

**Aoibhneas CLG**

**Annual Report**  
**2018**



**Aoibhneas**

**Domestic Abuse Support  
for Women and Children**

*Safety. Recovery. Freedom.*



**On behalf of myself and Hannah\*, I would like to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. I walked in these doors on the 9th of June as a fragile, afraid, broken girl and I am walking out a strong, confident, complete woman.**

**I am a believer of what you put in you get out. I did have my fears and defences up because I find it hard to trust. People can hurt you if they know things so why would you tell them? Social Workers only want to take your kids. If I mention mental health I will be thrown into a category of unstable and my child will be branded unsafe.**

**Aoibhneas has completely turned around my thoughts and fears. I gave myself as an open book and not one person in here abused, misled or hurt me in any way for it.**

**You guys believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, you reassured me and picked me up when I fell. I can never thank any of you enough for what you have done for me, right down to Caroline answering the Helpline that day. Please continue to keep up your amazing work. You guys are angels in disguise, every single one of you. You saved me.**

**Client 2018**



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

**Registered office**  
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Domestic Abuse Support  
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*Safety. Recovery. Freedom.*

## A Note from our Chair

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It is with great pride that I present our 2018 Annual Report. Our report provides the background to Aoibhneas' annual activities, our mission, vision, organisational structure and our financial report for 2018.

In 2018 Aoibhneas turned 30 years old. Over three decades, Aoibhneas has grown from supporting the immediate needs of domestic abuse survivors into a multi-responsive domestic abuse support agency that provides refuge accommodation, a 24 hour helpline, a drop-in service, an outreach service, a court preparation and accompaniment service, child and youth specific services, in-house legal aid clinics, advocacy, training and prevention work as well as a suite of therapeutic and empowerment support services.

During this year, and in line with the focus of our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have reflected on our history so far, the challenges and opportunities, our successes and what remains to be accomplished. This reflective period was necessary as we sought to expand our Board of Directors, engage in the drafting of our new strategic plan 2019 – 2021 and look for new ways of partnering with other domestic abuse organisations in order to enhance opportunity of access to domestic abuse victims who are currently living in areas where there is a gap of service provision.

In this way, during the year we welcomed new directors to the Board who brought with them new perspectives and skills to complement the existing Board composition; we participated in a needs assessment project focused in North Dublin/Fingal and it is expected

that in 2019 there will be tangible results to this research with the provision of an integrated service model led by Aoibhneas, Sonas and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre.

However, despite our growth and energy to meet the needs of women and children impacted by domestic abuse, the homeless crisis that remains so prevalent continues to grossly misrepresent domestic abuse as the cause of homelessness for many women and children. Aoibhneas has been working towards integrating a model of stepdown accommodation to facilitate those families reaching the end of their time in crisis accommodation. It is with great concern that Aoibhneas sees women and children leaving emergency accommodation with no other option than to enter homeless accommodation. While Aoibhneas continues to offer support to those families through our outreach provision, there is a disconnect between the transformative aim of Aoibhneas' interventions with women and children and the re-introduction of these families into services that are not appropriate to their specific needs, endangering their ability to continue with their recovery and healing process.

In 2018, we awaited the allocation of a vacant site near our refuge centre by the HSE in order to progress the development of stepdown accommodation, unfortunately this did not materialise. However, we have continued to campaign for the transfer of this site and we are hopeful that we will see this finalised in 2019 thanks to the intervention of Dublin City Council and their support.



**I would like  
to express  
my deepest  
gratitude to  
the women and  
children that put  
their trust in us.**



Aoibhneas remains a credible and authentic voice in the sector. We continue to bring women and children affected by domestic abuse to the heart of all our planning, conversations and link-ins with our funders, partners and stakeholders. Today, as we did 30 years ago, Aoibhneas continues to empower women and children to live in freedom and safety from domestic abuse and envision the kind of societal change and growth that will allow us to create a more equal society for all.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the women and children that put their trust in us; the staff and Board of Aoibhneas who show the dedication and commitment to our values and ethos in all their actions; to our funders and donors and to our CEO, Emma Reidy, who keeps the ship steady in all weathers.

**Cristina Santamaría**  
Chair

# Organisation Purpose and Service Overview

## Mission

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

## 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.

## Summary of Aoibhneas Purpose, Beliefs, Values and Activities

Aoibhneas is tasked with providing women and children experiencing domestic abuse access to a full care arrangement which takes into consideration every woman and child's unique and specialist needs.

## 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 signpost 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 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 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 does not exist in a vacuum. How we respond as services, family members and friends is crucial.

This response is informed by cultural, media and societal perceptions of domestic abuse and gender inequality. We work to influence others and to create change.

## Values

*'One Family One Team'*

*Dignity*

*Respect*

*Compassion*

*Empathy*

*Inclusion*

*Trust*

*Unity and Partnership*

*Co-operational Service Excellence*

*Efficiency*

*Innovation*

*Value for Money*

*Embrace and Drive Change*

*Pursue Growth and Learning*

*Build Open and Honest Relationships  
with Communications*

## Activities

Our key activities undertaken in relation to our purpose include:

### Refuge Accommodation

We have 10 self-contained units for 10 families to access at any one time from our refuge centre. Facilities include communal kitchen, dining area, sitting room, laundry facilities, courtyard and children's play area. Women and children can access refuge accommodation on a 24 hour, 365 days per year basis.

### 24 Hour Helpline

Access to a 24 hour confidential helpline service to women and agencies/family/friends ringing on behalf of women who are looking for information about aspects of their current situation.

- 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, entitlements and budgeting
- Information, advocacy and referral to appropriate services
- Referral to refuge

### Drop-In Service

This service offers a safe, confidential space for women to talk and work through their difficulties with experienced 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, entitlements and budgeting
- Information, advocacy and referral to appropriate services
- Court accompaniment and preparation service
- Referral to refuge
- Post Refuge Support

### Outreach Service

Provision of a community-based service that enables women and children experiencing domestic abuse to access the necessary supports required to remain safely in their own homes and to provide post-refuge support to women and children who return home or relocate elsewhere.

This service offers support in the following areas:

- 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, entitlements and budgeting
- Information, advocacy and referrals to appropriate services

## Court Preparation and Accompaniment Service

Provision of a court preparation and accompaniment service to support in the following areas:

- Advice on legal orders, court process, court application process
- Court Accompaniment- (application/ court hearing) in District, Circuit and High Court
- Court Preparation- assistance formulating, preparing and delivering cases
- Assistance in legal aid application and gathering necessary and applicable documents
- Information and Referral to Outreach, Refuge, Drop-In Service
- Linkage/ Advocacy with Gardaí, Solicitors, Barristers, social workers and legal personnel
- Post Court Support/Debrief

We offer women and children access to a variety of therapeutic supports to complement our one to one and group work from both our refuge and community based services.

We help women identify and understand the tactics, behaviours and beliefs of abusers, identify the effects and impact of domestic abuse on them and their children, assist in recognising potential future abusers, help build self-esteem and confidence to improve the quality of their lives, provide peer support regarding their experiences, access multi-disciplinary and specialist support.

For women our activity programme consists of:

- Legal Advice Clinic
- Freedom programme
- Aftercare programme
- Parenting Programme
- Alternative holistic therapies
- CDETB evening classes - flower arranging, relaxation and cooking
- Mental Health Clinic

We identify that the parent/ child relationship requires special consideration and we aim to support mothers understand attachment, identify in their children's experience, how they can support their children in their recovery and connect/ bond with their children.

We do this with access to:

- Infant massage
- CDETB homework (family learning) club
- Weekend activity schedule

We have a role in helping children explore and make sense of their experience, the change that experience brings, reassure the abuse directly/ indirectly experienced is not their fault, understand what a healthy/ safe relationship looks like, gain confidence, trust in self and others, feel unburdened and cared for and have fun.

For children our activity programme consists of:

- Play therapy
- Midterm, Summer and Christmas schedule of events
- Breakfast club

## Training

At Aoibhneas we recognise the need to work towards social and community change. We provide specialist training to statutory groups, non-statutory groups, family resource centres, women's groups and specialist domestic abuse services responding to domestic abuse. 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.



# Organisation Structure

## 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 include Keyworkers, Social Care Workers, Outreach Workers, a Court Accompaniment Worker, Weekend and Night Support Workers and an Activity Worker.



## Organisational Structure

### Multi-Disciplinary Team

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

### Management Team

CEO  
Social Care Leaders

### Board of Management



## 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 complying with all necessary legislation and regulation.

## Subcommittees of the Board

### Finance Subcommittee

The Finance subcommittee review internal financial controls, monitor and review the financial accounts and liaise with the external auditor, accountant and CEO.

### Human Resource Subcommittee

The primary role of the HR Subcommittee is to advise and support the CEO in the fulfilment of the Board's financial and legal responsibilities in relation to employees and on other issues as requested by the Board from time to time.

### Strategic Planning Subcommittee

The primary role of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee is to oversee the strategic planning process that will result in the formulation of initial and revised versions of a strategic plan, before finalizing the *Strategic Plan 2019-2021*. To identify the strategic issues and priorities, as well as resource constraints, in the light of the changing environment and circumstances.

### Health and Safety Subcommittee

The H&S Subcommittee is made up of Staff, Management and Board. The main purpose of the health and safety committee is to provide a forum that facilitates employee participation on the steps taken to safeguard their, service users, visitor's safety, health and welfare within the workplace.



In 2018 our Board of Directors were:

*Richard Plenty*  
*Eilish McDonnell*  
*Cristina Santamaria*  
*Donal Costello*  
*Maureen Leahy (Retired 15/05/18)*  
*Marie-Aude Gagnon Rousseau*  
*Melanie Farrell*  
*Donal Gill (Retired 06/02/18)*  
*Fiona Scott (Appointed 15/05/18)*  
*Aoibheann Treacy (Appointed 15/05/18)*  
*Ciara Savage (Appointed 15/05/18)*

**Secretary**

*Richard Plenty (Outgoing)*  
*Aoibheann Treacy (Incoming)*

**Chair**

*Marie-Aude Gagnon Rousseau (Outgoing)*  
*Cristina Santamaria (Incoming)*

The Board of Management delegate the CEO and staff to work for and on behalf of Aoibhneas in pursuance of the organisation's affairs and principal activity.

The CEO is delegated responsibility for the day to day management of Aoibhneas and delegates responsibilities to staff.

**CEO**

*Emma Reidy*

# Strategic Highlights

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Our work in Aoibhneas reflects our core aim; to support women and children impacted by domestic abuse through a recovery process. In 2018 we supported **1,266 women** and **children (634 families)** through access to refuge, drop-in and outreach. This represents a **57% increase** on our 2017 figure.

We recognise the recovery process is different for each family, and our priority over the last 12 months has been to grow our service to reflect the supports women and children require at times of crisis and recovery. In 2018 we accommodated **128 families** in our 10-unit refuge facility but given high demand for refuge we were not able to accommodate a further **365 families** seeking refuge. This reflects the clear need for specialist care and accommodation for families experiencing domestic abuse and the limited access to this.

In 2018 we engaged **908 women** and **children (447 families)** in a community setting and a further **187 families** were supported through access to our court preparation and accompaniment service.

At Aoibhneas we provide access to crisis refuge accommodation to support women and children facing the unsavoury reality and last resort of leaving their homes. Women leave their familiar surroundings with their children to ensure both their own and their children's safety, a basic right in the first instance denied. Women and children who experience emotional, physical, sexual, financial and/or digital abuse are victimised by both their experience and what follows in leaving.

This may involve leaving their home without personal comfort items; becoming homeless; enrollment in a new school and/or creche and isolation from family, friends and community. Women and children commence a journey that involves facing the reality of their domestic abuse experience while confronting systematic barriers and blocks associated with breaking away from a relationship and seeking safety. This can include engaging with Gardaí, the Courts, Homeless Services, Housing Services, Medical Services to name a few. At Aoibhneas, we feel we have a collective responsibility with services and agencies to assist women and children during times of crisis by removing obstacles and bringing help, options and supports to them. With this responsibility in mind, Aoibhneas focused on expanding its community provision in 2018 to;

- Improve our service visibility and reach to meet women and children at earliest opportunity in their experience of domestic abuse
- Tailor a programme that supports a model of prevention and early intervention

## We achieved this by:

### Expansion of our Outreach Team

There is no quick fix to meeting a family's support needs in the aftermath of an abusive or violent experience. It is for this reason we pride ourselves on offering a tailored service that works alongside a woman and her children. The expansion of our outreach team to 5 outreach workers saw us offer families experiencing domestic abuse a wraparound support provision in the community.

We identify individualised patterns that occur in domestic abuse and as a result the complex and individual needs that a person presents with. Our customised approach to care plan management allows for women and children to express what they need from a service like Aoibhneas. Our service provision is not limited to a length of engagement and many families stay connected with our service for a long-term period, allowing them to access support after a crisis incident and in the recovery and healing stages that follow.

We know that for a family to access recovery and healing they need to emerge from crisis and trauma. To do this adequately, women and children require access to a range of supports over a period and at a pace that works for them. This is emphasised in the **1,143 families** that accessed our outreach service in 2018 on a rolling basis.

Our outreach workers have defined catchment areas in North Dublin, North Inner City and North County. Our part time Court Accompaniment Worker works between Dolphin House, the Criminal Justice Courts, Balbriggan District Court and Swords District Court.

By defining catchment areas, our outreach workers have fostered an approach of engagement, partnership and collective action with local community groups, professionals and state services. We launched a new referral form in 2018 that facilitated a multi working approach and direct referral pathway into our community service for anyone seeking support around domestic abuse.

### **New Outreach Premises**

In 2018 our outreach team relocated to new premises in Artane, Dublin 5. This welcome development allowed our outreach team to centralise their work and initiate development of a

community base. This has proved very successful, and in a matter of months we had a thriving service where women and children accessed one to one support and group interventions. Our outreach workers remain visible in the community, meeting women on a one to one basis in clinics and centres, networking and training local services and professionals. Our community base integrate and fuse a range of supports that women and children can access at any stage of their involvement with our service.

From our Artane base in 2018 we ran several interventions and programmes including play therapy, art therapy, holistic therapy, freedom programme, freedom friends, aftercare, drop in coffee mornings.


### **Community Initiatives**

We launched an initiative for children residing in homeless accommodation; *Freedom 4 Kids*, a 6-week programme based on four themes.


- Well-being
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking

The Foundations Project in the City Centre agreed to host this Aoibhneas initiative, delivered by artist Violet Dempsey. The aim of this group was to encourage and demonstrate the importance of sharing a creative space between primary care givers and children. Play has been proven to strengthen bonds, develop communication skills and create positive memories. We worked with 5 families over 6-week cycles. This initiative finished up mid-November and was a great success with some good outcomes regarding child development and parental attachment such as securing stable accommodation and interventions regarding PHN referrals because of engagement.





**We know that  
for a family to  
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We launched a support group *Embrace* in recognition of the correlation between domestic abuse and addiction issues and the barriers women in addiction face. The Embrace Programme examined the topic of domestic abuse, relationships, identification of healthy and unhealthy relationships, signs of an abusive relationship and the impact these relationships can have on individuals and their children as well as their parenting. The programme explored safety planning and provided information regarding legal options and how to obtain same. Moreover, participants reflected on societal and cultural beliefs about relationships and how these influence one's own understanding of relationships. In addition, the extension of the programme provided an opportunity

to complete psycho educational work such as self-care and compassion, setting boundaries, etc. There were two facilitators of the programme and the venue used was the North Community Care Service in North County Dublin.

### **Networking**

Our Outreach workers visited services to introduce Aoibhneas, our work and issue promotional material to assist in better signposting for service users and professionals. We attended **251 networking events** and delivered **15 training sessions** with the objective of establishing visibility, building an interagency relationship and formalising a referral pathway.

### Court Preparation and Accompaniment Service

The provision of a dedicated legal and court advice and accompaniment service is an important component for our clients as the judicial system can be complex and difficult to navigate. Furthermore outcomes can vary considerably. Our court accompaniment worker supports women through the court process including application of legal orders in the District, Circuit and High Court. In 2018 our part time Court Accompaniment Worker supported **187 families** with access to court preparation and accompaniment.

### Legal Aid Clinics

We established a legal aid clinic based from our refuge centre in 2018. Our volunteer Barrister Jack Murphy facilitated **34 clinics** from which **120 clients** accessed support and advice.

### Engaging with Government and Legislators

We made a commitment in 2018 to engage Ministers, Departments and Councillors regarding themes, trends and challenges we were experiencing within our frontline work. It was important for us to promote the visibility of frontline services like Aoibhneas to illustrate the prevalence of domestic abuse and the true and lasting impact it has on women and children. We want to represent our frontline service delivery by giving input and opinion to relevant agencies and departments regarding new legislation, policy and service planning. Trying to engage public representatives and seeking to promote fair representation of domestic abuse service providers at regional and national committee in areas of housing, children and justice has proved challenging.

We will continue to advocate for visibility and involvement at regional and national committee level to represent the voices and experiences of women and children and to promote enhanced access and better outcomes for all women and children who experience domestic abuse.

### Website Redesign

In June 2018 we launched our new website, which offers visitors easy to access information and guidance both from a desktop computer and mobile device with up to the minute updates from our social media accounts.


From June to December we received **19,278 unique visitors** to our website, the majority of whom accessed our website through social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter), COSC and solicitor firms.

### Governance Code

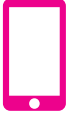
In line with best practice governance, Aoibhneas is in the process of adopting recommended guideline actions for compliance for a Type C organisation as defined by the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations ([www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie)). We adopted the journey in 2018 and this is updated on the Governance Code website - [www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie).

# 2018 Service Summary

**1,266 women and children (634 families)**   
supported through access to refuge, drop-in, court accompaniment and outreach service.


**634 women**   
supported through access to refuge, drop in and outreach services

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

**8,243** ()  
Helpline calls.

 **128 family admissions to refuge.**  
**171 child admissions to refuge.**

**319 women 461 children**   
supported through outreach and community.

**1,143 families**   
in receipt of outreach support on a rolling basis.

**187 families**   
supported through Court Preparation and Accompaniment Service.

## 7,664 Outreach Contacts

This includes:

**2,451**   
Support Calls

**3,960**   
Indirect Support Calls

**1,030**   
Support Sessions

**157**   
Play Therapy Sessions

**162 contacts**   
Freedom Group

**60 contacts**   
Aftercare Group

**62 contacts**   
External Facilitated Groups

**34**   
Legal Aid Clinics (In-house)

**120**   
Clients that accessed Legal Aid Clinics (In-house)

In 2018, Aoibhneas provided domestic abuse support to women and children from **43 nationalities**. This highlights the far reaching and pervasive existence of domestic abuse in our multi-cultural and diverse Ireland of today. While our service offers specialist advice and support to women and children who experience domestic abuse, we have had to adapt our service to promote opportunity of access and inclusion for everyone. This requires our staff team to promote cultural awareness and an ability to shape our care plans, approaches, interventions to the needs of the family in receipt of our service.

While we saw diverse access from women and children from different nationalities, **64% of families** that accessed our service identified themselves as Irish.

Of the **447 families**  
that accessed our refuge, outreach  
and drop-in service;



**25% women**  
reported concerns for their  
child/children.



**23% women**  
reported social work involvement  
at the time of our initial assessment.



**31% women**  
reported prior Gardaí involvement.



**23% women**  
had a court order in place  
prior to engagement.

This indicates patterns of ongoing abuse experienced by women and children that accessed our service and engagement with state services with an awareness of the family's past or ongoing exposure to domestic abuse.

Many referrals into our services are self-referrals. Once a woman accesses one strand of service, she can be referred internally into other service strands. This allows women and children to seamlessly transition between our service therefore better ensuring a continuum of care.

Referral into Refuge is assessed on a first come, first serve basis given the crisis nature of our service. Our outreach service saw an increase in Gardaí, social workers, addiction services, primary care and family assessment centres referring into our service. We received an average of **15-22 referrals** per month into our Outreach Service in 2018.

We see diversity in all age categories accessing our service, we noted women in the 54-60 years and 60 years + age category (**6% in 2018**) expressed a preference to engage in our community service in order to remain in their home and community. Women in these age categories expressed worry that the perpetrator would not be asked to leave the home due to age and health.

The dominant age categories for the **632 children** that accessed our service were 0-5 years and 6-12 years (**74%**). This is consistent with previous years. With these age groups in mind we ran breakfast and homework (family learning) clubs to complement the therapeutic one to one and group work. We centred much of our weekend work around the use of activities and games with children, to promote a sense of fun and excitement. We also engaged mothers in one to one and group parenting support to strengthen the bond between mother and child while assisting mothers to meet the emotional and practical support needs of their children. It highlights a need to expand and grow a range of interventions that offer preschool and school going children access to therapeutic individual and group supports.





Young people aged between 13-18 years represented the remaining **26%**. With this age group in mind we engaged in one to one work, focusing on self-esteem, healthy and unhealthy relationships, safety, sense of self. Youth have access to a dedicated space which facilitates use of consoles, chill out time, homework/study.

Our refuge accommodation has to continually adapt to the needs of our resident children and young people.

The differential between male (49%) and female (51%) children accessing our service remain balanced.

In **43%** of cases, women and children that accessed our refuge service were coming from rented accommodation.

The well documented problem of supply of housing can leave women having to make difficult decisions. In some situations, women may have to

surrender their accommodation and while resident with us seek out and obtain new accommodation. Women face countless barriers trying to obtain new accommodation. This results in some women choosing to return home, leave refuge to reside with family or friends or enter after refuge homeless services, due to a lack of alternative accommodation.

Our refuge accommodation is accessed by women and children identified in crisis, as such women may present to the service in the aftermath of a violent or abusive episode. We recognise that accessing refuge and leaving all that is familiar can be traumatic and unsettling, so it is our aim to work with a family to meet them where they are at earliest opportunity.

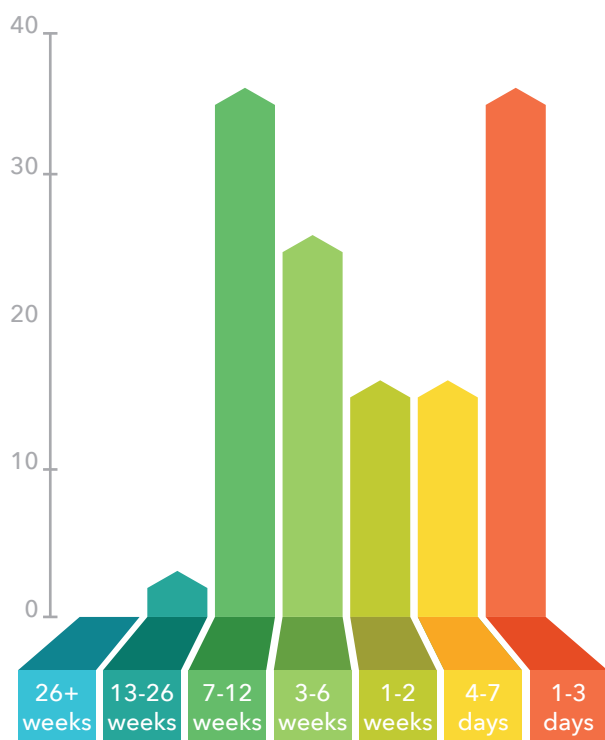
Women may choose:

- to return home once the crisis has subdued (**3%**)
- to access legal supports and safety planning before returning home (**36%**)
- not to return to the relationship, home or community (**32%**)
- to seek referral into transitional/ supported housing (**10%**)

Whatever a woman chooses around her 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.



### Refuge Length of Stay



While our Refuge and Helpline takes on national scope, our Outreach Service operates in defined catchment areas- North County, North Inner City and Dublin North. Our data indicates **79% of women and children** that access our refuge, outreach and drop in service reside in Dublin City Council and Fingal County Council.

**59% of women** we supported identified their perpetrator as a current spouse, partner or boyfriend, a further **31%** of women informed us that while their intimate relationship had ended that the abuse continued in some form.

Women that accessed refuge, outreach and our drop-in service;

**88% disclosed emotional abuse.**

This included:

- Being verbally abused
- Being undermined, ridiculed, and put down
- Being harassed, monitored and stalked
- Being threatened with self-harm, suicide and threats to kill her and/or the children
- Being told that she is a bad mother, mentally ill, stupid and deserving of the abuse
- Being prevented from sleeping
- Being threatened with physical and sexual assault

**74% disclosed physical abuse.**

This included:

- Being beaten
- Being bitten
- Being punched and slapped
- Being cut/stabbed
- Being strangled/choked/suffocated
- Being hit
- Being kicked
- Having hair pulled

**Women who accessed refuge accommodation disclosed physical abuse, 38% of these women presented to refuge with injuries.**

These injuries included:

- Pain/Ache
- Swelling
- Cut/Scrape
- Stabbing
- Choking/Suffocation
- Bruising
- Concussion/Head Trauma
- Dental Injury
- Broken/fractured bones/Dislocation

#### **44% disclosed financial abuse.**

This included:

- Being denied access to household finances for food, rent, household utilities and clothing
- Being left in debt
- Being denied child/spousal maintenance
- Being denied access to child benefit

#### **16% disclosed sexual abuse.**

This included:

- Being raped and sexually abused
- Being coerced into sex/sexual activity
- Being forced to have sex with other people
- Being denied the right to use contraception methods

#### **15% disclosed digital abuse.**

This included:

- Being told who you can or can't be friends with on Facebook and other sites
- Being sent negative, insulting or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, DMs or other messages online
- Using sites like Facebook, Twitter and others to keep constant tabs
- Sending you unwanted, explicit pictures and demands you send some in return
- Steals or insists to be given your passwords
- Constantly texts you and makes you feel like you can't be separated from your phone for fear that you will be punished
- Looks through your phone frequently, checks up on your pictures, texts and outgoing call



### Helpline

In 2018 we responded to **8,243 calls** to our refuge and outreach Helpline.

Given a lack of available units we were not able to accommodate **365 families** seeking refuge. As one of the largest providers of refuge accommodation in Ireland, this promotes our need to build capacity with access to additional units.


### Training and Networking

Aoibhneas recognise the need to work towards social and community change in promoting a preventative response to domestic abuse. In 2018 we provided **15 specialist trainings** attended by **209 participants**. Aoibhneas recognise the need to raise awareness about domestic abuse and highlight the supports available to women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

Aoibhneas also attended **251 networking** and awareness raising events to inform members of the community, local services, and agencies of the work we do and how we can support families experiencing domestic abuse.

### Some of the Training and Workshops we delivered in 2018 included:


- An Garda Siochana
- Midwives, Trinity College Dublin
- Crosscare Migrant Project and Family Hub
- Cross and Passion Secondary School
- Mount Carmel Secondary School
- Dublin Simon Community
- Institute Technology Blanchardstown
- North West Inner City Network
- Probation Services
- St Helena's Family Resource Centre
- Tallaght Rehabilitation Project
- Coolmine Drug Project
- Ana Liffey Drug Project




**It has given me more confidence to know what to do in helping clients experiencing domestic violence. From now on our team will be more consistent.**  
**Staff, Dublin Simon 2018**




**Discussions around professional limitations when dealing with domestic violence and homelessness were very helpful along with the reiteration of the importance of interagency support.**  
**Staff, Crosscare 2018**



**I thought it was very informative and really opened my eyes as I had an abusive ex-partner and feel more aware of ways to abuse that I wasn't fully aware of before. Hopefully I can now notice the signs in the future.**  
**TCD Midwives, 2018**



**The information was all factual and interesting. Found it very good and something I may look into doing further study in.**  
**ITB student, 2018**





# Client Feedback

**100% Clients felt their expectations were met having accessed our service.**

**Everyone was really helpful, and I felt respected and appreciated.**

**Client 2018**

**When I came here first, I was overwhelmed by the kindness and understanding of all the staff. I have never received such compassion and generosity in my life, which is something I will never forget. Thank you all!! All amenities available, social care staff were extremely kind and helpful, key working staff were extremely engaging, helpful and caring.**

**Staff always caring and available to listen at any time. This service went above and beyond all my expectations.**

**Client 2018**

**I was very happy with the whole team. Everybody offered 100% service to me. It is a supportive environment for women who are completely helpless. It is a God's gift for me to stay here. Thank you, guys, great job.**

**Client 2018**

**All staff at Aoibhneas were extremely kind and caring, understanding and compassionate towards me. I felt respected and supported at all times.**

**Client 2018**

**The staff were very kind and helpful. The facilities were excellent. Will never forget some of my happiest moments.**

**Client 2018**

**Some of the happiest moments in this refuge with my children. I would like to say thank you for this, the amazing support and kindness I received. You are a really great team.**

**Client 2018**

**I'm so grateful for the service and that we got a place when needed! It's an amazing service really and someday I'd like to contribute in some way to the work you do.**

**Client 2018**

**Thank you for everything. I will never forget this experience we had here. I love everybody. Thank you. God Bless everybody.**

**Client 2018**

**The feeling of being safe is priceless. The care and proactiveness of all the staff is overwhelming. Thank you, thank you from my heart, please stay in this with me until I'm fine.**

**Client 2018**

**I'm GRATEFUL for this place and of peace of mind it's given me.**

**Client 2018**

**"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)  
FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018**

	Restricted Funds 2018 €	Unrestricted Funds 2018 €	Total Funds 2018 €	Total Funds 2017 €
<b>Income</b>				
Incoming Resources from Generated Funds	-	35,028	35,028	32,912
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	1,174,245	10,225	1,184,470	1,157,813
Other Incoming Resources	-	-	-	-
Total Incoming Resources	1,174,245	45,253	1,219,498	1,190,725
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Cost of Generating Funds	-	-	-	-
Charitable Activities	1,286,289	17,542	1,303,831	1,242,843
Governance Costs	20,135	-	20,135	13,413
	1,306,424	17,542	1,323,966	1,256,256
<b>Net (Outgoing)/Incoming Resources Before Transfers</b>	(132,179)	27,711	(104,468)	(65,531)
<b>Transfers</b>	132,179	(132,179)	-	-
Transfers Between Funds	-	-	-	-
(Deficit)/Surplus for the year	-	(104,468)	(104,468)	(65,531)

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 2018**

	<b>2018</b>		<b>2017</b>	
	€	€	€	€
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets	<u>424,177</u>		<u>503,837</u>	
		<u>424,177</u>		<u>503,837</u>
<b>Current assets</b>				
Debtors	11,260		11,709	
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>576,728</u>		<u>594,291</u>	
	587,988		606,000	
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(66,323)</u>		<u>(59,527)</u>	
<b>Net current assets</b>		521,665		546,473
<b>Total assets less current liabilities</b>		<u>945,842</u>		<u>1,050,310</u>
<b>Net assets</b>		<u><u>945,842</u></u>		<u><u>1,050,310</u></u>
<b>Reserves</b>				
Designated Reserves		250,000		-
Unrestricted Reserves		<u>695,842</u>		<u>1,050,310</u>
<b>Members funds</b>		<u><u>945,842</u></u>		<u><u>1,050,310</u></u>

**"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 2018**

	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Deficit for the financial year	(104,468)	(65,531)
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation of tangible assets	93,349	94,993
Government grant income	(18,300)	(9,800)
Accrued expenses/(income)	1,211	6,186
 <i>Changes in:</i>		
Trade and other debtors	449	(4,142)
Trade and other creditors	5,585	(4,031)
Cash generated from operations	(22,174)	17,675
Net cash (used in)/from operating activities	(22,174)	17,675
 <b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Purchase of tangible assets	(13,689)	(36,048)
Net cash used in investing activities	(13,689)	(36,048)
 <b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Government grant income	18,300	9,800
Net cash from financing activities	18,300	9,800
 <b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</b>	(17,563)	(8,573)
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year</b>	594,291	602,864
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>	576,728	594,291

Cristina Santamaria  
Director

Aoibheann Treacy  
Director



## **Extract from Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Aoibhneas CLG Year ended 31 December 2018**

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We have audited the financial statements of "Aoibhneas Limited" Company Limited By Guarantee (the 'company') for the financial year ended 31 December 2018 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 2018 and of its loss 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

### **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*

### **For and on behalf of**

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

30 April 2019



## Future Plans

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Our short to medium term targets are set out in Our Strategic Plan 2019 - 2021, these are as follows:

1. Maintain and improve a quality service for women and children who experience domestic abuse
2. Maintain a service of excellence by promoting team collaboration and a high- performance culture
3. Expand and broaden our service provision
4. Improve regulation and governance structures, processes and infrastructure
5. Develop a volunteer programme
6. Develop a brand and profile
7. Develop sustainable and alternative funding structures
8. Develop a best practice data and technology management process

## Acknowledgments

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I would like to thank our donors who through their generosity allow us provide practical assistance to women and children. I would finally like to thank our funders who recognise and support the services we provide to women and children. In 2018 we received funding from Tusla Child and Family Agency, COSC, CDETB, Applegreen, ESB.

Special thanks to Michael James, Jack Murphy 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.

*Cristina Santamaria*







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/aoibhneaswomenandchildrensrefuge