Government including changes to housing legislation to remove the eligibility barrier for women who already own a property but who cannot safely live there, inclusion of criteria related to Domestic Violence in the assessment of child custody and access and the establishment of a statutory duty to protect and care for victims of Domestic Violence through the establishment of Tusla.
In 2011 we strongly urged the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality to do a root and branch review of the issues affecting victims of Domestic Violence. In 2014 after extensive work, this Committee produced its first report on Domestic Violence taking on board most of the recommendations we submitted. In addition, all 34 recommendations from our Legal research have been approved by the National Policy Fora on Violence Against Women and submitted to the Department of Justice & Equality law reform division for consideration. The Minister for Justice has recently published a General Scheme to consolidate legislation relating to Domestic Violence and some of the SAFE Ireland recommendations have been addressed in this scheme.

SAFE Ireland has just completed and published a comprehensive legal research report “Lawlessness of the Home”. The highly publicised launch of the report has increased awareness of some of the failings of the system. We have begun to create spaces for dialogue with key decision makers across the justice system. The Garda Commissioner has recently announced a series of structural changes which include a focus on addressing domestic violence and the deficiencies highlighted in recent reports.

SAFE Ireland has been working with the US National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) to increase frontline service understanding of how to support women to use new technologies safely. This innovative programme called ‘Safety Net’ increases frontline professionals understanding of how perpetrators use technologies to monitor and track women’s movements and communications and ways to increase women’s safety.

What’s Next 2015-2020

National Service Development and Advocacy

We will continue our national role to support, advocate and advise strategic service development and multi agency responses across communities in Ireland. We will do this in order to increase accessibility for women and children to effective safety, protection and recovery supports in their communities, including improved multi-agency responses and safe and sustainable accommodation and well being supports. We will also collaborate with frontline DV services to implement strategies to respond to the unmet and emerging needs of women and children, with a focus of also reaching at least 10% of the 79% of women in Ireland who have never disclosed to anyone serious violence by their partner.

We will continue to work directly with women, children and frontline service providers to identify system deficiencies and to advocate for the full implementation of national policy and international Government commitments including the Istanbul convention and the EU Directive on Victims. We will work to support the Irish Government to meet its commitments and obligations by offering innovative and evidence based solutions to any gaps in existing provision.

Legal Reform

We will scale up significantly our national legal advocacy role to drive legal reform and to improve outcomes for women in the legal system. This will include establishing a legal advocacy unit in SAFE Ireland which will provide training programmes to legal professionals, support strategic and complex cases and advise the government on legislative changes as they are identified.
Continued Professional Development
We will design innovative, high quality professional development programmes which will be delivered to a range of frontline professionals working in legal, social, health, children, family and community services. These programmes will aim to increase professionals capacity to respond effectively to women and children, particularly in relation to women’s safety, needs assessment, empowerment practice, the safe use of new technologies and trauma sensitive responses.

Project Deliverables 2015-2020
- Strategic collaboration and further relationship building with senior change agents within the justice system to advise and monitor the implementation of a wide range of existing recommendations.
- 34 recommendations as outlined in ‘Lawlessness of the Home’ will have been implemented.
- Drafting of legislation and advocating for implementation underway.
- Direct legal advocacy support for complex cases presented by women who are being failed by the legal system.
- Provide support for strategic cases to create case law through appeals and where possible through the European Court of Human Rights.
- Delivery of high quality continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for legal and other professionals drawing on relevant international best practice.
- Bring key thinkers and champions together to problem solve system gaps.
- Document women’s experiences of seeking protection in order to inform international and national monitoring reports and to seek further understanding of what works well and the areas for further reform.
- Work with Tusla and front line DV services to agree and implement a national framework for strategic service delivery in Ireland.

Outcomes and Impacts 2015-2020
- Champions for this issue are visible and vocal within the justice system.
- Legal professionals will have a greater understanding of the dynamics of Domestic Violence and their role with victims.
- Legal representatives will have a greater capacity to advocate for women’s needs and safety.
- Other frontline professionals will have a greater understanding of the dynamics of Domestic Violence and their role with victims.
- Women will have increased confidence in the legal system.
- There will be an integrated justice system response for all victims of Domestic Violence.
- The existing legal system is reformed and has increased capacity to meet women and children’s needs.
- Domestic Violence is taken seriously and treated as a crime.
- Women have access to the information and supports they need to safely access the justice system.
- There is clear accountability and transparency in decisions made by justice professionals which directly impact on victims.
- A national framework for service delivery would be implemented to address existing gaps and increase standards in service provision.
Strategic Priority 3: Leadership

What is Needed
We want to cultivate Champions for this issue in Ireland. We need to achieve a critical mass of Champions who will be visible and vocal leaders on this issue across social, economic, cultural and government systems. This issue needs attention, this issue needs to be prioritised with political commitments to reform and investment if we are to transform the response.

Current Context
There is an emerging groundswell of support against Domestic Violence in Ireland right now. Not least because we have increased the profile of the prevalence and nature of this issue. Through bringing public voice to the real experiences of women and their children throughout Ireland, there is significantly more coverage of the reality of the issue being profiled on the airwaves and in politics daily. However, while there is increased support and profile for the issue, there still are very few visible and vocal Champions to put this serious social and economic problem on the government priority list. There is a need to advocate for and secure significant investment and better infrastructure to transform the response to this issue in Ireland.

Progress to date
After considerable lobbying up to 2011, the programme for government 2011-2016 has a commitment to reform Domestic Violence legislation. SAFE Ireland has held a number of engagements with Senior and Junior Ministers, including the Taoiseach and Tánaiste to advocate for greater prioritisation of Domestic Violence on the government agenda. The Taoiseach has committed to convening a Cabinet Sub-Committee to focus on Domestic Violence. The Minister for Justice and Equality and the newly appointed Garda Commissioner have both recently named Domestic Violence as a priority area. Following a request from the Taoiseach, SAFE Ireland submitted a 10 point plan to his Department for a roadmap to transforming Ireland’s response to gender based violence. This plan has outlined the need for developing the necessary infrastructure, securing investment, implementing existing recommendations and supporting innovative programmes for leadership and prevention.
What’s Next 2015-2020

SAFE Ireland believes that Ireland can be the safest country in the world for women and children. During the period of this Strategy we plan to host the first SAFE Ireland Leadership Summit in Dublin in 2016 with a follow-up Summit in 2019.

This Summit will be a defining moment to debate, distil and share our understanding of the complexity and root causes of Domestic Violence and then to identify and design innovative, brave solutions that can help shape Ireland to become the safest country in the world for women and children. Ireland has the potential to be a global leader in effecting cultural change around domestic violence and this Summit will help set this stage.

The Summit will bring together Global influencers and leading thinkers from around the world about leading social change on this issue.

The second Summit in 2019 will showcase Ireland as a world leader on this issue presenting and discussing new thinking and developments that can be replicated in other countries across the globe.

Project Deliverables 2015-2020

- SAFE Ireland Leadership Summit hosted in Dublin with over 200 attendees.
- A number of innovative solutions will be identified to effect cultural change on the issue in Ireland over a 5-year period.
- 2nd Summit hosted in Ireland.
- Ireland showcased as a world leader on this issue presenting and discussing new thinking and developments.
- Series of engagements and briefings with leaders across political, social and corporate spheres to secure their visible and vocal leadership for the issue.

- Continued relationship building across government departments and ministries to achieve commitments, prioritise Domestic Violence and secure greater state investment.

Outcomes and Impacts 2015-2020

- Ireland is the safest country in the world for women, children and men.
- Greater profile for this issue in Ireland with many new visible and vocal Champions.
- Messages of zero tolerance and support for victims become a dominant public narrative.
- New thinking generated with more innovative solutions to addressing Domestic Violence in Ireland and globally.
- Increased government and philanthropic investment in transforming the response.
Strategic Priority 4:
Understanding & Capacity

What is Needed
In order to address the issue of Domestic Violence we need to understand the problem at a much deeper level. We also need to communicate this understanding to all key stakeholders who have a critical role in responding to and preventing Domestic Violence. We need to continue to build our “body of knowledge”, ask key questions and leave no stones unturned or questions unanswered in a quest for more effective solutions to what is a very entrenched and complex issue, the issue of Domestic Violence in our society today.

Current Context
SAFE Ireland’s investment in increasing knowledge that focuses on the needs and experiences of women and their children affected by Domestic Violence has increased the understanding of some of the barriers to safety, social and legal systems failures and negative health and lasting social effects of trauma resulting from Domestic Violence.

Through centre staging women and really listening to them in all their diversity we continue to increase social and political understanding of the impact of this violence, needs of women and children and the behaviour of perpetrators. In the past 6 years we have contributed a series of research reports to academia and social policy fields. We have been able to develop evidence based recommendations for social and legal system reform.

The recent study by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency is the first robust study in Ireland which gives us some estimation of the prevalence of the issue. Most striking is that 79% of women never disclosed a serious physical or sexual assault by a partner to anyone. With only 12% ever contacting a Domestic Violence shelter or victims support service.

The EU FRA study also gives us baseline data from which we can measure the impact of initiatives over the next 5 years. SAFE Ireland will shortly secure access to the data set of this study which included face to face interviews with a stratified national sample of 1,500 women in Ireland.

SAFE Ireland’s research methodologies strive to centre stage women’s recovery needs by creating spaces for healing and opportunities for women to have their story heard. We are creating a new discourse in ‘Herstory’ in Ireland. The approach brings together academic robustness with the lived reality of women’s lives. We bring understanding into the public domain which breaks through the pervasive silence and isolation that so many women have been forced to live in because of their partner’s coercive control.
Progress to date

The SAFE Ireland strategic direction since 2008 has focused on increasing our understanding of the needs and experiences of women living with Domestic Violence. The rationale for this was based on the dearth of research into Domestic Violence, particularly robust research that documented and articulated women’s experiences. The publication of these research findings is creating a new public discourse in relation to Domestic Violence, in effect we are beginning to ‘wake up’ people to the reality and pervasiveness of Domestic Violence which surrounds them in neighbourhoods, communities, workplaces and across our social and health care systems.

SAFE Ireland is the only national organisation in Ireland currently collecting national data and conducting independent research which is closely examining women’s needs and the nature and impacts of perpetrator behaviour.

We have completed, published and widely disseminated a suite of groundbreaking research reports focused on understanding more about women’s needs, the impact of trauma, the barriers to women and children’s safety and women’s experiences of seeking legal remedies. We have documented women’s experiences and analysed these in the context of existing evidence and the Irish statutory human rights obligations. In addition, we have documented the number of women and children accessing Domestic Violence services on an annual and daily basis. The evidence from these reports combined with other emerging international research has informed a range of policy submissions to government departments, and Oireachtas committees. We have also had a series of journal articles published with our research collaborators Professor Cris Sullivan (Michigan State University, USA) and Professor Denise Saint Arnault (University of Michigan USA).

We have successfully launched all of our research reports and we have built a considerable following and interest across academia, frontline professionals, politicians, businesses, community organisations and public and civil servants.

In order to spread our understanding and further achieve the transformation that women and children need we have begun to host a series of continued professional development seminars. Our European funded research programme will develop evidence based risk assessment toolkits for justice professionals. In 2016 we will begin delivering training in partnership with relevant justice agencies to embed these toolkits and transform frontline professionals’ capacity to assess risk.

We have secured funding from two separate European funds to conduct research related to improving the civil and criminal justice system. We have also developed a costed research proposal with leading academic Dr Nata Duvvury, NUIG to conduct an economic cost of violence study in Ireland.

We established links with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and as a result we will have access to the data and data collection tools arising from their extensive research programme which was conducted in 2012.
What's Next 2015-2020

We will continue to expand understanding by conducting, completing and publishing a further series of research reports which are based on emerging issues and the gaps identified in our previous research programmes.

We will disseminate the learning through public launches and through delivering professional development programmes and seminars to key stakeholders and change agents.

We will continue to identify new research areas that will help us to understand Domestic Violence at a deeper level.

We will also seek resources to conduct research which can measure the impact of our overall programmes.

The Case for Investment

We want to get the economic data necessary to illustrate the widespread cost and the cost benefits of investment specific to Ireland – We want this to tell us what Domestic Violence is currently costing across the system and the money that is needed to put the necessary infrastructure (human capital, technology, training, housing etc) in place. We want to be able to present this to the relevant Government Ministers to give them the case for a phased investment plan by Government from 2016–2020 and what this will achieve.

Domestic Violence Truth Commission

We want to increase our efforts to hear women’s stories and give voice to their lived experience of Domestic Violence. We want to create the spaces for women to come forward and tell their stories. We want to hear from children as children and also from men and women who were once “that child” who was exposed to Domestic Violence.

We want to know more about women’s help-seeking trajectory, their needs, safety and well-being outcomes. We want the evidence base in order to design and evaluate healing and well-being programmes that understand the complex traumas that women and children have experienced, the impact on their well-being and ways to support healing and wellness.

We know that 79% of women do not access services and we want to extend the possibility to hear from these women in order that they might provide us with critical information to design a change programme that can impact positively on their lives and history of abuse.
Project Deliverables 2015-2020

- Through scaling up our current research and support capacity we will establish a ‘Truth Commission’ where women can tell ‘Herstory’.
- Using information from the ‘Truth Commission’ process along with other research methodologies we will complete the following research projects:
  - A study of risk assessment practices across the criminal and civil justice system relating to Domestic Violence to produce evidence based toolkits for justice professionals. This is being conducted in partnership with five other European countries and is funded through the EU Justice programme.
  - A study of the effectiveness of existing legal protection measures for particularly excluded populations of women. This is being conducted in partnership with five other European countries and is funded through the EU Daphne programme.
  - Research on the economic cost of Domestic Violence in Ireland in partnership with Dr Nata Duvvury, NUIG. Research on trauma resulting from Domestic Violence and how it affects women’s help-seeking with Professor Denise Saint Arnault, University of Michigan, USA.
  - Understanding of women’s needs in relation to healing the long term effects of Domestic Violence.
  - Understanding of any emerging barriers affecting women’s and children’s access to safety and support research into social attitudes and behaviours relating to Domestic Violence.
- Conduct a prevalence study based on the EU FRA methodologies to measure progress.

Outcomes and Impacts 2015-2020

- Increase in understanding of the conditions and enabling factors that facilitate Domestic Violence.
- Increase in understanding of ways to prevent Domestic Violence.
- Increase in the knowledge and capacity of key stakeholders to respond effectively to women and children.
- Evidence of impact of SAFE Ireland interventions to transform the response in Ireland.
- Increase in the number of frontline professionals who have an understanding of the complexity of Domestic Violence.
- Increased number of evidence based learning and professional development programmes developed and delivered.
- Reality of women’s and children’s experiences widely documented.
- 1,500 women have had the opportunity to have their experiences listened to in a supportive and healing environment.
- There is evidence to make an economic case for significant investment to address Domestic Violence.
How we will Measure Success

**Strategic Priority 1:**
Transform Culture - Social Behaviour and Attitudes

- % population change in behaviours and attitudes
- Number of people who engage with the campaigns
- Number of organisations who engage with the campaigns
- Number of people who are aware of the campaigns

**Strategic Priority 2:**
Transforming the Whole System Response

- Feedback from women accessing the system
- % increase in investment
- Changes in infrastructure including policy
- Number of Professionals who have been trained
- Number of women who have received direct support
- Number of strategic cases taken
- Number of shadow reports
- Number of monitoring reports
- Number of recommendations implemented
What success will look like

**Strategic Priority 1:**
**Transform Culture - Social Behaviour and Attitudes**

- 20% target population change in behaviours and attitudes
- 200,000 people have engaged with the campaigns
- 500 organisations will have engaged with the campaigns
- 2,000,000 people are aware of the campaigns

**Strategic Priority 2:**
**Transforming the Whole System Response**

- 20% increase in system user satisfaction
- 100% (€30 million) increase in state investment
- Significant changes in infrastructure including policy
- 1,000 Professionals will have increased capacity
- 500 women will have received direct legal support
- 20 strategic cases taken
- 4 shadow reports produced
- Number of monitoring reports
- Number of recommendations implemented
How we will Measure Success

3 Strategic Priority 3: Leadership

- Number of politicians who are vocal
- Number of Senior politicians who are vocal
- Number of Corporations/Businesses involved
- Number of Civil society organisations who are prioritising the issue
- Evaluation of SAFE Ireland’s Leadership Summits
- Number of innovative solutions which are actioned
- Extent of media coverage of the issue

4 Strategic Priority 4: Understanding & Capacity

- Number of research reports completed
- Number of evidence based recommendations submitted
- Number of professionals who are trained
- Number of seminars held
- Number of training resources produced
- A business case for state and corporate investment
- Number of Women who have participated in research
What success will look like

Strategic Priority 3: Leadership

- 80 politicians who are vocal
- 6 Senior politicians who are prioritising DV
- 100 Corporations/Businesses involved
- 20 of Civic society organisations who are prioritising the issue
- Evaluation of Global Leaders Summits
- 50% of innovative solutions are actioned
- 50% increase in media coverage of the issue

Strategic Priority 4: Understanding & Capacity

- 8 research reports completed
- 20 policy submissions
- Number of professionals who are trained
- Number of seminars held
- Number of training resources produced
- A business case for state and corporate investment
- 1,500 Women will have participated in research and healing opportunities
Appendix 1
Organisational Structure

SAFE Ireland’s Board of Directors

Chief Executive Officer

Management Team

Development & Administrative Team

Associates for Programme Support & Development

- Media / Communications
- Design & Editing
- Organisational Development
- Trainers
- Researchers
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