



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2022



## Foreword from the Chairperson

*It is with great pride we present the 2022 Annual Report for Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women.*

*Ascend continues in its work to support women affected by domestic abuse. I would like to thank our funders—Tusla and the Victims Commission for their ongoing funding and support of the project.*

*I would like to commend the team of Ascend NTDC who continue to support women on a daily basis. Their dedication and commitment is central to the success of the programme.. There are complex barriers facing women who are experiencing domestic violence in the rural context.*

*Finally, I would like to thank our board of directors on North Tipperary Development Company who provide their time and expertise to support Ascend and other projects in the organisation.*

*Jim Finn*

*Chairperson NTDC*



## Welcome

*Welcome to our Annual Report for 2022. We have had a number of positive developments in our organisation. We had a very successful launch of our One Million Stars Campaign—a culmination of hard work and dedication by our star weavers and our volunteers who collaborated on the project. Our Safe House project is going very well and provides an option for women experiencing domestic abuse in North Tipperary.*

*I would like to thank the agency partners for their collaboration – through the Advisory Group and beyond and I want to re-emphasise how fortunate we are in North Tipperary for the spirit of cooperation that prevails through our agency partners and their individual staff members. I would also like to thank the secondary schools in North Tipperary who welcome the delivery of Healthy Relationships Programme. We delivered to 12 schools in the last academic year. We have designed a new updated version of the programme and look forward to rolling this out in 2023.*

*We saw an increase in referrals to our organisation and aimed to provide a high quality service to our clients and encourage anyone in need of support to contact us. We are here to help and support.*

*Kathleen Maher*

*Manager*

*Ascend Domestic Abuse Service For Women*

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# Service Overview



**1,197**  
Contacts with Professionals

**191**  
Helpline Calls

**10,216**  
Total Contacts

**8,256**  
Total Telephone /SMS/ Email/Letter

**525**  
Total Outreach Appointments

**44**  
General Accompaniments

**171**  
New Referrals

**145**  
Court Accompaniments

## **Introduction History/Mission**

Ascend Domestic Abuse Service offers confidential support services and information to women who have or are experiencing domestic abuse. 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**

Ascend 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. 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.

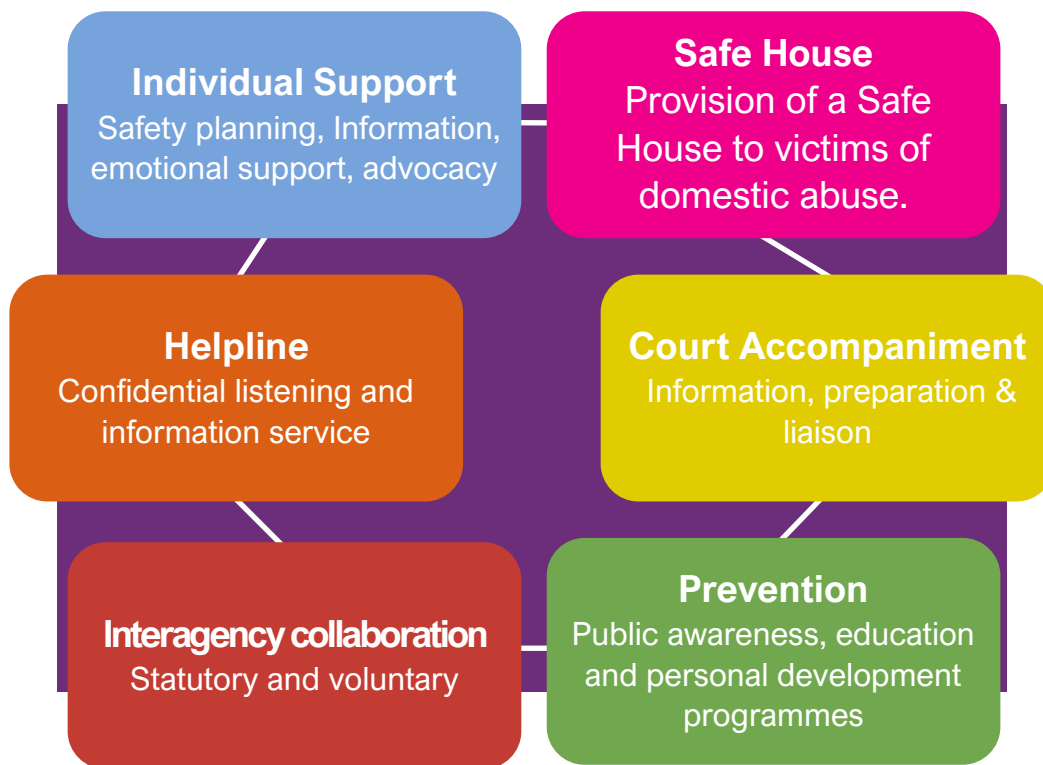
## **Services offered by Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women**

Ascend supported 387 women in 2022. Cases are reviewed every quarter and cases closed as deemed appropriate. One hundred and seventy one new clients contacted the service in 2022. 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 2022, Ascend offered telephone support on 3,320 occasions, 423 emails and 4,491 SMS Messages and received 191 calls on our helpline numbers. There were 525 outreach appointments and 1,197 contacts made with professionals regarding clients' issues. We accompanied clients on 44 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 whose 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 142 court accompaniments carried out in 2022. Ascend NTDC staff attended court/provided support to clients in court. There were a total of 195 court accompaniments booked with some adjourned or cancelled. Staff members were in court over 280 hours in total. 70 Clients received court accompaniment in 2022 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.

We also provide support for clients who are attending court for the Tipperary Town District Court area now currently sitting in Nenagh.

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

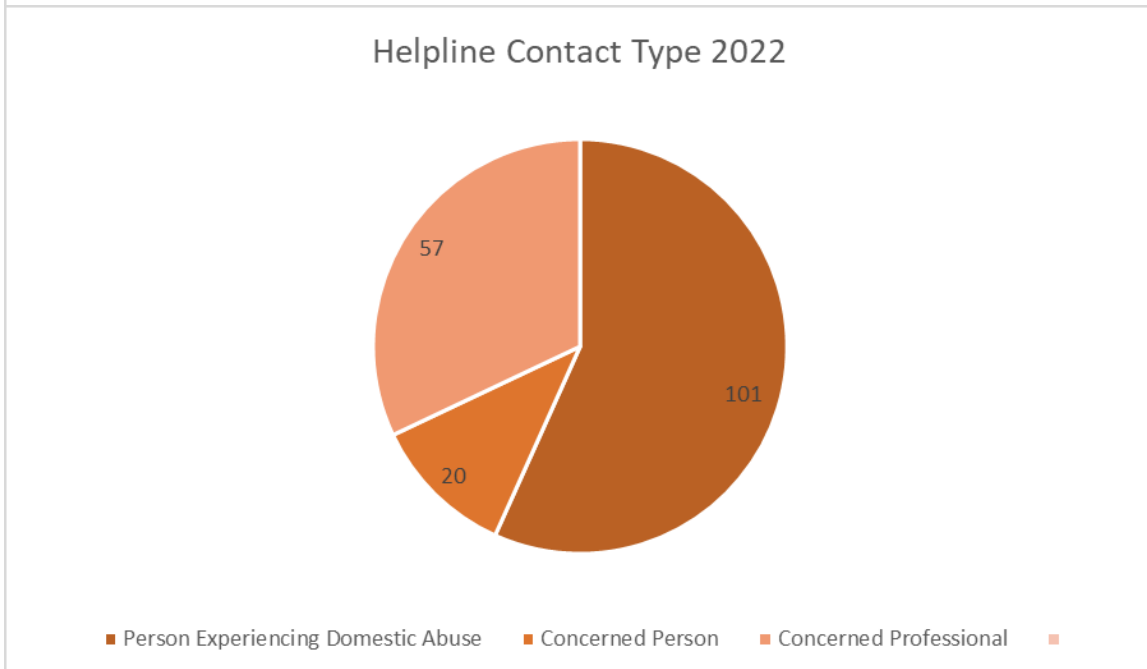
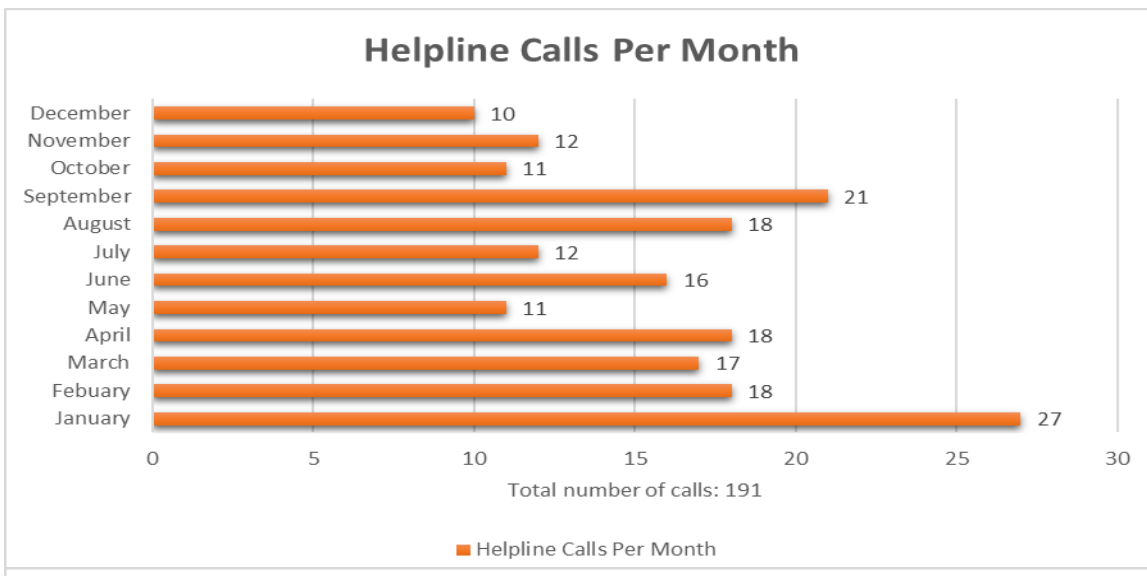
Ascend has engaged with the eSafe programme (a collaboration with Safe Ireland and Enclude) which is an integrated information solution led by Safe Ireland and we have the database in place since November 2021. We are excited for this new development to reflect the diversity and trends of our work and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



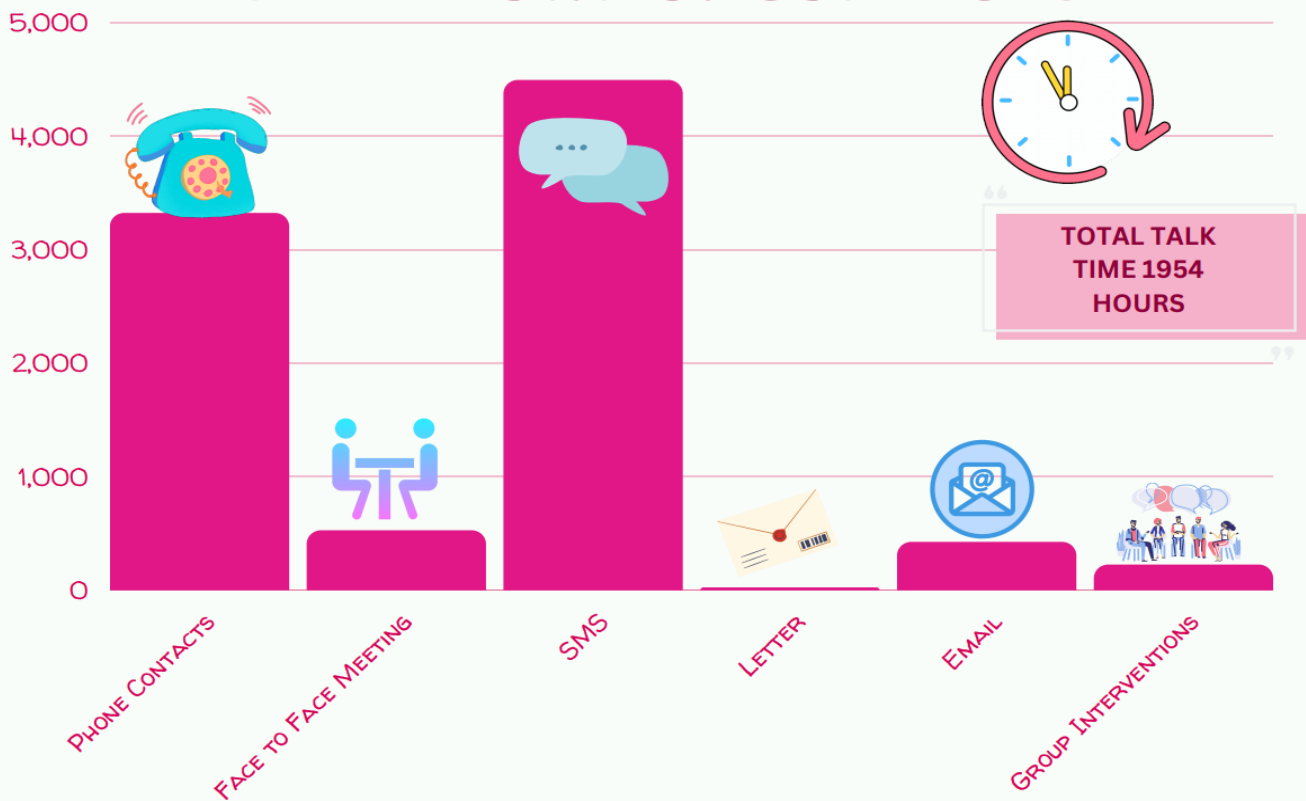
## Detailed Statistics

We received 171 new referrals in 2022.

Sources of Referrals Total 171	
Self Referral	74
Gardai/Courts	20
Social worker/Tusla	16
Domestic Violence Organisations	14
Family/Friends	12
NTDC Projects	6
Citizens Information Office	5
CSMT/Coolmine	4
CWO	4
Housing/Homeless Services	2
Hospitals	2
Counselling/Mental Health Services	4
Silver Arch	2
FSW	1
Employer	1
School Principal	1
Primary Care	1
Killaloe resource centre	1
Concerned Professional	1



# BREAKDOWN OF CONTACTS



## 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 also received a grant from Lotto Funds also to run the Personal Development Group. We also obtained a grant from Mid West Drug Task Force to run our second Personal Development Course. We received a fund from the Community Activities Fund for the running of our safe house and some initial fit out expenses.

## 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 inter-agency collaboration. This group has met four times in 2022 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 2022.

Ascend participated in the TLC Kidz Steering Group meetings in 2022.

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

We also attend all Homeless Action Team meetings chaired by Tipperary County Council.

We also sit on the North Tipperary Connecting For Life Sub Group which was established in 2021 with the aim of reducing suicide and putting effective suicide prevention strategies.

## 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
- Presentation to CE Workers – NTDC
- Presentation to Farm Safety Group – Nenagh
- Presentation to Traveller Team - NTDC
- NTDC Roadshow Main Street Roscrea
- Own My Life Course Taster Day for Professionals
- 16 days of action Public Awareness Campaign with UHL hospital
- Podcast with Tipperary Social Democrats—December 2022

## Go Purple Day

Friday, April 29th 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.

We aim to reach a wide and diverse audience through this Public Awareness Campaign. Here is the poster for the event and some photos from the day.



*Pictured Nenagh Gardai and Ascend Staff*



*Pictured Roscrea Gardai and Ascend Staff on Go Purple Day.*



**520**  
followers



**572**  
followers

**3,406**  
website visits



**3,492**  
followers



## Growing up in a Porn Culture Webinar with Dr. Gail Dines (Culture Reframed)

Ascend Domestic Abuse Services – North Tipperary were delighted to be able to host the webinar – “*Growing up in a Porn Culture Webinar*” - facilitated by Dr. Gail Dines in April 2022. We were delighted with the overwhelming attendance with over 250 individuals registering for the event. Dr. Gail Dines, a Professor Emerita of Sociology, has been researching and writing about the porn industry for well over thirty years. She is the CEO of Culture Reframed which focuses on the education around relationships and sexuality. This webinar explored the links between sexuality and pornography. Feedback included as follows:

*“An absolutely outstanding online webinar. Great to have a link to this organisation and the resources that they offer, I think these resources are much needed for those that work with parents, children and young people. The chat seems to reflect absence of resources in this field. Quite striking how pornography, is clearly impacting violence against women and children.*

*.”The webinar was really excellent. We are seeing the impact of porn on our clients particularly women aged 18 - 25 years. Unfortunately, it's becoming more acceptable which is really frightening. It is great to start these conversations in the communities.”.*



**Growing up in a  
Porn Culture with  
Dr. Gail Dines**

**CULTURE REFRAMED**

- THE HARMS AND SOLUTIONS
- THE LINK BETWEEN  
PORNOGRAPHY AND  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
- OF INTEREST TO PARENTS  
AND PROFESSIONALS

**Webinar on April  
6th 8p.m.-9.30p.m.**

**FOR MORE INFO ON DR. GAIL  
DINES CLICK HERE**

**NTDC**  
North Tipperary  
Development Company

**Ascend**

## 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.

In September 2022, we delivered to the following schools: Nenagh CBS, St. Mary's Nenagh, St. Joseph's Borrisoleigh, Borrisokane Community College and Newport College, We are awaiting funding to continue our work. We also hope to unveil our new programme—The DAY Programme (DAY) is a comprehensive multi-media education tool that equips young people to recognise domestic abuse and exploitation and to critique popular culture. It is a unique resource that uses contemporary music, film and structured discussion to challenge the beliefs and attitudes which are at the root of domestic abuse and exploitation, and does so in a unique and exciting way.

### Personal Development Group

Ascend Domestic Abuse Service for Women have unveiled a new Personal Development Group in 2021. We have ran this programme twice in 2022—in April and September. The April group was in person and our September Group was a hybrid group a mix of online and in person held in the evenings. The programme's website is [www.ownmylifecourse.org](http://www.ownmylifecourse.org). This is a 12 week 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. We have had pre and post course evaluation of the course by participants. We also held a Taster Day in November last for local practitioners who can refer to the course. This was well attended on the day.



### 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. Since we opened, we have had three families living in the safe house. Two of which, have moved to a more permanent home.



## Launch of One Million Stars Display

As a joint project we aimed to weave 10,000 stars with our colleagues in Cuan Saor Refuge and Support Services in South Tipperary. We exceeded this by weaving 14,000 stars. The idea behind One Million Stars weaving communities of courage against violence is especially relevant in today's world.

Ascend NTDC is grateful to artist—Ute Duggan for building the display and bringing this display to life. We also had a Volunteer Co-ordinator on board—Emma Daly. Ascend would like to acknowledge the following groups and schools who took part in star weaving.

- Colaiste Mhuire, Thurles.
- St. Joseph's College, Borrisoleigh.
- Borrisokane Community College.
- St Cronan's Association service users who attend Mary Gill House in Springfort Nenagh.
- Nenagh Craft Group.
- Barnardos TLC Kidz Mother's Group.
- Roscrea Youth Project.
- And special gratitude to St. Mary's School, Nenagh & for star weaving and creating the display.

The exhibition was held in Nenagh Arts Centre on 8th March 2022 (International Women's Day) and we received funding for the project from Healthy Ireland and NTDC SICAP. The Display then went on a tour of the libraries in Tipperary and was put on display in seven libraries across Tipperary. The Display has now returned to the NTDC Office in Nenagh



### Pictured

Left—Artist Ute Duggan

Bottom Left—  
Students of St.  
Mary's Nenagh

Bottom Right Stu-  
dents and NTDC  
Team

Right-Cuan Saor  
Team & Ascend





# Supports provided by Ascend NTDC



**WOMEN'S AID EMERGENCY FUND**

- We received a Women's Aid Fund of €10,000 in January 2022 and again another €10,000 was granted in November 2022. There were 44 recipients of this fund. The average amount of the grant awarded was €300.00 each. The fund provides for the immediate needs of women and children subjected to domestic violence and who require help with provisions including (but not restricted to) food, basic supplies, accommodation, personal and home security costs, legal advice, and other costs to support their urgent needs.

## THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS



*22 women accessed counselling through our service and 10 children accessed play therapy.*

**SAFE HOUSE PROVISION**

2 Women and 7 Children accessed our Safe House Provision in 2022.

**DV RENT SUPPLEMENT**

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



# Feedback from Service Users

The women were great support and a massive help. I also found the Own my life group and great help

The only thing id like to say is Id just like to give kathleen a big thank you for everything she has done for me

Ascend has changed my life for the better. So grateful for ongoing support.

I appreciated the phone support during Covid-19.

I got fantastic support and advice. I genuinely believe that ascend gave me the strength and help to change my life for the better

# Feedback from Safe House Service Users

Their willingness & ability to listen & understand my situation compassionately & understand how important it was for me & my kids to have our own place in order to move on & re-establish ourselves, moving into the safe house really helped me & my kids thrive & enjoy our new beginning.

They gave me a place to feel safe until I sorted out issues I had going on in my life

Being a user of the services of ASCEND I now see how important their work is, as I would not have got through it without them, thank you so much

## Our 16 Days of Action Campaign

The 16 days of Action campaign which ran from 25<sup>th</sup> November (UN Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022 - International Human Rights Day), to raise awareness of victims of Domestic Abuse being run by Ascend Domestic Abuse Service For Women in collaboration with Barnardos TLC Kidz Programme, North Tipperary. Both organisations were delighted to launch posters for the event – North Tipperary’s 16 Facts for 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence and My Wishes. The 16 Facts poster aims to provide 16 Facts about our organisation and where you can access help in North Tipperary. Barnardos TLC Kidz is launched it’s poster – My Wishes. Many services/organisations took part across North Tipperary.

**Ascend** **NORTH TIPPERARY'S 16 FACTS FOR 16 DAYS OF ACTION AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.**

- ESTABLISHED 2000 ESTABLISHED**
- 334** We worked with 334 women in 2021
- We open from **MON-FRI 9-5pm**
- 7** We have seven outreach locations across North Tipperary
- 1** We have one safe house in North Tipperary
- OWN MY LIFE COURSE**  
We offer the Own My Life Personal Development Group
- ↑40%**  
Our referrals have increased by 40% since the COVID-19 Pandemic
- We also provide accompaniment to Garda stations and if you need to you can ask for a Garda who is specially trained in Domestic Abuse
- 0505 23 999 HELPLINE**
- 087 950 1299 HELPLINE**
- Barnardos**  
*Because childhood lasts a lifetime*  
We refer to Barnardos TLC Kidz group work recovery programme for children and young people 5-18 and mothers in North Tipperary area.
- We have translation services available
- We are referral agents for DV Rent Supplement. **Call us to find out more**
- TRAUMA INFORMED CARE**  
All of our team are trained in Trauma Informed Care
- Healthy Relationships Programme**  
We deliver the Healthy Relationships Programme to Secondary schools Students – delivering in 12 schools last year.
- We provide Court Accompaniment in Nenagh and Thurles Courthouse
- CUAN SAOR WOMEN'S REFUGE**  
The service for South Tipperary is Cuan Saor Refuge & Support Services CLG. 1800 57 67 57

**NTDC** North Tipperary Development Company

**TÚSLA** An Ghnóthairíocht Linn An Ghnóthairíocht Linn An Ghnóthairíocht Linn Child and Family Agency

An Bólaí Tí agus Cúir agan Comhionannais Department of Justice and Equality

**hi**

## 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 2022

- Living Works Start – HSE -
- HSE – Working with Person’s Bereaved by Suicide
- NTDC Induction Training
- Domestic Violence Awareness Training – Adapt.
- Social Housing, Emergency Accommodation and the Law with Mercy Law Resource Centre – Safe Ireland
- Risk Assessment & Safety Planning Training with Davina James-Hanman – Safe Ireland
- Cyber Skills & Cyber Ireland Webinar - Cyber Crime Against Women - Risks, Legislation and Actions
- Criminal Justice System Training – Safe Ireland
- Trauma informed Practice
- The Criminal Justice System- Supporting Domestic Violence Victims
- GDPR workshop
- Domestic Violence and Child Protection
- Enclude Training System Admin Level 2
- ESafe Training Reports
- ESafe Reports Training Level 2
- ESafe Community of Practice Workshop Dublin
- TASC Financial Resilience Training – Safe Ireland
- Know Sex Trafficking Training – Ruhama
- ASIST – Living Works/HSE
- Manual Handling – North Tipperary Development Company

## **Appendix 2—Webinars/Conferences Attended 2022**

- ODVSS - What we know now - How we can shape the future - marking 25 years
- Community of Practice Barnardo's – 'Getting it Right for and with Children'

## **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>