



Aoibhneas CLG

Annual Report
2019

**Over 30 Years Empowering Women & Children
to live in freedom and safety from Domestic Abuse**



The most life changing, encouraging, caring, beautiful people I have ever met in my life, John* feels the same. So helpful, kind, nothing but care, love, empathy and more. I will never forget my experience staying here. Thank you will never be enough.

I will miss the love I have been given. I am blessed to have met each and every one of the staff, if not for this place I don't know how I would have survived another day before arriving. Beautiful, kind, loving from the first day I entered. I am now a stronger and different person. No words can describe how much Aoibhneas and staff has meant to me.



Aoibhneas CLG
Trading as Aoibhneas
Registered Charity Number 8955
Company Registration Number 131675

Registered office
Hayden Brown
Grafton Buildings
Grafton Street
Dublin 2

Business address
PO BOX 5504
Coolock
Dublin 17

Table of Contents

1 Case Study

3 A Note from our Chairperson

5 A Note from our Chief Executive Officer

6 2019 At a Glance

10 Organisation Mission, Vision and Purpose

12 Our Services

12 Refuge & Helpline Support

13 Outreach & Community Support

14 Court Preparation and Accompaniment

14 Training & Networking

15 Advocacy and Lobbying

16 2019 Strategic Highlights

18 2019 Challenges

20 Organisation Structure, Governance & Management

20 Our Organisational Structure

20 Board of Management

21 Board Committees

23 Financial Accounts

28 Acknowledgments

Case Study

Our case study provides an insight into women and children's unique experience of domestic abuse and how the supports we provide need to reflect their real and substantive needs. Our work and involvement with a family may commence from helpline, refuge, outreach, court, or drop-in and the importance of that is that women have the scope to consider the medium of support that's right for them to best promote flexibility concerning access and transition between our services.

Mary* commenced engagement with the outreach service at Aoibhneas, following a referral from her family support worker. Mary has five children and lives in the local area with her children.

Experiences of DV

Mary has experiences of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse at the hands of her perpetrator, who is a chronic alcoholic. Mary was in a relationship for 8 years during which time she and her children experienced ongoing domestic violence. Approximately 2 years ago, Mary and her children fled their home obtaining refuge accommodation through Aoibhneas, from there accessing step-down supported accommodation, and eventually securing long term Dublin City Council housing. During this time Mary had no contact with her ex-partner who was actively seeking her and the children's location.

In 2019, Mary's ex-partner found her and began presenting abusively to the local area. During this time, the children observed their father attempt suicide and emergency services response to the incident.

Mary's ex-partner presented abusively to her home, breaking windows of her property, gaining access to her home and holding her and the children in a hostage situation.

On this occasion Mary's ex-partner was abusive, used weapons to threaten her and the children and threatened to end his life if his children and Mary did not heed his orders. Mary, with the assistance of her daughter managed to de-escalate the situation. Mary and her children escaped to the safety of a neighbour's home upon which she contacted Gardaí and armed Gardaí responded, arresting Mary's ex-partner.

Additional Needs

Mary has a mild learning difficulty and receives weekly support from her family support worker. Mary suffers anxiety and depression which she attributes to her experiences of domestic violence.

Mary was experiencing financial strain with housing rent arrears, and staff considered Mary and the children to be living in poverty. Mary expressed concern regarding the anti-social and criminal behaviour in her local area. She advised of local individuals involved in this anti-social behaviour to have identified her family as a vulnerable family presenting regularly to her home at night shouting in the letter box and throwing items at their door.

Mary has no support from her family and has no identified friends who she could rely on for support.

Family Needs

Staff identified Mary's children to be undernourished. Staff would identify this to be due to lack of financial means to access nourishing food as opposed to neglect or wrongdoing of Mary, who staff have observed to be a supportive and caring mother. The poverty the family are experiencing has resulted in the children being subject to bullying by their peers.

The children have experienced and witnessed a high level of domestic violence, the impact of which can be observed in their behaviour which, at times, can be challenging. The children ask about their father regularly to which Mary has expressed feeling uncomfortable about and telling the children their father is on holidays. One of the younger boys in the family has started copying dad's behaviour, breaking property in the home and refusing to go to school.

Interventions by Aoibhneas

Since engaging with our service, the following actions/interventions in the family's care plan have been achieved.

Domestic Violence

Following the abusive incident which prompted a referral into our outreach service, Aoibhneas assisted Mary obtaining a protection order against her perpetrator. Aoibhneas assisted Mary throughout the criminal court proceedings against her perpetrator which resulted in her perpetrator receiving a prison sentence and remaining in custody.

A danger assessment was completed with Mary. The danger assessment is a tool used by Aoibhneas to assess the likelihood of a woman being seriously injured or killed by a perpetrator. Mary scored in the extreme danger category, the highest category that can be assigned. Using the danger assessment tool, Aoibhneas liaised with local Gardaí and put a safety plan in place for Mary, in the event that Garda assistance was needed, she would be flagged as a priority.

Mary has actively engaged with staff in the exploration of psycho-educational work and safety planning regarding her experiences of domestic violence as a means to maintain her safety and prevent her from entering an abusive relationship in the future. Her access to one to one support has been regular and sustained to reflect her learning needs.

Family Needs

Mary's sons attended play therapy, while Mary and her other children took part in supervised creative play in our community Outreach office. Staff observed that the facilitated space enhanced Mary and the children's connection and communication.

Staff explored with Mary the impact of domestic violence on children, the impact of domestic violence on the parenting relationship and supporting children through their experiences of domestic violence in an open child-friendly manner.

Through interagency collaboration between the children's school, staff, and the family support worker, the children have been referred to an afterschool programme. It is hoped this will assist the children in building relationships with their peers and increasing their confidence among their peers and within social situations.

Staff submitted a child protection report to Tusla together with recommendations regarding how Mary and her children could be supported in the aftermath of their experiences of domestic violence.

Financial Needs

Due to the financial abuse Mary has experienced, her budgeting and finance skills are limited. Aoibhneas staff and the family support worker assisted Mary with weekly meal plans, budgeting and meal preparation. Aoibhneas has assisted the family financially and practically through the provision of donations and food vouchers to ensure the children have access to appropriate food and clothing.

Accommodation

Aoibhneas staff submitted a transfer request on behalf of the family. Our advocacy referenced Mary's experience of financial abuse and its link to mounting rent arrears.

A Note from our Chairperson

I am delighted to present my first Annual Report as Chairperson of Aoibhneas, Domestic Abuse Support for Women and Children ("Aoibhneas").

As I write this note, 2019 seems like a distant memory, and the world we are living in today has changed utterly. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt by many, in Ireland and across the globe. In battling the virus, global restrictions have not only led to significant socio-economic issues, they have also highlighted ongoing inequalities in our communities. Undoubtedly, you will have seen the many news reports that documented the substantial increase in domestic abuse perpetrated against women throughout the lockdown. Home, which should have been a place of safety during COVID-19, was anything but, for many.

At Aoibhneas, I am proud to say that we adapted quickly and did our best to provide continuity of care to women and children over the last six months. When Government restrictions meant that we could not operate the refuge at full capacity, we innovated and found additional accommodation to ensure continuity of care. I have been blown away by the team's dedication and professionalism in handling the crisis and their commitment to safeguarding women and children at all times. However, the pandemic only served to highlight both the importance and significant under-resourcing of the sector.

The recent Programme for Government described domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence ("DSGBV") as an epidemic in Ireland and set out several steps to tackle this, including

prioritising prevention and reduction and undertaking an audit in conjunction with NGO's and service providers. While this is a welcome development and should result in meaningful change, we have been fighting for domestic abuse agencies' visibility at regional and national committee levels for many years. Frontline domestic abuse agencies must be able to illustrate the prevalence of domestic abuse and the real impact it has on women and children. Only with the opportunity to input into new legislation and policy will we see lasting change.

When I reflect on 2019, it was a challenging year for Aoibhneas as we came up against several issues. In particular, staffing has been a challenge for the organisation as we came up against the inability to take on replacement hires and fill temporary vacancies. If the Government plan to follow through on their commitments, the focus on resourcing specialist domestic abuse services needs prioritisation.

Housing solutions also continue to be a barrier for women and children and impact our ability to bring them through a full recovery process. It is crucial that domestic abuse agencies have exposure to, and involvement in, forming homelessness policy and that the provision of accommodation for women and children at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse is prioritised. As a direct response to these issues, I am happy to say that our plans to provide step-down accommodation are progressing, as we look to support women and children continuing their journey of healing with us.



It is crucial that domestic abuse agencies have exposure to, and involvement in, forming homelessness policy and that the provision of accommodation for women and children at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic abuse is prioritised.



Despite these challenges, Aoibhneas achieved much in the twelve months, and we began 2019 with the launch of our 3-year strategic plan. At the end of the year, we met a number of our key objectives, including improving our regulatory and governance structures, developing a new brand and profile, and introducing an organisation-wide volunteer programme. 2020 and 2021 will continue to see us progress against a range of additional objectives, and we look forward to updating you in the years to come.

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the staff and management team for the immense work they have undertaken over the past few months. I know that they see an increase in demand for their work and that many of them have had to adapt to different ways of working.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us all in various ways, but as frontline support, they bear the impact more than most. In particular, I want to thank CEO Emma Reidy, whose dedication and commitment know no bounds.

I want to thank the Board for trusting me in this role and for supporting me and the organisation in what has been a very busy period.

Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to every individual and organisation that has supported us throughout 2019, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have experienced support and solidarity in our community and beyond like never before.

I hope that events over the last few months are a catalyst for positive and meaningful change and can make a difference in how we support women and children living through domestic abuse across the country.



Melanie Farrell
Chairperson

A Note from our Chief Executive Officer

We bring you our 2019 Annual Report as we enter into our 6th month of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is significant because in the space of 6 months, our services have faced unprecedented pressures which have necessitated both the adaptation of service interventions and transformation of our service delivery to reflect a new way of providing safe access to crisis accommodation and recovery supports to women and children experiencing domestic abuse. The key to our success has been reframing how we do things, including the Board and staff's ability to adapt in real-time. Board and staff have stepped up not just in support of a national effort but also an Aoibhneas effort, demonstrating collective agility and resilience.

This Annual Report concerns, of course, our activities in the preceding year. Set against the backdrop of our strategic objectives, we have delivered some key achievements, which include maintaining service provision and thereby supporting 1,266 women and children. Our ability to reach and safeguard families experiencing domestic abuse remains our number one priority. Looking back to 2019, I can say it was a year of progress, much of which came from the momentum of the launch of our Strategic Plan, laying the foundation of a strong strategic focus. 2019 was not without its challenges and to bring our end of year 2018 deficit of €104,468 in line, we had difficult decisions to make regarding spending, particularly in the area of recruitment and replacement hires. As we continue to come up against the lack of medium-term housing options post refuge, 2019 saw us progress our plans to develop a step-down accommodation solution for families.

We are working with Dublin City Council on the development of 14 housing units which will increase our ability to respond to the medium-term accommodation needs of our families. In addition, we progressed our plans to refurbish a house adjacent to our refuge centre into a dedicated therapeutic space for children. This will be an important development as we continue to respond to the increased recovery needs of children, who are very often the invisible casualties of domestic abuse. 2019 saw the provision of support to 739 children across refuge and outreach, a 17% increase on our 2018 figure, highlighting the need for continued specialist support for children. While we have made considerable progress concerning our fundraising efforts, we will require the continued support of donors to progress the development of this much needed centre for children, a first of its kind in Ireland.

Lastly, while our year-end financial results show stability, this will be an on-going challenge in the context of the ever-increasing level of demand for our services. The financial implications of COVID-19 so too will be immense when we consider the layered work we undertake with families. Our adapted post COVID-19 services will need to reflect a woman's and child's journey from crisis to recovery to healing and their need for sustained engagement and support.



Emma Reidy
Chief Executive Officer

2019

At a Glance

2019 Service Summary

1,226 women and children



supported through access to refuge, drop-in and outreach service. Total Interventions:

Women 16,225 Children 2,144

739 children



supported (directly/indirectly) through access to refuge, drop-in and outreach service.



116 family

admissions to refuge.

174 child

admissions to refuge.

1,055 families



Aggregate number of families in receipt of outreach and community support.

487 women



supported (directly/indirectly) through access to refuge, drop-in and outreach service.

8,181 (())

Helpline calls.

255 women and 448 children



supported through Outreach and Community Service.

6,211 Outreach Contacts

This includes:

2,168

Support Calls



2,832

Indirect Support Calls



676

Support Sessions



97

Play/Art Therapy Sessions



123

contacts

Freedom Group



85

Holistic Therapies



145 **Crisis**

Support Calls



123 contacts

Aftercare & External Facilities Group



Within our refuge setting we provided the following interventions:

Interventions Women

12,630

Interventions Children

2,013

Support Groups (Contacts)

560

Holistic Services (Sessions/Attendees)

86/512

Breakfast Club (Contacts)

622

Homework Club/Literacy Classes (Contacts)

51

In 2019, Aoibhneas provided domestic abuse support to women and children from **41 different nationalities**. The diversity we see in our client's backgrounds demonstrates the global nature of domestic abuse and its prevalence in our diverse society of today.



I was terrified coming into refuge, but my experience here was totally relaxing and stress free. I would recommend this place to anyone experiencing domestic violence.

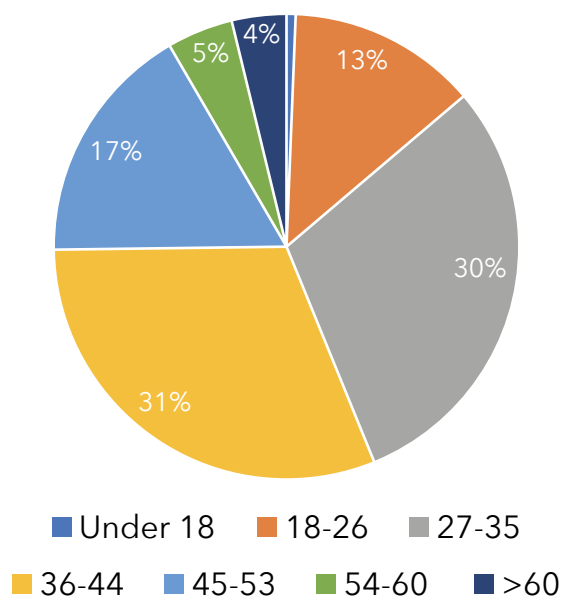


The diversity of our client base has grown over the past number of years and this has meant that as an organisation we have had to adapt our service to ensure we can cater for the needs of women and children from all backgrounds. In addition to promoting cultural awareness across the organisation and working with women and children on an individual basis to cater for their specific cultural needs, in 2019 we updated our resident's handbook to reflect the linguistic needs of our diverse refuge population. Our handbook now includes accessible information regarding all aspects of a family's stay which also includes local services and amenities.

While we supported clients from 41 different nationalities, **54% of our client base** identified themselves as Irish, highlighting the prevalence of domestic abuse in Irish society today. When it comes to age, domestic abuse does not discriminate and 2019 saw a diverse range of age categories among clients, with our youngest adult refuge resident

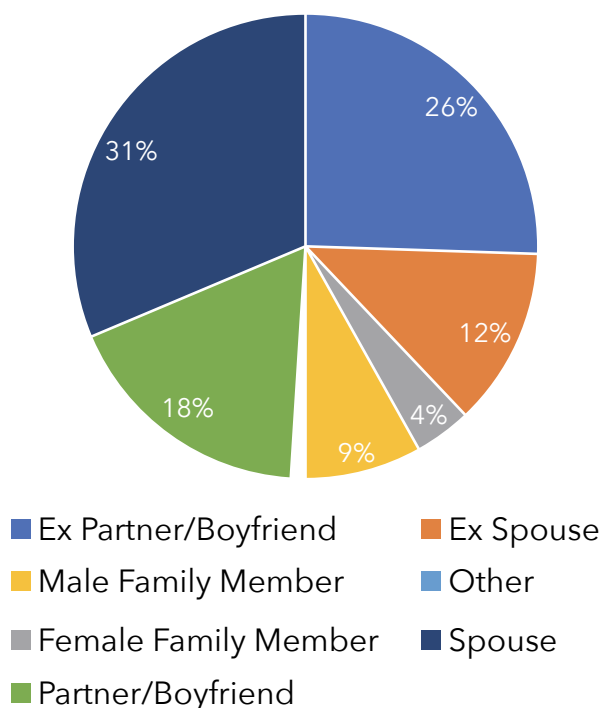
aged **17 years** to our oldest outreach client aged **71 years**. **31% of women** that presented to us were between the ages of **36-44**, with **30% in the 27-35** age category. **4% of clients** that presented to us were over **60 years of age**.

Client Age Profiles

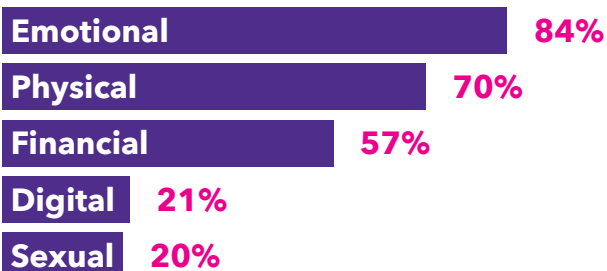


49% of women we supported identified their perpetrator as a current spouse, partner or boyfriend. **12% of women** disclosed an ex-spouse as their abuser and **26% of women** said they were abused by an ex-partner or boyfriend; these figures suggest that intimate partner relationships represent the majority of cases whereby domestic abuse gets perpetrated. However, **9% of clients** disclosed that their abuser was a male family member while **4%** identified a female family member as the abuser, this represents an increasing trend of adult child to parent violence. In recent years we associate this as a feature of the housing crisis whereby more adult children are remaining in or are returning to the family home, we have also seen increased cases of child to parent abuse when an adult child is acting also as the parents caregiver.

Relationship to Abuser



At a client's initial access to our service, they report their experience of abuse, we note experiences as wide ranging, overlapping and escalating depending on the stage into the violence we first engage the client. Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse experienced by clients (**84%**), while physical abuse followed second with **70% of clients** experiencing abuse of that nature. **33% of clients** presented to refuge with physical injuries. Injuries ranged from concussion/head trauma to broken bones, choking, bruising and cuts, among others. Clients noted the following weapons used in a physical assault: glass bottle, brush, hammer, pole, machete, chair. Of the **174 children** that accessed refuge, **4 children** presented with significant physical injuries this included: broken bones, bruising, strain and sprain.



Many clients disclosed more than one type of abuse with financial abuse being another common experience.

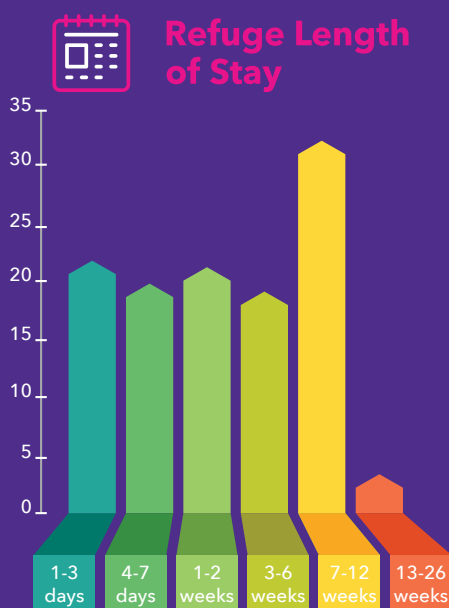
Digital abuse is a more recent type of abuse experienced by clients and continues to be used by perpetrators as another form of coercive control. We saw a **5% increase** of digital abuse reported to us based on 2018 figures. Clients outlined that often when they attempted to end the relationship that they experienced heightened digital abuse which ranged from being sent negative, insulting, or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, or DMs. Clients recalled having movements and activities monitored and scrutinised using sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Clients also experienced unwanted demands made and threats of unwanted or explicit pictures shared through social media.

26% of 487 women in receipt of direct support through Aoibhneas had some form of order in place, this included protection, safety, barring, maintenance and access orders. **25% of women** informed us that prior to accessing our service they had sought Gardaí assistance regarding their experience of domestic abuse. Further to that, **26% of women** informed us of past or ongoing involvement with Child Protection Social Workers. This indicates that multi-disciplinary services often share insight into a family's experience of domestic abuse before we commence engagement with a family. It indicates a long and arduous process that women and their children face concerning 'the leaving' and how leaving or ending an abusive relationship does not mean the end of the violence.

In 2019 we provided support to **739 children** across refuge and outreach. Of that number, **38%** of the children were between the ages of **6-12** and **34%** were **under 5 years of age**.

This is a **17%** increase on the number of children we provided support to in 2018 and highlights the need for continued specialist support for children in a household where domestic abuse is taking place. The support we provide to children is a vital aspect of our work and we know that children who live with and are aware of violence in the home face many challenges and risks that can last throughout their lives. Our child refuge population diverges quite considerably week to week, so we promote interventions that facilitate and adapt to the needs of family's in receipt of refuge. This included in 2019 the delivery of homework club, literacy classes, breakfast club, a summer programme with sessions running twice a day 5 days a week to cater to toddlers/babies and childrens'/ youths' more distinguished needs. We also explored themes of anger, anxiety, domestic abuse, night terrors etc. through story time, creative play, mindfulness and visualisation.

8% of children that presented alongside mum were **18 and over**, which is indicative of how child adult dependents themselves have few options concerning access to social welfare assistance, housing assistance and free third level education.



Thank you very much for everything. I'm going home but you helped me find happiness and safety.

Whatever steps a woman decides to take in relation to housing, we aim to work alongside and advocate on her behalf to support her and her children. These choices will invariably impact on length of stay. The most common length of refuge stay is **between 7 and 12 weeks**. Following an intake to refuge a period of assessment commences, during this period we complete a needs survey with each woman both with regard to her and her children's identified needs. This guides our care plan and interventions by ultimately providing client and team a clear set of expectations and objectives. An increased length of stay for us generally facilitates a more substantial focus in areas of psychoeducational support, housing or tenancy supports and legal protection.



Organisation Mission, Vision and Purpose



Mission

Mission

We at Aoibhneas aim to empower women and children to live in freedom and safety from domestic abuse through a healing process that nurtures and enables positive growth and societal change.



Vision

Vision

To centre stage women and children who are or have been affected by domestic abuse in the provision of a complete continuum of care arrangement within a service of excellence.

A complete continuum of care arrangement provides for the access of women and children to supports at earliest intervention through provision of prevention and awareness raising programmes, community-based support, refuge accommodation, transitional accommodation and post refuge/ transitional support.



Purpose

Purpose

To provide short term crisis accommodation to women and children who are forced to leave their homes due to domestic abuse.

To promote the welfare and safety of women and children that access crisis accommodation through our refuge service.

To promote the welfare of the family by identifying and responding to the needs of women and children.

To provide women and children who access Refuge, Outreach, Drop in and Court Preparation and Accompaniment and Helpline with practical and emotional support.

To provide a violence free environment for women and children using our services.

To link, engage with and sign-post to agencies who provide specialist services and to facilitate women and children's access to these services.

To provide a continuum of care across all our services to women and children.



Beliefs/Values

Beliefs and Values

Domestic Abuse in all its forms is a violation of basic human rights. All women and children have a right to live free from abuse and furthermore a child's right to safety is paramount.

Being 'safe' is more than being physically safe - it includes all aspects of wellbeing.

Domestic Abuse has a negative impact on a person's wellbeing and in turn a community's wellbeing.

Women and Children have a fundamental right to safety in their home and the existence or threat of abuse deprives them of this right.

Domestic Abuse doesn't exist in a vacuum.

How we respond as services, family members and friends is crucial. This response is informed by culture, media and societal perceptions of Domestic Abuse and Gender Inequality. We work to influence others and to create change.

When I arrived at Aoibhneas I felt safe, the staff were amazing, welcome and warm. They support you in so many ways. They are a fantastic team. I really am so grateful to them all.

The kids were so upset but they settled very quickly, thanks to the staff at Aoibhneas. I'm going to have a few tears going. I am going to miss everyone. In my opinion you don't get the appreciation you truly deserve for all the hard work you do.



Values

'One Family One Team'
Dignity
Respect
Compassion
Empathy
Inclusion
Trust
Unity and Partnership

Values

Co-operational Service Excellence
Efficiency
Innovation
Value for Money
Embrace and Drive Change
Pursue Growth and Learning
Build Open and Honest
Relationships with Communication

Our Services

Refuge & Helpline Support

We provide safe emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic abuse through provision of **10 self-contained units for 10 families**. The refuge offers facilities such as a communal kitchen, dining area, sitting room, laundry facilities, courtyard and outdoor children's play area. Women and children can access refuge accommodation on a 24 hour, 365 days a year.

In 2019, we supported **116 families** and **174 children** with access to refuge. Within our refuge setting, we provide a number of interventions for women and children. In 2019, we supported women through **12,630 interventions** and children through **2,013 interventions**. These interventions included:



560

Support Groups



512

Holistic Services Attendees



622

Breakfast Club



51

Homework Club/Literacy Classes

24 Hour Helpline

We provide access to a 24-hour confidential helpline service for women and for agencies, family or friends ringing on behalf of women, looking for information about aspects of their current situation.

The helpline provides:

- Practical and emotional support to women who have or are experiencing physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse.
- Advice and assistance on legal, housing, social welfare, rights and entitlements, budgeting.
- Information, advocacy and referral to appropriate services.
- Referral to refuge.

In 2019, we provided support via helpline with **8,181 calls**.



Halloween comes to Aoibhneas



Story time - Refuge



Christmas comes to Aoibhneas



Christmas Grotto

Outreach & Community Support

In addition to our refuge and helpline, we provide a community-based service that enables women experiencing domestic abuse to access the necessary supports in a range of locations. The outreach service also offers a continued service to women post-refuge who return home or relocate elsewhere. Aoibhneas outreach service spans across all of North Dublin; from inner city to north county Dublin. This service offers:

- Practical and emotional support to women who have or are experiencing physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse.
- Advice and assistance on legal, housing, social welfare, rights and entitlements, budgeting.
- Information, advocacy and referrals to appropriate services.
- Freedom programme.
- Aftercare programme.
- Alternative therapies.
- Play and Art therapy.
- Court accompaniment and preparation service.



Community Offices - Play Therapy Space

In 2019, we provided support to **255 women** and **448 children** through our outreach programme. Within our outreach and community setting, we provided the following interventions:

 **2,168**
Support Calls

 **2,832**
Indirect Support Calls

 **676**
Support Sessions

 **145**
Crisis Support Calls

 **97**
Play/Art Therapy Sessions

 **85**
Aftercare and External Facilitated Groups

 **123**
Freedom Group Sessions

 **85**
Holistic Therapies

As part of our community support, we provide a drop-in service which offers a safe confidential space for women to talk and work through their difficulties with trained staff who will provide:

- Practical and emotional support to women who have or are experiencing physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse.
- Advice and assistance on legal, housing, social welfare, rights and entitlements, budgeting.
- Information, advocacy and referral to appropriate services.
- Court accompaniment and preparation service.
- Referral to refuge.
- Post refuge support.

In 2019, we provided support to **89 families** through our drop-in service.

Court Preparation and Accompaniment

The legal system and court process can be a daunting prospect for anyone. Knowing your rights and entitlements, as well as understanding how the system works and what you can expect when you go before the courts goes a long way in supporting women obtaining relevant legal orders to increase their safety. We provide a Court Accompaniment and Preparation Service for women, which offers support in the following areas:

- Advice on legal orders, court process and court application process.
- Court accompaniment - (application/ court hearing) in District, Circuit and High Court.
- Court preparation-assistance formulating, preparing and delivering case.
- Assistance in legal aid application and gathering necessary and applicable documents.
- Information and referral to outreach, refuge and drop in service.
- Linkage/Advocacy with Gardaí, solicitors, barristers, social workers and legal personnel.
- Post court support/debrief.

I don't know where I'd be if it weren't for Aoibhneas. I feel confident now and I understand that the situation I was living in no woman deserves.

In 2019 we supported **184 women** through our Court Preparation and Accompaniment service.

Training & Networking

Aoibhneas recognises that in order to reduce the number of people affected by domestic abuse, we must work towards community and societal change.

Aoibhneas provides specialist training to statutory groups, non-statutory groups, family resource centres, women's groups and specialist domestic violence services responding to domestic violence. We have designed a positive relationships programme, which is delivered to Secondary Schools and Youthreach. All training provided by Aoibhneas is tailored to meet the identified needs of those requesting the training. Our prevention work involves awareness raising, building relationships, promoting understanding of domestic abuse, the need for zero tolerance and working together.



International Women's Day at Aoibhneas Community Offices

In 2019, we delivered **13 targeted training sessions** to Target Counselling, Midwives through Trinity College, Social Care Students at Technology University Dublin, Merchants Quay Ireland, Dublin Simon Community, Crosscare, De Paul Ireland, Family Hubs, North Dublin Regional Task Force, Secondary School Students and Gardaí.



Social Care Students - TUD Training and Visit

We deserve much better in life and I just realised that because of all you ladies and the work you do. I'll be forever grateful. I will always remember your lovely and encouraging words.

Further to the targeted training sessions referenced, we collaborated with colleagues in Sonas to deliver joint training as part of the launch of our Balbriggan Hub. Training was provided to: Pavee Point, Aster Family Support, Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force, Scoil Ciaran/Our Lady of Consolation schools Donnycarney, Balbriggan Gardaí, St Helena's Resource Centre.

In addition to training, networking and awareness raising is a vital aspect of our work and we have developed local referral pathways and networks with key stakeholders such as Gardaí, GPs, local community groups, with emphasis on seldom heard and hard to reach communities.

In 2019 we engaged in **109 targeted networking events** and **14 awareness raising events**.

Advocacy and Lobbying

Advocacy and lobbying are central to the work that we do in our mission to effect societal change and change the perception of domestic abuse in our communities. In 2019 we continued to lobby relevant stakeholders and Government officials in relation to various issues we faced as an organisation and sector. Our media engagement strategy also ensures we keep the issue of domestic abuse on the agenda.



President Michael D. Higgins visit to Aoibhneas

My wish would be more could believe in themselves and this journey.

2019

Strategic Highlights

2019 was another year of progress for Aoibhneas. We provided frontline support to **1,226 women and children** across all our strands of service. The safeguarding of women and children continued to be the number one priority and we also saw a number of significant milestones achieved within the period.

The launch of our 3-year strategic plan was the first of its kind for Aoibhneas and set out eight strategic objectives, in line with our mission to empower women and children to live in freedom and safety from domestic abuse. Our objectives range from maintaining and improving quality of service, expanding service provision to improving regulation and governance structures and developing sustainable and alternative funding structures. A timeline was set against each objective and a number of objectives were met in 2019, including:

1. Improvement of regulation and governance structures, processes and infrastructure

The area of Governance has been a significant and ongoing focus for the Board. In 2019 we adopted the Voluntary Governance Code while also finalising the adoption of the Board Handbook. 2019 also saw the adoption of Statement of Recommended Practice for charity accounts (SORP).

2. Develop a Volunteer programme

In October 2019 we launched our pilot volunteer programme and following a recruitment, training, and induction period our volunteers went live in November!



As part of our initial launch we allocated volunteers' practical tasks to assist us at one of our busiest periods by answering and making calls, sorting, and tidying donations and delivering donations and Christmas presents to women and children. We considered the programme a real achievement given we were able to support more than 100 families by way of food, toy and clothing donations at Christmas!

3. Develop a brand and profile

Another key milestone in 2019 was the launch of Aoibhneas' new brand. The aim of the re-brand project was to reflect the organisation as it stands today, as much more than just a refuge for women and children but a holistic community support and a voice for the vulnerable. The project, which took place over a number of months, saw input from key stakeholder groups.

In line with our vision of centre staging women and children in the fight against domestic abuse, 2019 was an active year for the organisation in terms of raising the profile of domestic abuse and lobbying the Government for continued supports.



In March we launched our **'One Day Census'**, which highlighted the number of interventions the service has in one day. The aim of the one-day census was to educate the public

about just how critical an organisation like ours is and the extent of the support needed on a daily basis for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. The report received widespread national media coverage and enhanced our media presence while representing the issue of domestic abuse and the work we undertake at Aoibhneas.

In August we opened an integrated domestic and sexual violence service in Balbriggan in collaboration with Sonas, DRCC and our core funder Tusla. The first of its kind, the service provides the community with a full range of support for those affected by domestic and gender-based violence.



Launch of the Balbriggan Hub

As we continue to come up against the lack of medium-term housing options post refuge, 2019 saw us progress our plans to develop a step-down accommodation solution for families. We are working with Dublin City Council on the development of 14 housing units which will increase our ability to respond to the medium-term accommodation needs of our families.



Planned site for children's centre

In addition, we are progressing plans to refurbish a house adjacent to our refuge centre that will be repurposed into a dedicated therapeutic space for children and young adults.

Through our training, networking and awareness raising, we have had the opportunity to build strong inter-agency partnerships which has helped to promote Aoibhneas and our services to important stakeholders. Our brand and its reach is really important when it comes to informing services and agencies of our work because women typically make first contact following an incident of abuse in a service or with a person that they trust or know. This is a critical stage for women and children because if the response they receive is not what they were hoping for they may fail to follow through with access to further supports and therefore internalise their experiences.

Through our engagement with services and agencies in the areas of screening, responding and referring into our specialist service we promote the idea of early response and intervention. While self-referral forms the main referral type other common referral sources include family/friends, Gardaí, social work, legal aid, family support worker, housing, and homeless services.

2019

Challenges

While a number of significant milestones were achieved throughout the year, 2019 proved difficult in relation to service delivery for a number of reasons. As we continue to grow our community outreach and participate as a voice of authority on the issue of domestic abuse, we are experiencing increased demand across all aspects of our service and a number of issues have meant an inability to cater for this increase.

As an organisation we pride ourselves on building a professional multi-disciplinary team to deliver specialist domestic abuse support to women and children. However, the biggest challenge for Aoibhneas remains losing key personnel and the instability this brings for the organisation.

Staff employed in this sector have a right to terms and conditions of employment that recognise the highly specialised and trauma focused nature of the work. Improved terms and conditions of employment should include the payment of increments to staff.

Last year we had a number of temporary vacancies within our outreach and community team that we were unable to replace. As a result of our inability to resource our outreach and community team we were unable to maintain programmes and supports in 2019 and this is reflected in our reduced outputs in art therapy, play therapy, group work (external) and therapeutic group work.

As a service, we respond to crisis and complex needs with a duty of care and a consciousness that is in keeping with our ethos of promoting safety and facilitating recovery. We understand that the work we do also carries an impact on our frontline team. As a result, in 2019, we undertook a number of initiatives to support staff at an individual, departmental and team level in meeting everyday case challenges. It is a necessary investment in our staff team that is resource intensive in nature. At a time when staffing levels were low, ensuring that we continued to invest in our frontline staff represented an additional challenge.

Our service provision has been severely impacted by the lack of sustainable, safe and alternative move on options available to family's resident in refuge. This has impacted the length of stay of families in what is a crisis-based service and the increased demands on our frontline staff. With that in mind, we worked with leading homeless and housing providers in the design and implementation of policy concerning domestic abuse and staff team training within the homeless sector.

These emerging relationships have allowed us to generate informal referral routes into family hubs and centres.



2019

There is an urgent need to develop step down accommodation of our own that will allow us to hold families for longer periods after the crisis has subsided, so families can avoid having to enter homeless accommodation and can continue their recovery and healing journey provided by a specialist service.

Separately, but also of great concern, is the impact of recent criminal networks within the catchment area of our service which remains a grave consideration for our staff, women and children and network of services. We have over the year liaised and worked with the Gardaí and relevant stakeholders in order to raise concerns and contribute to the ongoing challenge of keeping our communities safe.

The greatest challenge we continue to face, both as an organisation and as a sector, is our invisibility. Although COVID-19 has put a much-needed spotlight on the issue of domestic abuse, both in Ireland and around the world, we remain a sector that is often left behind. One that has no real involvement or engagement with Government on issues that gravely impact every community across the country. In order to move forward and prioritise prevention and early intervention, we must have visibility at national level and we hope that the commitment set out in the new programme for Government will follow through on this.



I had the greatest experience of my life, I wish with all my heart to involve myself in the future, so I can do something good and beautiful for other people who are in the same situation as I was. I would like to thank you through this letter, you are wonderful people with a big heart, you knew how to help me not give up and to take strength from my experiences. Thank you very much.

I am very grateful for all the work you have done with me and my sons. Aoibhneas will remain in my heart throughout my life, you are a very strong and beautiful team which gives so many of us positive energy.



Organisation Structure, Governance & Management

Aoibhneas is constituted as a company limited by guarantee as set out under parts 1 – 15 of the Companies Act 2014. Its purpose and objectives are set out in its Memorandum of Association and how it conducts its business is set out in its Articles of Association. Both of these documents (now the Constitution) are publicly available from the Companies Registration Office website (www.cro.ie).

Our Organisational Structure

The Management and staff team provide a multidisciplinary range of practical, emotional and therapeutic supports for women and children. Our frontline team includes Keyworkers, Social Care Workers, Outreach Workers, a Court Accompaniment Worker, Weekend and Night Support Workers and an Activity Worker.

One Family One Team

Board of Management

Members of the Board of Management offer their services on a voluntary basis. They direct the organisation's affairs while meeting the appropriate interests of its stakeholders and comply with all necessary legislation and regulation.

[Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations:](#)

Aoibhneas adopted recommended guideline actions for compliance for a Type C organisation as defined by the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations (www.governancecode.ie).

We adopted the journey in 2018 and this is updated on the Governance Code website - www.governancecode.ie where we are listed as a fully compliant organisation.



Board of Directors

Management

Management Team

CEO
Social Care Leaders

Multi-Disciplinary Team

Social Care Workers
Keyworkers
Outreach Workers
Court Accompaniment Worker
Weekend and Activity Support Workers
Night Support Workers



Board members do not receive remuneration in respect to their services to the charity. There have been no contracts or arrangements entered into during the financial year in which a Board member was materially interested or which were significant in relation to the charity's activities.

All Board members are independent.

Board Committees

The Board operates the following sub-committees:

- Finance Committee.
- Strategic Committee.
- Risk Management and Health and Safety Committee.
- Human Resources & Staffing Committee.

The Finance Committee monitors and reviews the financial performance of the company. It provides an independent review of the annual budgets, forecasts, monthly management and annual financial statements and reports. The Committee also makes recommendations to the Board as relevant.

The Strategic Committee sets the organisations strategic objectives over the medium and long term. The Committee is responsible for developing the organisations strategic plan and for setting realistic KPI's to evaluate performance of both the Board and management team in line with the plan. The Committee is also responsible for evaluating and assessing growth opportunities for the organisation and to report said opportunities back to the Board.

The Risk Management and Health and Safety Committee monitors risk within the organisation by promoting that the management of risk is the concern of everyone, management of risk is part of normal day to day business, and the process for managing risk is logical and systematic and should be implemented on a routine basis and integrated with service delivery. The Committee ensures risk management is an integral and ongoing part of its management process, is as simple and straightforward as possible and that structures and responsibilities are clearly defined.

The Committee sets out to

- Determine an appropriate method for addressing identified risks.
- Repeat the process of risk identification on an appropriate periodic basis.
- Assess identified risks on an appropriate periodic basis.
- Provide for monitoring and reporting at various levels of management.



Thank you for all your help support and guidance on this journey. All the staff were very helpful. You have made my transition to living a different life even though hard a lot more realistic and in that I realised more how capable I am. Thank you.



The Human Resources & Staffing Committee assists the Board in ensuring that all pertinent human resources and staffing issues are reviewed, monitored and highlighted to the Board as necessary. It ensures that best practice recruitment and selection processes are in place and utilised in full and that future hiring requirements are identified and planned as efficiently and effectively as possible. The Committee also supports the CEO in the resolution of day-to-day human resources and staffing issues where input is requested by the CEO.



Board Member	Board Meeting	Finance Subcommittee and Risk Management	HR Subcommittee	Strategy and Fundraising Subcommittee	Retired/ Appointed
Richard Plenty	4/6			2/2	Co-opted Director
Eilish McDonnell	0/1				Retired 2.7.19
Cristina Santamaria	6/6	1/3	1/1	2/2	Retired 22.2.20
Donal Costello	3/6	3/3 RM			
Marie- Aude Gagnon Rousseau	0/3				Retired 2.7.19
Melanie Farrell	6/6			2/2	
Fiona Scott	5/6		1/1		
Aoibheann Treacy	5/6	3/3			
Ciara Savage	6/6	3/3 RM			

**"AOIBHNEAS LIMITED" COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING SHARE CAPITAL)**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
(CONTINUED) FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019**

	Restricted Funds 2019 €	Unrestricted Funds 2019 €	Total Funds 2019 €	Total Funds 2018 €
Income				
Incoming Resources from Generated Funds	-	34,360	34,360	35,028
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	1,201,110	9,460	1,210,570	1,184,470
Other Incoming Resources	-	-	-	-
Total Incoming Resources	1,201,110	43,820	1,244,930	1,219,498
Expenditure				
Cost of Generating Funds	-	-	-	-
Charitable Activities	1,165,098	13,143	1,178,241	1,303,831
Governance Costs	18,906	4,613	23,519	20,135
	1,184,004	17,756	1,201,760	1,323,966
Net (Outgoing)/Incoming Resources Before Transfers	17,106	26,064	43,170	(104,468)
Transfers	-	-	-	-
Transfers Between Funds	-	-	-	-
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	17,106	26,064	43,170	(104,468)

The Statement of Financial Activities has been prepared on the basis that all operations are continuing operations.

There are no recognised gains and losses other than those passing through the Statement of Financial Activities.

**"AOIBHNEAS LIMITED" COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING SHARE CAPITAL)**

**BALANCE SHEET (CONTINUED)
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2019**

	2019		2018	
	€	€	€	€
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	<u>338,178</u>		<u>424,177</u>	
		338,178		424,177
Current assets				
Debtors	14,144		11,260	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>717,620</u>		<u>576,728</u>	
	731,764		587,988	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	<u>(80,930)</u>		<u>(66,323)</u>	
Net current assets		<u>650,834</u>		<u>521,665</u>
Total assets less current liabilities		<u>989,012</u>		<u>945,842</u>
Net assets		<u><u>989,012</u></u>		<u><u>945,842</u></u>
Reserves				
Restricted Reserves		17,106		-
Designated Reserves		250,000		250,000
Unrestricted Reserves		<u>721,906</u>		<u>695,842</u>
Members funds		<u><u>989,012</u></u>		<u><u>945,842</u></u>

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on 12 June 2020 and signed on behalf of the board by:

Melanie Farrell
Chairperson

Aoibheann Treacy
Company Secretary

**"AOIBHNEAS LIMITED" COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND NOT HAVING SHARE CAPITAL)**

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS (CONTINUED)
FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2019**

	2019	2018
	€	€
Cash flows from operating activities		
Surplus/(Deficit) for the financial year	43,170	(104,468)
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation of tangible assets	82,843	93,349
Government grant income	(15,549)	(18,300)
Accrued expenses/(income)	27,146	1,211
<i>Changes in:</i>		
Trade and other debtors	(2,884)	449
Trade and other creditors	(12,539)	5,585
Cash generated from operations	<u>122,187</u>	<u>(22,174)</u>
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	<u>122,187</u>	<u>(22,174)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of tangible assets	(9,171)	(13,689)
Proceeds from sale of tangible assets	<u>12,327</u>	<u>-</u>
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	<u>3,156</u>	<u>(13,689)</u>
Cash flows from financing activities		
Government grant income	<u>15,549</u>	<u>18,300</u>
Net cash from financing activities	<u>15,549</u>	<u>18,300</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	140,892	(17,563)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	<u>576,728</u>	<u>594,291</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	<u>717,620</u>	<u>576,728</u>

Extract from Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Aoibhneas CLG Year ended 31 December 2019

We have audited the financial statements of "Aoibhneas Limited" Company Limited By Guarantee (the 'company') for the financial year ended 31 December 2019 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activity (Including Income and Expenditure Account), balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 3. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31 December 2019 and of its profit for the financial year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs (Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing

and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and the provisions available for small entities, in the circumstances set out in note 16 to the financial statements, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which ISAs (Ireland) require us to report to you where:

- the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the directors have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- in our opinion, the information given in the directors' report is consistent with the financial statements; and
- in our opinion, the directors' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit.

In our opinion the accounting records of the company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Stephen Brown (Senior Statutory Auditor)

For and on behalf of

Hayden Brown
Chartered Accountants and
Statutory Audit Firm
Grafton Buildings
34 Grafton Street
Dublin 2

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all of our donors who, through their generosity, allow us to provide practical assistance to women and children. I would also like to thank our funders, who recognise and support the services we provide to women and children. In 2019 we received funding from Tusla Child and Family Agency, COSC, CDETB, Applegreen, ESB.

Special thanks to Michael James and Cindy Morrissey who offered their talents and expertise to us on a pro bono basis. A special mention to family and friends of Aoibhneas staff who have assisted with repair, maintenance, and gardening, giving their time so generously to create and maintain a welcoming environment for women and children. We would like to thank our volunteers Lisa, Susan, Olga, who assisted us so generously around the Christmas period.

Finally we were honoured to welcome President Michael D. Higgins, Sabina Higgins, Lord Mayor Paul McAuliffe, Cllr Alison Gilliland, President of Sinn Féin Mary Lou McDonald, Denise Mitchell TD and Cllr Larry O Toole to Aoibhneas in 2019. We consider their interest and engagement hugely significant if we are to work together to create meaningful community and societal change.

Melanie Farrell



Colleen Cheque Presentation



Facebook Market - Aoibhneas presentation



Lord Mayor Paul McAuliffe and Councillor Alison Gilliland with the Aoibhneas Team



President Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins
Aoibhneas Refuge tour



President Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins
visit Aoibhneas



Helpline

(01) 867 0701

Admin

(01) 867 0805

Email

helpline@aoibhneas.org

General Enquiries

admin@aoibhneas.org

Registered Charity No. 8955



@aoibhneas_org



aoibhneasdomesticabusesupport



/aoibhneaswomenandchildrensrefuge