

Aoibhneas CLG

Annual Report 2022







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1

Who we are and what we stand for





Who We Are

Aoibhneas was established in June 1988 to meet the needs of women and children experiencing domestic abuse living in the Ballymun area. At that time, we supported women and children from a three-bedroom flat in Ballymun. Our accommodation provision expanded in 1997 with the opening of a new purpose-built 10-unit refuge in Coolock. In addition to our refuge centre, Aoibhneas has developed and adapted its service provision to support the needs of the community and to provide a continuum of care to women and children experiencing domestic abuse through access to a 24-hour Freephone Helpline and community and outreach service covering the North County Dublin and North Dublin area.



Our Beliefs

Our work with women and children experiencing domestic abuse is underpinned by a number of core beliefs centred on the impact of domestic abuse, individual human rights and how we respond:

Domestic abuse in all its forms is a violation of basic human rights. Every woman and child has a right to live free from abuse.

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on a person's wellbeing and in turn, a community's wellbeing. In some instances, it can be fatal. Women and children have a fundamental right to safety in their own home and the existence or threat of abuse deprives them of this right.

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

Domestic abuse does not 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 positively influence others and to create 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.



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.

“

Everyone was so kind and helpful towards us. It felt like a home. Thanks very much for the love and support Aoibhneas

”



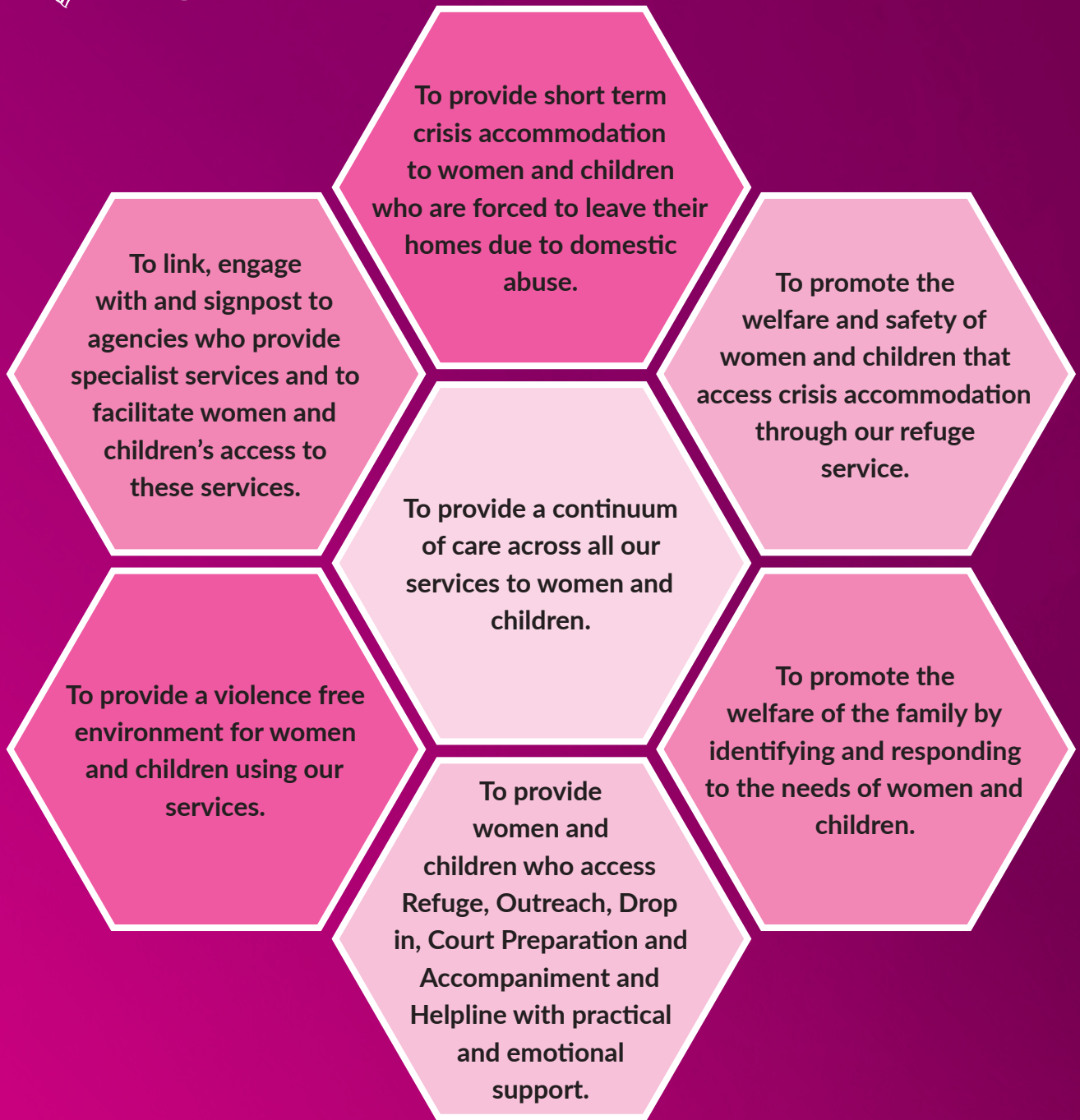
Domestic Abuse

The motto that we operate by is One Family One Team. The meaning behind our motto is layered. At the most basic level, we invite service users, staff, collaborators, supporters, and funders to join our family. Joining our family for service users carries particular meaning, because for a lot of women and children that access our service, they feel isolated, removed and disconnected from their own family, friends and networks. From the moment a service user engages with our service we aim to create a sense of belonging. From an organisational perspective, we respect everyone's individualism, and how everyone's individual makeup and effort supports a shared purpose and vision. We aim to reinforce a shared sense of commitment and partnership amongst our service users, staff, collaborators, supporters and funders to promote better outcomes for women and children.





Purpose





Our Values

As an organisation we are:

Compassionate: Our work is person centred and built on the fundamental human rights of our service users. We strive to understand the suffering of others and are motivated to alleviate this suffering. We respond to another's suffering through positively using an interpersonal and individualised approach. We promote kindness and empathy towards colleagues, to remain connected, healthy, and productive as we work with trauma on a day to day basis.

Empowering: We support our service users to heal and to become stronger and more confident in controlling their lives and claiming their rights, including the right to freedom from abuse. At an organisational level we put in place structures to enable, where possible, decision making at every level within the organisation.

Empathetic: We give service users the necessary time and space to express their feelings and emotions and we respond supportively and without judgement. At an organisational level we strive to actively engage and listen, at the same time encouraging genuine perspective taking and compassion.

Respectful: We treat our service users with courtesy, dignity and respect, showing them consideration and working with them at their pace. At an organisational level we promote respect as an action by exhibiting an interest in, and appreciation for, others' perspectives, knowledge, skills, and abilities, by expressing recognition and gratitude for the efforts and contributions of others and by taking concerns seriously.

Courageous: We hold courageous conversations with service users about their situation and options for them, with staff about their own development and the development of the organisation, with policy makers and funders about how our vision can be achieved and supported. We strive to encourage discussion and conversation within the organisation defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability and create a culture that inspires courage. This involves stepping up as a leader in our area of specialism, pioneering efforts including stepping into new areas, and taking action.

Trustworthy: We work hard to gain and maintain our service users' trust and confidence. We are honest in our dealings with them, with our staff, with our partners, collaborators and other stakeholders.

Learning: We learn from our service users' experiences and their feedback to us and this informs how we work internally and with others. We keep up to date with the latest developments and practices in our sector and apply the knowledge gained to our own work.

Ambitious: We are driven and have the determination to work to eliminate gender-based abuse. We endeavour to foster individual and collective ambition by hiring motivated employees that feed into organisational culture to promote progressive change.



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A Note From Our Chairperson





Dear Supporters, Friends, and Allies,

It is with profound gratitude and a sense of purpose that I present you our annual report 2022. The year 2022 has been one of resilience, innovation, and adaptability. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis, Aoibhneas has demonstrated its unwavering commitment to excellence and sustainability. Our ability to navigate through these challenges speaks volumes about the dedication of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and the trust that our valued stakeholders, have bestowed to us.

Throughout the year, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to provide victims and survivors of domestic abuse with a safe haven, a supportive community, and a pathway towards recovery, healing and freedom.

The case studies shared within this report are testament to women and children's strength and courage. Their accounts reflect not only the challenges faced by those affected by domestic abuse but also the commitment of staff, volunteers, and partners to bring about lasting change.

Our accomplishments in 2022 have extended beyond the immediate impact of our services. From our fundraising and advocacy efforts to our collaborative design and launch of a bed availability App and client database, to the acquisition of a site for the development of a new refuge centre, to the development of our new 5-year Strategic Plan 2023-2027. These achievements would not have been possible without the collective efforts of our team, who continue to be the backbone of our success.

In November Minister of State James Brown, TD visited our refuge centre and in December Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O' Gorman TD officially opened our Community Office in Swords, Co Dublin, providing us an opportunity to consider with them some of the key issues impacting our organisation. The Ministers were keen to hear the

barriers both Aoibhneas and women we work with are facing and we continue to work closely with them. We welcomed the publication of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence ('DSGBV') and the focus of Zero Tolerance is something we strongly advocate for in Aoibhneas. We have maintained engagement with the Department of Justice regarding the development of a new standalone State agency that will be responsible for DSGBV, overseen by the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our shareholders for their continued support and trust. To our dedicated



employees, thank you for your tireless efforts and dedication. To our partners and stakeholders, your collaboration has been invaluable.

None of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of donors, funders and partners. I would like to express in particular my thanks to the now former Lord Mayor Allison Gilliland who nominated Aoibhneas as her chosen charity for the Lord Mayors' Ball 2022 and UCD Med Soc, University College Dublin who nominated Aoibhneas as their chosen charity during Rag Week 2022. Much needed funding like this is vital in meeting our core funding shortfall and creating great awareness and information pertaining to our work. Whether through their time, resources, or belief in our cause, donors, funders and partners have played an indispensable role in the lives we touch. The ongoing support we receive renews our determination.

As we reflect on the past year's accomplishments, we also look to the future with a sense of purpose with your continued support. We are resolute in our mission to amplify the conversation around domestic abuse, challenging the misconceptions that often surround it, by leading from our values of compassion, respect, empathy, and empowerment, in creating safe homes and communities where no one lives in fear of abuse.

“

My short time here saved my sanity and prepared me get strong emotionally. I now have an Outreach worker. I am delighted, because I can do a course to help me become educated regarding the coercive control experienced over 34 years.

”

In the wake of the untimely killing of Ashling Murphy and in memory of the 243 women murdered in Ireland since 1996 we remain committed to honour their memory while working towards preventing such tragic events in the future. Lastly to the victims and survivors who remain our driving force thank you for finding courage and bestowing your trust in our service.



Aoibheann Treacy
Chairperson

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Chief Executive Officer's Welcome





Chief Executive Officer's Welcome

I am pleased to present our Annual Report for the year 2022, outlining the significant achievements, challenges, and impact of our work. It is with immense gratitude and a sense of purpose that I reflect on the strides we have taken in our mission to combat domestic abuse and provide support to women and children victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Over the past year, our organisation has navigated a complex landscape marked by the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, retention challenges, and an ever-increasing demand for our essential services. The senseless murder of Aishling Murphy on the 12th of January 2022 prompted a fresh debate about violence against women with communities moved in grief and anger and mobilised by their general concern for women everywhere. The public outcry represented a catalyst with government renewing its commitment to the Istanbul Convention and publishing the Third National Strategy on Domestic Sexual Gender Based Violence (DSGBV).

Post COVID-19 Impact and Cost of Living and Housing Crisis

The year 2022 continued to be marked by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we saw the gradual return to normalcy, the social and economic ramifications of the crisis persisted. The pandemic has not only exacerbated domestic abuse but has also intensified the challenges faced by victims and survivors, making our work even more critical. Additionally, the cost-of-living crisis has placed increased financial strain on vulnerable women and children, leaving them more susceptible to abusive situations or further compounding experiences of poverty and financial hardship. Further to this the housing crisis continues to limit victims in their ability to leave an abusive relationship and remain out of an abusive relationship, with critically low access to refuge spaces, short term housing, step down or supported housing and private rental accommodation. In 2022 we saw the lack of move on options post refuge continue to impact adversely a family's recovery from domestic abuse with 19% of families post refuge accessing homeless services, 32% of families post refuge returning home (32%) and 21% of

families post refuge seeking accommodation through family and friends.

We accommodated through our refuge centre and Airbnb 267 women and children in crisis and experiencing domestic abuse. We continue to come up against a lack of medium-term housing options post refuge, and 2022 saw plans to develop a step-down accommodation solution for family's stall. We hope Dublin City Council will be able to recommence engagement with us on the proposed development or offer an alternative solution to enable us to respond to the medium-term accommodation needs of families.

Unprecedented Demand for Services

The demand for our services reached unprecedented levels at the onset of COVID-19. As more individuals recognised the importance of seeking help and support, our organisation faced the challenge of meeting this increased demand with limited resources. This called for innovative solutions, efficient resource allocation, and close collaboration with other stakeholders in our sector.

Our Resilience and Achievements

Despite the challenges, our organisation displayed remarkable resilience and achieved significant milestones. We expanded our outreach and community efforts through digital platforms, ensuring that victims and survivors could access our support services even in the midst of restrictions, and following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions we continue to retain a hybrid delivery of interventions. Collaborative partnerships with governmental agencies, colleagues in other Domestic Violence specialist services and corporate sponsors allowed us to maximise our impact and broaden our reach.

Key Achievements

A key achievement for Aoibhneas in 2022 was our ability to directly support 985 women and children experiencing domestic abuse, through the delivery of 37,765 interventions to women and 6,185 interventions to children. Further to

that we supported 6,268 callers through our 24-hour Freephone Helpline. Our ability to reach and safeguard families experiencing domestic abuse remains our number one priority.

In 2022 we progressed our plans to develop and refurbish dedicated therapeutic spaces for children. This will be an important development as we continue to respond to the recovery needs of children, who are very often the invisible casualties of domestic abuse. We will rely on the continued support of donors to progress the development of this much needed centre for children, a first of its kind in Ireland.

In 2022, Aoibhneas was named the specialist provider leading out on the development of a new refuge centre in the Fingal Area. With support from Fingal County Council, Aoibhneas commenced site selection in 2022 and Aoibhneas with assistance from the Housing Agency nominated preferred sites against a project brief and needs outline. The Housing Agency supported Aoibhneas with a design outline concerning our preferred site and we are actively progressed plans to acquire and develop the site. In 2022 alone Aoibhneas could not accommodate 400 families seeking refuge, this development will go some way to meet the very immediate and short term needs of families in crisis by providing refuge accommodation in the North County area.

Looking Forward

Our 5 Year Strategic Plan, aligned with the four pillars of the Third National Strategy on DSGBV - Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Co-ordination, will see Aoibhneas continue to lead in the delivery of key supports across the sector to develop what is required and at a minimum to deliver on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Our Strategic Plan 2023-2027 reinforces our commitment to combating domestic abuse and supporting survivors with enhanced focus on furthering our advocacy efforts, expanding our accommodation and community-based support services, and working collaboratively to create systemic change.

While our year-end financial results show stability, this will be an ongoing challenge in the context of the ever-increasing level of

demand for our service and our increased reliance on fundraising and donor income to meet mounting operational costs. We face particular uncertainty in the wake of the cost-of-living and energy crisis, and require increased dedicated and specified funding from our core funder Tusla, Child and Family Agency to meet increasing operational costs and the shortfall in fundraised income. The cost of living and energy crisis will have a disproportionate impact on our most vulnerable clients, with already a notable increase in the number of families identified in poverty and seeking immediate financial relief from us.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated board, staff, volunteers, supporters, and partners. With your support and belief in our mission we are confident in our ability to make a lasting impact and bring positive change to the lives of those affected by domestic abuse.

With warm regards,

Emma Reidy
Chief Executive
Officer



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Service Activity in 2022





In 2022 Aoibhneas provided frontline and direct support to 985 women and children in the following areas:

<p>267 women and children were accommodated through Refuge and Airbnb.</p> 	<p>718 women and children accessed direct, face to face support through Outreach and Community.</p> 	<p>3,305 women and children in receipt of outreach/ community support on an aggregated basis.</p> 
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Total Interventions Women:

37,765 through 17,679 engagements

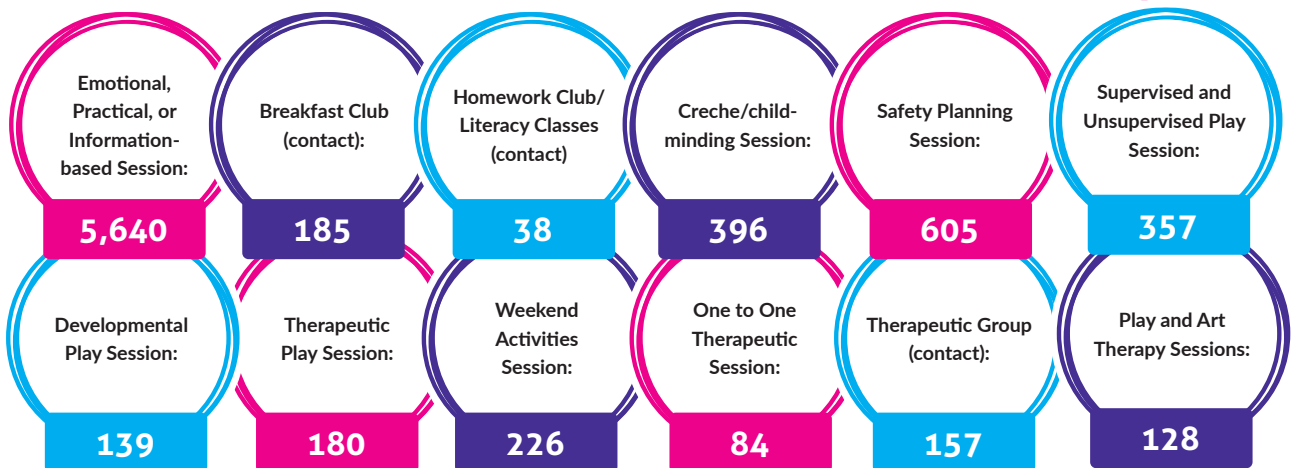


Including:



Total Interventions Children:

6,185 through 2,818 engagements



External Accompaniment provided to Women and Children (includes accompaniment to court, legal support, gardai, mental health services, SATU, medical services, social welfare, social work etc.):

277



Referral to External Organisations on behalf of Women and Children Service Users (includes social welfare, counselling, mental health services, gardai, legal, education, immigration services, childcare services, school, CAMHS, family support, social work etc.):

1,256



6,268
Helpline Calls:



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Service Delivery in 2022





Service Delivery in 2022

During 2022, we provided direct support to **985** women and children including the delivery of **37,765** interventions through **17,679** engagements to women and **6,185** interventions to children through **2,818** engagements. Additionally, we responded to **6,268** helpline calls.

In 2022, Aoibhneas provided domestic abuse support to women and children from **39** different country of origins. The diversity we see in our client's backgrounds demonstrate the global nature of domestic abuse and its prevalence in our diverse society of today. The diversity of our client base has grown over the past number of years which has meant that as an organisation we have had to adapt our service to ensure we cater for the needs of women and children from all backgrounds.

We endeavour to promote cultural awareness across the organisation to ensure we continue to respond to women and children's cultural needs. While we supported clients from **39** different country of origins, **71%** of our client base identified as Irish highlighting the prevalence of domestic abuse in Irish society today. When it comes to age, domestic abuse does not discriminate and 2022 saw a diverse range of age categories among clients, with our youngest adult refuge resident aged **17** years

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This place has become like a home to me and my son, thanks to the staff for their support.

”

to our oldest outreach client aged **77** years. Our largest cohort of clients presented in the age ranges 36-44 (**26%**), 27-35 (**24%**), 45-53 (**21%**), with a noted increase in 18-26 (**17%**) age category seeking support. **10%** of clients that presented to us were over 54 years of age.

44% of women we supported identified their perpetrator as a current spouse, partner or boyfriend. **45%** of women disclosed an ex-spouse, ex-partner or ex-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 family member, 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 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.

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 a client. Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse experienced by clients (**90%**), while physical abuse followed second with **60%** of clients experiencing abuse of that nature (**70%** of clients presenting to refuge compared with **56%** of clients engaging through our community and outreach service). **27** clients presented to refuge with physical injuries. Injuries ranged from concussion/ head trauma to broken, dislocated and fractured bones,

choking, bruising and cuts, strains, and sprains. Many clients disclosed more than one type of abuse with financial abuse being another common experience (**54%**). Digital abuse is a more recent type of abuse experienced by clients (**29%**) and continues to be used by perpetrators as another form of coercive control. Clients outlined that often, when they attempted to end the relationship, 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. Sexual abuse disclosures (**19%**) are typically underreported due to the fact we ask information pertaining to abuse type at a clients first engagement with our service.

We note once a client builds rapport, understanding and comfort they feel more enabled to speak on the true and full extent of their situation and experience.



◀ Pampering Day in Refuge thanks to the volunteer efforts of Hair and Nails Kandi.

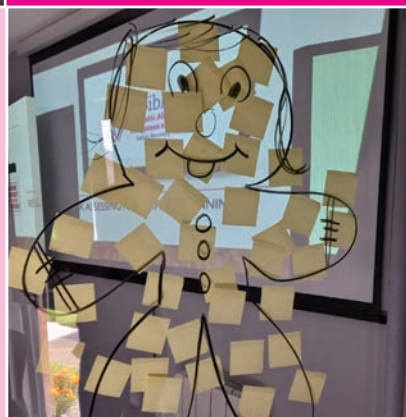


◀ Our refuge team regularly host breakfasts and brunches for resident families to enjoy some nutritious food

▶ Celebrating GoPurple Day, a national awareness day with the team in Balbriggan Garda Station.



▶ Training new members of our team in Trauma Informed Care



Noeline's Story

My name is Noeline, I'm 42-year-old from South Africa and a mother to two children, a 16-year-old girl and 8-year boy. I have experienced physical, financial abuse and coercive control. I first contacted Aoibhneas 24-hour helpline following a physical assault, pregnant and scared for my children I knew we had to leave our home in order to feel safe.

Initial Contact and Assessment:

Noeline first contacted our 24-hour helpline in December 2021 when refuge was offered to her and her children. Following a two-week stay in refuge, Noeline returned to her alleged perpetrator, with whom she shared a property. During her initial stay, Noeline was supported obtaining a protection order through the Dolphin House District Court.

In August 2022 Noeline contacted our service again, expressing fear of her alleged perpetrator. With the assistance of her social worker, Noeline and her children were supported accessing refuge. Now out of the relationship Noeline described ongoing experiences of coercive control, verbal and financial abuse. Noeline stated her alleged perpetrator had attempted to break into her home and this prompted Noeline to seek support through Aoibhneas. Noeline described her immigration and housing status as ways her alleged perpetrator was attempting to create uncertainty and fear over leaving the relationship.

Current Situation and Support:

Noeline and her children were accompanied by An Garda Siochana to refuge. Aoibhneas engaged with the family, providing psycho-educational support, assistance with housing and residency status, and addressing presenting anxieties about status and housing.

Noeline's children engaged positively with their Social Care Worker, participating in play and summer programme activities. Involvement and engagement with our team required building trust to identify supports, risks, and concerns.

Noeline's 16-year-old daughter took on adult-like responsibilities, caring for her younger sibling and intervening on her mother's behalf in formal engagements. The families Keyworker and Social Care Worker supported mum and daughter to look at the parenting relationship and the children's needs as part of their support.

Ongoing Challenges and Exit:

After the family concluded their stay in refuge, they transitioned to homeless accommodation. Our service established financial supports in Noeline's name and connected her to relevant resources aligned with her support needs. While Noeline's immigration status continued to be a source of concern for her, Aoibhneas initiated and maintained engagement with services that are advocating for Noeline.

In Summary:

This case study illustrates the challenges faced by a mother and her children who are victims of domestic abuse and coercive control. A client's immigration status adds a layer of complexity to her situation, contributing to her anxiety and impacting engagement with support services. The children's resilience, especially the eldest daughter's role assumption, highlights the family's adaptive responses and coping strategies. Aoibhneas multi-faceted approach, combining psycho-educational support, housing assistance, and addressing legal issues, underscores their commitment to addressing the families complex and varied needs.

This is indicative of how layered and complex situations not to mention patterns of coercive control and domestic abuse are.

At initial engagement with Aoibhneas, clients are asked about their involvement with external services. **28%** of clients informed us they had some form of court order in place, this included protection, safety, barring, maintenance and access orders (**117** clients). **22%** of clients (**297** clients) informed us that prior to accessing our service they had sought Garda assistance regarding their experience of domestic abuse. **31%** of clients (**128** clients) informed us of past or ongoing involvement with Tusla, Child and Family Agency. A further **19%** of clients (**79** clients) described child protection or child welfare concerns for their children. This indicates that multidisciplinary services often share insight into the family's individual experience of domestic abuse before we commence engagement with that family. It indicates a long and protracted process that women and their children face concerning 'the leaving' and how leaving or ending an abusive relationship does not signal the end of abuse.

In 2022 we provided support to **520** children across refuge and community. Of that number, **32%** were under 4 years of age and **38%** of the children were between the ages of 5-9 years.

The pandemic has added to the trauma children and young people have experienced in the home. We recognise the continued importance of promoting our community and inhouse reach to children and young people at earliest opportunity with a diverse range of trauma and therapeutic response-based interventions. Our child refuge population diverges quite considerably week to week, so we promote interventions that facilitate and adapt to the ages and needs of children living in refuge. We had noted at the beginning of the pandemic and during heightened restrictions reduced numbers of children accessing our refuge service, reflected back to us by clients was their concern of being exposed to COVID-19 in a residential based setting. Following easing of restrictions, we immediately responded to an increase of families with 2 or more children accessing our service, we anticipate this trend will continue as families feel increased comfort and reassurance. In 2022 we maintained a hybrid

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*Aoibhneas is more than
a refuge home, very
peaceful and homely.
Thank You !!!*

”

delivery of refuge and community-based supports and interventions that took place in a virtual and face to face form. We supported individual children and families with access to a range of family-based interventions including art and play therapy, baking, family play sessions in our playroom and outdoor play areas, homework and breakfast clubs, parent/child mindfulness relaxation classes, creative play, therapeutic stories, resilience building, free play, and sensory play. **12%** 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.

Following an intake to refuge a period of assessment commences, during this time we complete a needs survey with every client both with regard to the woman and her child'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. Whatever steps a client decides to take in relation to housing, we aim to work alongside and advocate on her behalf to support her and her children. A lack of move on options post refuge saw family's access homeless services (**19%**), return home (**32%**) and seek accommodation through family and friends (**21%**). The lack of alternative move on options invariably impacts on a family's length of stay. In 2022 the average length of refuge stay was **21** days.

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Our Services

**SHINING THE LIGHT
ON DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Aoibhneas Domestic Abuse
Support for Women & Children

Helpline:

1800 767 767



Our Services

Our objective is to provide victims and survivors of domestic abuse access to information and support through a range of interventions across our services including.



We deliver a range of one to one and group interventions across our service including:



“

I would just like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have done for me and my son, the past few weeks I appreciate everything. And all the support and kindness you have shown me.

”

Alice's story

This case study highlights the complex and challenging situation faced by Alice and her children in the context of domestic abuse.

Referral to Outreach Service Alice and her two children, aged 4 and 8, were referred to the Outreach Service in November 2020 due to her experience of coercive control, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse at the hands of her husband, who is the alleged perpetrator.

Initial Contact and Safety Measures: Initially, Alice could only contact her allocated outreach worker through her family support worker due to the control and abuse she was experiencing. Safety measures were put in place, such as Alice sending a text message with a smiley face when it was safe to call her, and then deleting any trace of the contact.

Building Trust and Engagement: Over time, Alice's outreach worker built a trusting relationship with her. They started meeting regularly for brief face-to-face meetings in a location close to Alice's local shop, making it appear as though she was doing her weekly shopping, to best promote her safety.

Increased Confidence and Safety Planning: Through these meetings, Alice and her outreach worker were able to explore safety planning in depth and the impact of her experiences of domestic abuse. This support increased Alice's confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth, and she started making plans to leave the abusive relationship.

Financial Dependence: Alice's husband did not want her to work outside the home, leaving her financially dependent on him. Her legal status in Ireland was also tied to her husband, further complicating her ability to leave the relationship.

Support for Basic Needs: Due to financial abuse, Alice was unable to provide basic food and toiletries for her children. Aoibhneas provided her with dried foods, toiletries, and food vouchers from agreed collection points to help meet these needs.

Financial Independence: In April 2022, Irish Banking and Culture Board (IBCB) in partnership with Safe

Ireland launched a scheme to assist people deemed vulnerable open a bank account safely. Alice and her outreach worker worked together to open a private, independent bank account, allowing Alice access to some financial independence. Alice then began the process of applying for a social welfare payment to be deposited into this account.

Safety Measures for Financial Independence: Aoibhneas provided support letters to social welfare and Alice's bank, requesting that no communication be sent to Alice's home regarding payments or accounts. This helped maintain her safety and maintain discretion.

Support for Independent Status: Alice was referred to Crosscare to work on gaining independent legal status in Ireland.

Child Protection Concerns: During her engagement with Aoibhneas, several child protection concerns were identified following disclosures made by Alice. Aoibhneas referred Alice's concerns to Tusla, Child and Family Agency for support, and her children have commenced play therapy to address the impact living in an abusive home has had on them.

Ongoing Safety Planning: Alice's outreach worker continues to work with her and her children on safety planning to ensure their safety within the home.

Continued Engagement and Empowerment: Alice and her children continue to engage with the Outreach and Community Service. Alice hopes to increase her independence gradually, with the ultimate goal of leaving her abusive relationship. Alice describes these steps as empowering providing her with a sense of freedom.

This case study illustrates the critical role of outreach and community-based specialist services in helping families like Alice and her children escape domestic abuse situations and regain control over their lives. It also emphasises the importance of a multi-agency sustained approach to address the complex needs of survivors of abuse.



Key activities undertaken in relation to our purpose include:



Refuge Accommodation

Safe emergency/crisis short term 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 per year basis.

In 2022, we supported **254** women and children through access to refuge and **13** women and children with access to Airbnb accommodation. Within these settings, we provided a number of interventions to women and children. In 2022, we supported women with access to **24,718** interventions and children with access to **5,436** interventions (representing a **8%** decrease in interventions to children and **49%** increase of interventions to women provided in 2022). In addition to planned admissions and arrivals to our refuge centre **23** women and children (**12** families) presented to our centre in crisis, these families presented to our service feeling unsafe, unable to return home and seeking immediate support, information and referral to an alternative location when we had no room availability.



24 Freephone Helpline

Access to a 24-hour freephone confidential helpline service to women experiencing domestic abuse and agencies, family, friends ringing on behalf of victims looking for information and/ or referral into our service.

In 2022, we provided support through our helpline to **6,268** callers. The ongoing demand we see for helpline support signifies an important access route for callers experiencing domestic abuse seeking information, support, and accommodation.



Outreach and 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 from 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 North Dublin; from inner city to north county Dublin with offices in Coolock, Smithfield, Swords and Balbriggan and several satellite clinics located in Dublin City Centre, Finglas, Ballymun, Coolock, Swords.

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.

In 2022, we provided direct support to **718** women and children through our outreach and community service. We place a huge emphasis on our ability to work within a continuum of care model so family's engagement with our service is sustained to ensure as they journey from crisis to recovery, we provide adequate and tailored interventions and supports.

In 2022, we supported women with access to **13,047** interventions and children with access to **3,785** interventions through community and outreach.

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 experiences of domestic abuse. In 2022 we supported **63** women and children (**33** families) with access to drop-in support through our refuge centre.



I was scared when I arrived, but the team were so kind and understanding with me. I felt safe in here. I received emotional support and thanks to that I managed to get better with time.



Court Preparation and Accompaniment Service

The provision of the Court Preparation and Accompaniment Service offers support in the following areas:

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

In 2022, we provided case management support and assistance to **498** women and children referred into our court preparation and accompaniment support service. Our court service experienced considerable demand, providing **3,717** interventions to women and **1,361** interventions to children.

We provided the following accompaniments from January to December

- Court accompaniments – **148** resulting in **123 orders** obtained through engagement in our service.
- Legal aid, Solicitor, Barrister accompaniment -**106**
- An Garda Síochána accompaniment -**16**



Child/Youth Specific Services

In 2022 we supported **520** children with access to **6,185** through **2,818** engagements including access to.

- Childcare (supervised)
- Homework/afterschool support
- Breakfast club
- Developmental play
- Play and art therapy
- 1:1 Therapeutic work
- Group programmes
- Holistic and therapeutic interventions



Advocacy / Accompaniment

Enabling and supporting women and children to attend or access a civil or statutory service with a view to reducing crisis or increasing empowerment. In 2022 we provided **277** accompaniments to Women and Children, ranging from accompaniment to court, legal support, gardai, mental health services, SATU, medical services, social welfare and social work.



Thank you for everything, you are the best women. I'm very happy, me and John thank you so much!



Training and Prevention Work

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

Aoibhneas have designed a positive relationships programme, which is delivered to Secondary Schools. All training provided by Aoibhneas is tailored to meet the identified needs of those requesting the training. As such we were in a position to provide **16** targeted training sessions.



Generally this experience has been life changing and I am thankful to all staff for their support over these 8 weeks.





Networking and Engagement

To promote wraparound and collaborative care it is vital that Aoibhneas enlist specialist providers to support women and children who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. In 2022 Aoibhneas made **1,256** referrals to external organisations on behalf of women and children service users this included social welfare, counselling services, mental health services, An Garda Siochana, legal services, education supports, immigration services, childcare services, school, CAMHS, family support, social work.

In 2022 we promoted our awareness raising efforts by partaking in and hosting **221** networking and awareness raising events providing information on domestic violence and abuse to victims and survivors, their families and friends and their wider communities with particular focus on collaborative practice and engagement.

We engaged with media to promote our specialist support services and their continued availability this included featuring on local and national radio, national and local newspapers and on online news sites.



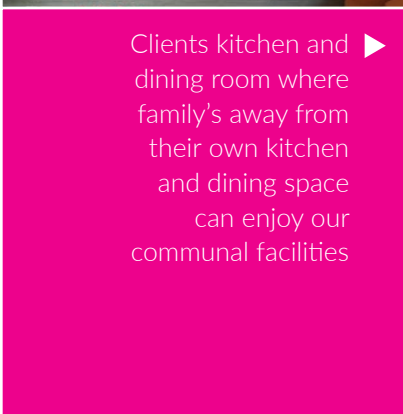
Our stay at Aoibhneas was very pleasant. From the moment we arrived there was a friendly and gentle atmosphere. I was overwhelmed by the kindness of the staff, ensuring we had all we needed. The children changed after coming in, they were relaxed and happy, they felt at home, they will miss being here. There was plenty of emotional support and a feeling of safety throughout. The staff in the playroom were incredible with the kids, they enjoyed the one-to-one support and interactions with other children. My keyworker Dammy was very informative in ensuring I secured a safe place to go, she helped me emotionally in my education and in planning for the future. I found her very genuine and supportive.



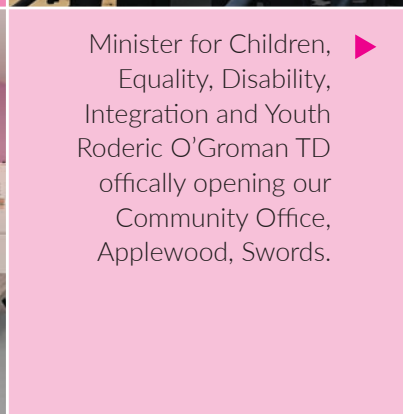
◀ Healthy cooking classes in refuge, one of the many classes/ interventions available to women and children residing in refuge.



◀ Minister of State James Brown TD visting refuge



▶ Clients kitchen and dining room where family's away from their own kitchen and dining space can enjoy our communal facilities



▶ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Groman TD offically opening our Community Office, Applewood, Swords.



7

Strategic Highlights 2019-2021



In 2018 we celebrated 30 years in operation and were honoured to have the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, present. In the same year we developed a three-year strategic plan covering the period 2019 to 2021. The emergence of COVID-19 had a significant impact on the implementation of the plan, yet despite this we remained open as a service, and we went above and beyond what we set out to do including the expansion of our service provision during the life cycle of our Strategic plan 2021-2021 include:



COVID-19

The period of 2019 to 2021 was an extremely active period for the organisation, predominantly due to the significant impact that Covid-19 had on households and communities experiencing domestic abuse. During that time, we were designated an essential service and we remained open throughout health restrictions. However, due to government restrictions and social distancing guidelines we were initially unable to operate the refuge at full capacity and our community and outreach support was curtailed. Despite these challenges, we adapted quickly and did our best to provide continuity of care to women and children during the period. As well as our 10-room refuge, we found additional ways to house women and children in need of safety through the use of Airbnb and procurement of a 14-unit property in Baggot Street during the height of restrictions. The team on the ground implemented health and safety procedures and engaged in scenario planning to ensure the safety and well-being of staff at all times. Remote and lone working was introduced across the organisation to prevent COVID-19 transmission. We thus expanded our level of service whilst keeping both staff and service users safe.

During the pandemic, Aoibhneas noted a trend in women and children who were victims of domestic abuse during lockdowns attempting to contact the service but who found it too unsafe or difficult to do so. In response, we initiated a campaign with pharmacies, GPs and health centres across Dublin using our information and tools to screen and respond to victims of domestic abuse. This included the 'Purple Mask' code word which gave these services a set of proactive steps and measures to follow. Boots pharmacy launched the initiative across its network of 87 branches.



Aoibhneas is an incredible service, there are so many friendly staff members who make the change easier. I never felt alone or unsafe throughout. My children loved it and will never forget the impact everyone here has made upon us all, helping us on our journey.



Aoibhneas brought the initiative to Safe Ireland and its members which resulted in the introduction of 'Safe Space' in pharmacy consultation rooms. This enabled victims of domestic abuse to contact one of the 38 frontline specialist domestic abuse services across the country.



Addressing Gaps in Service Provision

Following a review of services in North County Dublin which identified gaps in provision, we commenced a collaborative pilot project in Balbriggan with Sonas and Dublin Rape Crisis Centre where we created a 'one-stop' domestic abuse hub, and we continue to develop this partnership. Aoibhneas was informed by Dublin City Council in 2020 that we were successful in obtaining support to develop 15 units for the purpose of step-down accommodation on a site adjacent to the refuge centre. The allocation of 15 units signals an important development for Aoibhneas in the delivery of a more complete and sustained level of care to victims of domestic abuse. In 2021, Aoibhneas established a consultation and focus group and maintained regular engagement with Dublin City Council's design team to advance an accommodation design brief. The design is part of a larger housing development and Aoibhneas is awaiting the progression of planning and development of the full site.

We invested in a modular prefabricated unit to provide additional therapy and recreational space from our refuge campus. In 2021, we led a forum with our specialist partners for the purpose of

enabling better communication between service providers in respect of bed availability and facilities in these services.



Increased Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

Throughout the pandemic there has been increased awareness of domestic abuse and its prevalence. Over the years, Aoibhneas had engaged with local and national media to promote key messaging around visibility, accessibility, and responsiveness. This proved important as Aoibhneas, during the pandemic, was introduced as a specialist voice in frontline service delivery enabling the public to learn more about the range of domestic abuse supports that exist and how to access them, while also bringing public attention to the issues and real-life experience of women and children who experience domestic abuse, including the victim's journey.



Service Developments

The 2019-2021 strategic plan set out Aoibhneas' ambitions to provide best practice care that is culturally appropriate, human rights and equality based and to provide a comprehensive and full range of services, with greater emphasis on preventative and community-based supports. Aoibhneas recognises trauma as widespread and having far reaching impacts for victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Trauma can impact a person's personal relationships and create difficulties when engaging with services. Aoibhneas works to create safe and nurturing relationships between staff and service users so that greater recovery from trauma and positive engagement with the service is facilitated. All of our staff are trained in Trauma Informed Care and Courageous Conversations and from this we introduced a trauma informed care led approach to areas of practice. Courageous Conversations are underpinned by shared values and support open, honest and, sometimes, difficult and challenging, conversations.

Our community and outreach team expanded from two to five workers. We opened two outreach

office- one in Swords and another in Smithfield, as well as resumed clinics in Balbriggan, the City Centre and Coolock. We also resumed satellite clinics in Balbriggan, Swords, Ballymun, Finglas, and Dublin City Centre. This enabled us to provide increased support to our service users and to re-establish links with professional and community-based organisations. Outreach is a critical part of our work, enabling us to work in a preventative manner and to reduce the escalation of risk, allowing families to remain in their homes and reducing the reliance on refuge. During COVID-19, we introduced a hybrid model of working for our community and outreach. This enabled women in lock-down to access our supports and this way of working has proven to be successful and will continue to be part of our outreach offering going forward.

Our helpline continued to be very busy, and we converted it to a Freephone service to provide greater access at no cost to victims/survivors of domestic abuse, family, friends and professionals. The helpline reduces barriers to access and offers a critical lifeline to women and children experiencing domestic abuse. In the Autumn of 2021, we launched a volunteer programme with the aim of supporting our mission. Volunteers support our court preparation and accompaniment service, our helpline and provide specialist holistic and therapeutic interventions. Volunteers assist with preparing gift hampers to ensure donations reach families around seasonal celebrations like Christmas, as well as special celebrations such as birthdays, Mother's Day, confirmations, and communions. We undertook a branding exercise and renewed our brand and logo. We also expanded our social media presence and reach. As our services became more well-known, we saw an increase in referrals from hospitals and An Garda Síochána. We increased our collaboration with An Garda Síochána and the establishment by the Gardaí of Domestic Abuse Community Teams in many stations has supported this work.



Key Governance Developments

As we look to deliver on our ambitions, Board composition has been a key focus. We expanded our Board and brought in new skills relevant to our focus areas. Our management team was also enhanced

with the appointment of a Head of Services. We completed an internal audit in 2019 against the six principles set out in the Charity Regulator Governance Code. A strong focus and commitment to the targets and objectives set resulted in Aoibhneas achieving Charity Regulator compliance in December 2020. We invested in a new electronic database which provides additional data protection and will enhance our reporting capability to our funders and our Board.



Influencing & Engaging with Policy

We engaged with the consultation process for the Third National Strategy and provided input to national policy frameworks. We welcome the Third National Strategy and look forward to supporting its implementation through our strategic plan.



Consultation to inform our Strategic Plan 2023-2027

In 2022 we developed our strategic plan following substantive engagement and an in-depth consultation exercise with key stakeholders. The consultation process was conducted by independent facilitators. We consulted with service users in refuge and availing of our community and outreach services. We spoke to policy makers and other services that we work with. We held strategic workshops with our Board, Senior Management Team, Staff and Strategy Sub-committee.

The consultations indicated that stakeholders have high regard for Aoibhneas and consider it a very capable service. When we discussed what matters most with these stakeholders the overwhelming consensus was that the immediate safety of women and children was the number one priority. This was closely followed by providing women and children with practical and emotional support and empowering them to live safely and free from domestic abuse.



Our Strategic Priorities 2023-2027

Aoibhneas's goal is to be a leader in the provision of domestic abuse services. Our overall strategic priority for 2023-2027 is to ensure quality services for women and children with a strong emphasis on safety, empowerment, and advocacy.

Our strategic priorities for the period will be aligned with the Third National Strategy as follows:

1. Protection
2. Prevention
3. Prosecution
4. Policy & Coordination
5. Organisational Capacity

Protection will continue to form the largest part of our work, nonetheless we also have a role to play in prevention, prosecution, and policy, and we strive to develop our organisational capacity to meet the needs of women and children, and which will ultimately support in the delivery of the Third National Strategy.



8

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance Organisational Achievements in 2022



COVID -19

Where we saw restrictions lift gradually for the public Aoibhneas continued to respond dynamically to COVID-19, with that said Aoibhneas maintained adherence to adapted measures in order to facilitate face to face engagements while prioritising client and staff safety and welfare. The Aoibhneas team adapted their approaches to maintain a hybrid delivery of virtual and in person engagements to women and child victims and survivors of domestic abuse accessing support through our accommodation and community-based services.

In 2022 we were able to maintain a hybrid mix concerning the delivery of psychoeducational, holistic, and creative therapies, with greater access to interventions in the evening time for clients engaging in our community-based services. We were also delighted to pilot a first of its kind family and friends in person support group How Can I Help? where family and friends of victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access support and information. 2022 saw the return of our Summer Programme for family's residing in our centre. We celebrated the end of the Summer Programme with a Summer Party, for refuge and community clients (past and present). Similarly refuge and community clients (past and present) were invited to our refuge centre for a Christmas party where we even received a visit from Santa and his team of elves!

Aoibhneas as a referral host through the Safe Ireland Airbnb Initiative managed increased need

for refuge accommodation by sourcing alternative accommodation until the initiative ceased in July 2022. This enabled Aoibhneas to accommodate families in crisis due to domestic abuse and maintain an expanded accommodation brief.

The lifting of restrictions from within our refuge centre and community offices enabled us to cultivate connection and bonding, by coming together for in person team meetings, exchanges, and training. In addition, we organised two offsite team building events, with a focus on team development, communication, and connection.

The lifting of restrictions enabled us to resume our volunteer programme that supports us in our mission to promote safety, recovery and healing for women and children living with Domestic Abuse. All our volunteers join a professional multidisciplinary team that supports a wide-ranging delivery of specialist interventions to women and child victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Through volunteer engagement we promote increased visibility in the following areas.

- Helpline
- Holistic and Therapeutic Interventions
- Court Support

In addition, our Volunteer Helpers provided practice support with food hampers, clothes packing and gift wrapping to assist donations reaching families around seasonal celebrations like Christmas as well as special celebrations like Birthdays, Mother's Day.

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To all the staff... A heartfelt thanks to everyone. You made our stay memorable. All you guys are amazing!!! You really let us feel like at home with love, care, support, with privacy and dignity. Thanks to our lovely stay 8 weeks and 2 days. It was a huge help for me and Sarah, especially on Sarah' health. You help me save Sarah. She had 8 weeks and 2 days of peace of mind and happiness away from our abuser. We owe you a lot. I can't thank you enough. To Grace, Leanne & Cristina thank you for giving us full support. To all the Team, thanks for everything, we will never forget you. To Niamh - thanks for your patience and always giving Sarah an hour every afternoon to be out of our room enjoying UNO, Monopoly and Cluedo and Art & Crafts. Sarah said you are the best. To our Keyworker Raluca - you helped us from day 1 until our last day. I didn't struggle doing my paperwork because you guided me, you always had time to talk to me. I was lucky to have you as my keyworker. We won't forget you, good luck to you. To Marcella & Derek, thank you both, you never failed to make me smile especially in the morning. thanks for everything guys. To, Katy, Robbie, Caroline, Robyn, Lynn, Elaine, Dammy, Matthew and all. To Julie and Sandra - thank you guys. Great Team!

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Fundraising

Unfortunately, our core funding from Tusla, Child and Family does not adequately cover our core operational and programme overheads. As a result of which, we are reliant on income received through donations and fundraising to meet our annual funding shortfall. We were in the fortunate position to be selected as one of three chosen charities by Dublin Lord Mayor Allison Gilliland for the Lord Mayors' Ball 2022. In addition to this Aoibhneas was nominated by UCD Med Soc, University College Dublin as their chosen charity during RAG 2022, students engaged in numerous and wide-ranging activities all in aid of our cause. Both events amassed €67,375, creating also great awareness and information pertaining to our work.



Advocacy/ Networking

Throughout COVID-19 there was increased awareness of domestic abuse and its prevalence, in 2022 we prioritised focused engagement as a specialist voice in frontline service delivery to bring awareness to the range of domestic abuse supports we provide and how to access them with our community and outreach team attending 206 networking events.

With a focus on engagement with key stakeholders and the development of an Irish and Europe wide framework we engaged in key consultation regarding the Third National Strategy and EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. We also facilitated visits from the Belgium delegation when they came to Ireland to sign the Dublin Declaration on the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. We engaged in a consultation regarding the design outline for the new Family Courts at Hammond Lane, and the services women and children will access when they engage judicial supports. On St Brigid's Day the Aoibhneas Team took part in a walk to Leinster House, where we met Minister of Justice Minister Helen McEntee.

We welcomed Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O' Gorman to the official launch of our community office in Applewood, Swords. Minister of State James Brown

visited our refuge centre to learn more about our plans to develop our service in line with our Strategic Plan 2023-2027.



Collaboration

Aoibhneas established a forum during the COVID-19 pandemic when service providers in the Dublin Northeast and Southeast region faced unprecedented demand from women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Since inception of the forum Domestic Violence Providers maintain regular contact. In January 2021, members of the forum commenced information sharing pertaining to bed/unit availability through a dedicated email system, whereby frontline personnel received daily updates or updates as required pertaining to bed/unit availability. This initiative worked very well, with very positive engagement from all participating service providers. However, Domestic Violence Providers identified a need and benefit for a more permanent, custom-built solution. Domestic Sexual Gender Based Violence Unit, Tusla Child and Family Agency agreed to support the Forum with development of an App that facilitated dedicated, timely, safe and streamlined communication to forum members pertaining to bed/unit availability.

In January 2022 Aoibhneas as Lead Administrator steered the design, development and build process of the bed availability App. Over 5-months, Domestic Violence Accommodation Providers engaged in various processes to meet key milestones linked to the project and to ensure successful completion and launch amongst participant service providers. Safe Space went live in May 2022 where managers and frontline personnel from 7 service providers (Dublin, Meath, Wicklow, Kildare) were onboarded and trained in the use of Safe Space. Safe Space provides participating service providers a dedicated, safe, accessible, and live, up to the minute communication tool to inform of bed availability.

The App has the capability to be scaled up, and it would be envisaged that Aoibhneas, as Lead Administrator will progress engagement with Tusla, Child and Family Agency to support enhanced roll out and take up.



Strategic Plan

In 2022 Aoibhneas set out to develop its Strategic Plan 2023-2027 in conjunction and through an in-depth consultation with key stakeholders. We consulted with service users in refuge and availing of our community and outreach services. We spoke to policy makers and other services that we work with. We held strategic workshops with our Board, Senior Management Team, Staff and Strategy Sub-committee. The consultations indicated that stakeholders have high regard for Aoibhneas and consider us a very capable service. When we discussed what matters most with these stakeholders the overwhelming consensus was that the immediate safety of women and children was the number one priority. This was closely followed by providing women and children with practical and emotional support and empowering them to live safely and free from domestic abuse. As part of our consultation process, we revised our mission, vision and value statement in keeping with how we expect to maintain and develop services between 2023-2027.



Innovation

It is incredibly important to us that any woman and child experiencing domestic abuse has access to our service, as such we must actively consider how we engage service users in a way that considers their needs while all the same time being culturally sensitive and appropriate. We set about redesigning our website in 2021 and 2022 with the implicit objective of centre staging service users, including potential service users. We launched our website in

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***Webinar: Domestic Abuse:
Creating a Collaborative Model
of Working with Families***

***I am confident to approach
women within the service I
work with and notice domestic
abuse or violence.***

”

February 2022, and we hope to continue to develop this platform to respond to our clients or potential client's information and support needs. Further to that we introduced Language Line to our service, enabling us to through offsite means to access translation and interpretation services, that responds to the immediate practical, emotional support needs of clients and callers.

In January 2022 we were delighted to roll out a database Esafe developed and designed through Enclude, Safe Ireland and domestic violence service providers. We hope through the use of a shared database we can look at trends and collate information that informs responses and service development on a local and national level. Introducing collaborative practice that reinforces professionals' responses is important to Aoibhneas, in 2022 we set about developing on existing training programmes delivered by Aoibhneas, by seeking and obtaining CPD accreditation. Having obtained CDP accreditation, we delivered 2 webinars to professionals in social care and social work themed Domestic Abuse: Creating a Collaborative Model of Working with Families.

Service Development

Following the publication of a Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence an Accommodation by Tusla, Child and Family Agency a priority recommendation contained within to develop 10-family units in the Balbriggan area. Aoibhneas as a leading specialist provider in the area, set up a refuge development working group and sought support from Fingal County Council to acquire a suitable site. After Aoibhneas developed a need outline, Fingal County Council shortlisted sites for selection, and together Aoibhneas and the Housing Agency reviewed sites against the project brief and needs outline. The Housing Agency have supported Aoibhneas with a design outline concerning our preferred site and we actively progressing plans to acquire and develop the site.

“

Midwifery Training: Rotunda

Such an eye opener to what may be happening that we would not realise. Things like just supporting women even if they are not going to leave or asking them to leave a situation that could put them in danger.

”



9

Organisation Structure, Governance & Management





Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

Aoibhneas is constituted as a company limited by guarantee as set out under parts 1 - 15 of the Companies Act 2014. Its purpose and objects 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).

Aoibhneas adopted the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in 2018. Aoibhneas is Charity Regulator Governance Code compliant, details pertaining to company status are updated on the Charity Regulator Website (www.charitiesregulator.ie)

Aoibhneas is an Approved Housing Body, details pertaining to company status are updated on the Housing Agency Website (www.housingagency.ie)

Board members do not receive remuneration in respect to their services to the charity. There have been no contacts 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 has decided to operate the following sub-committees of the Board:

Finance 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 undertakes Governance reviews. The Committee makes recommendations to the Board as relevant.

Strategic Development & Planning Committee

The Strategic Development & Planning 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.

Risk Management Committee

The Risk Management 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 Risk Management Committee ensures Risk Management is an integral and ongoing part of a management process, is as simple and straightforward as possible and that structures and responsibilities are clearly defined. As such a Health and Safety Committee comprised of staff and a committee member meet to consider Health and Safety issues. The Committee refers all pertinent issues into the Risk Management Committee for review and consideration in the context of Risk Management and Audit.

Human Resources & Staffing Committee

The Human Resources and 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.

A summary of director meeting attendance during the year is as follows:

Directors	Board Meeting	AGM	Finance	Risk	Staffing	Strategy
			Committee	Committee	Committee	Committee
Melanie Farrell	6--6	Y	4--4			4--4
Aoibheann Treacy	7--7	Y	5--5			2--2
Donal Costello	4--7	Y				
Ciara Savage	6--7	Y		4--4		
Fiona Scott	4--7	Y				
Fiona Little	6--7	Y				4--5
Blathnaid Evans	5--7	Y			4--4	
Nickie Fowler	4--7	N	5--5			
Richard Plenty	5--6	Y				4--5
Declan Daly	1--2	Y		1--1		
Aimee Millar	2--2	Y				1--1

Reference and Administrative Details

The Board discharge the day-to-day organisation and running the company to CEO Emma Reidy, her management team, frontline support staff and administrative staff. The company use the professional services of their auditor and solicitors as and when required. Details of these providers are noted in the Director's information page of the financial statements. Any other professional services used by the company are used for purposes of them fulfilling the objectives of running the company.

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Amazing staff and place to stay.

”



Representation and Membership In 2022

We continued our representation roles at:

- Children and Young People's Services Committee
- Child Family Support Networks
- Prevention, Partnership and Family Support
- Irish Observatory on Violence against Women and Girls

We continued our membership roles at:

- The National Women's Council of Ireland
- SAFE Ireland
- The Wheel
- Irish Council for Social Housing
- Northside Partnership
- Children's Rights Alliance
- Brio



Future Developments

Our overall strategic priority for 2023-2027 is to ensure quality services for women and children with a strong emphasis on safety, empowerment, and advocacy.

1

Protection

Strategic Objective: To enhance our service offering to ensure women and children are protected.

Critical Success Factors

We often have to turn women away from our refuge because it is full. Expanding refuge places and developing our children's centre will be a critical aspect of the delivery of this strategic plan. Access to safe accommodation is an ongoing challenge and relationships with housing providers as well as the development of our own step-down options will be important. Our networks and collaboration with other service providers will be critical to this success.

Desired Outcome

Women and children have access to immediate safety when needed and to move-on accommodation options if required. Women and children have access to integrated pathways of care that support them on their journey to healing and that empower them to be agents of change in their lives.

2

Prevention

Strategic Objective: To use our skills and knowledge to support efforts to prevent the occurrence of domestic abuse and to intervene at the earliest opportunity.

Critical Success Factors

Harnessing our knowledge and good programme design to develop training programmes, continuing our communitybased approach, and working with partners and the Department of Justice will be critical success factors. Our training provision will be targeted and will move primarily to a train the trainer model. We will use our web site, social media platforms ,outreach and community services to raise awareness in the community. We will use our therapies to support children who have experienced or witnessed domestic abuse.

Desired Outcome

We are recognised as a thought leader and key voice in the sector. Our work contributes to greater awareness, understanding and skills to recognise and prevent domestic abuse and enable women and children at risk to have access to early interventions.

3

Prosecution

Strategic Objective: To provide supports that enable positive legal experiences for women and children.

Critical Success Factors

While Aoibhneas does not have a direct role in prosecution, the supports we provide to women enable them to enhance their safety (e.g. barring orders) and empowers them to make decisions about legal actions they might pursue. Access to relevant and up to date legal information and advice and knowledge of the court system are critical to supporting women who are taking legal action to protect themselves and their children or who may have legal action initiated against them. In addition, Aoibhneas can play a role in educating legal professionals and court officials on the impact domestic abuse has on its victims.

Desired Outcome

Women have the knowledge to make informed decisions about their options and are supported through the court system if necessary.

4

Policy & Coordination

Strategic Objective : To maintain a high profile for domestic abuse and Aoibhneas amongst key policymakers and relevant stakeholders contribute to the development of relevant policy and a strong sector capable of responding to the needs of victims of domestic abuse.

Critical Success

Factors fundamental to success will be keeping domestic abuse on the agenda for key policymakers and relevant stakeholders, collaborating with others and using our own experience and knowledge to highlight the issue of domestic abuse and to demonstrate how it can be addressed.

Desired Outcome

Domestic abuse remains a high national priority and Aoibhneas is recognised as the 'go to' organisation for practical advice on service excellence.

5

Organisational Capacity

Strategic Objective: To ensure continued operational excellence and enhanced organisational sustainability.

Critical Success Factors

We will continue to work to a high standard in our service provision and to develop our model of support for women and children. Sufficient funding to enable this is fundamental. We have invested significantly in our Board composition and skills to reflect the ambition of the organisation and will continue to do this. Sustainability will pivot around finances and fundraising, human resources and where we can play our part re climate change mitigation. We strive to create an environment where positivity, diversity, innovation, flexibility, and responsiveness flourish, for both our staff and our service users. Physical infrastructure also needs to be to a high standard.

Desired Outcomes

To have adequate resources (physical, human and financial) to meet the needs of our service users and access adequate statutory funding to meet these needs.

“

Family and Friends How Can I help

I am very grateful for the support and experience of this programme. It reinforced that domestic violence is not selective to any particular type of person. Meeting others in the same situation was comforting as we chatted and shared our experiences.

The gingerbread man exercise will be one I will always remember forever and enabled me to deeper understand how my daughter lost herself!

I am more educated, I have a deeper understanding of domestic violence and how to be supportive, patient, and compassionate of the victim and meeting them at whatever stage they are at!

Meeting all the staff was an additional bonus. Fantastic people that really love what they do. It was an absolute pleasure even though the situations we are experiencing are the most difficult.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart as ‘Aoibhneas ‘ has saved my daughters life ! I’d love to get involved with the organisation some day .

Thank you

”

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Acknowledgements



As we reflect on the year 2022, we are deeply grateful for the support and contributions that have empowered us to make a meaningful impact in the lives of women and children.

We extend our appreciation to our primary funder Tusla, Child and Family Agency, and the Department of Justice for their invaluable financial support. Their commitment has allowed us to expand our reach and effectiveness, ensuring that vital services reach those who need them the most.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the donors who have generously contributed to our cause throughout the year. Your compassionate donations have provided us with the resources necessary to offer comprehensive assistance and support to women and children.

Our success would not be possible without the dedication of our board members, whose strategic guidance has steered us in the right direction. To our incredible staff, your tireless efforts and passion continue to inspire us all. To our volunteers Tina, Adrianna, Pat, Roisin, Emma, who selflessly give their time and energy, your commitment drives our mission forward.

We also want to acknowledge the collaborative efforts of our community partners, who work alongside us to create a network of care and protection. In particular we would like to acknowledge DLA Piper who chose Aoibhneas as their charity partner from 2020-2022, their support in the area of data protection, leasing and fundraising was greatly appreciated. A big thank you to Collen who remain so supportive of our mission supporting families in the greater Dublin area experiencing domestic abuse. Following a call-to-action Dave Meier, Hidden Depth supported us redesigning our website. Over 6-months Dave gave his time and expertise so generously enabling us to launch a new website that prioritises clients access to information and support. Together, and with your help we are building a stronger foundation for victims and survivors to access safety and rebuild their lives.

We recognise the collective commitment and unity of individuals, community groups and services that enable us to bring about real change. The challenges we face in combatting domestic abuse are significant, but our shared determination is even greater. With your ongoing support, we look ahead to a future where safety, respect, and empowerment are the cornerstones of every woman and child's life.

Thank you,

Aoibheann Treacy
Chairperson



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Financial Statements



**“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 2022**

	Unrestricted Funds 2022 €	Restricted Funds 2022 €	Total 2022 €	Unrestricted Funds 2021 €	Restricted Funds 2021 €	Total 2021 €
Income						
Donations and legacies	198,693	-	198,693	210,120	-	210,120
Charitable activities						
- Grants from governments and other co-funders	-	1,414,017	1,414,017	-	1,424,740	1,424,740
Other income	10,956	1,000	11,956	10,826	1,000	11,826
Total income	209,649	1,415,017	1,624,666	220,946	1,425,740	1,646,686
Expenditure						
Charitable activities	110,097	1,448,262	1,558,359	98,007	1,515,605	1,613,612
Net income/ (expenditure)	99,552	(33,245)	66,307	122,939	(89,865)	33,074
Transfers between funds	(23,245)	23,245	-	(32,312)	32,312	-
Net movement in funds for the financial year	76,307	(10,000)	66,307	90,627	(57,553)	33,074
Reconciliation of funds						
Balances brought forward at 1 January 2022	1,109,846	10,000	1,119,846	1,019,219	67,553	1,086,772
Balances carried forward at 31 December 2022	1,186,153	-	1,186,153	1,109,846	10,000	1,119,846

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.

All income and expenditure relate to continuing activities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 28th March 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Bláthnaid Evans
Director

Aoibheann Treacy
Director

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

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	234,972	324,526
Current Assets		
Debtors	16,774	10,287
Cash at bank and in hand	1,099,848	908,487
	1,116,622	918,774
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(118,441)	(75,454)
Net Current Assets	998,181	843,320
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	1,233,153	1,167,846
Grants receivable	(47,000)	(48,000)
Net Assets	1,186,153	1,119,846
Funds		
Restricted funds	-	10,000
Unrestricted designated funds	630,000	350,000
General fund (unrestricted)	556,153	759,846
Total funds	1,186,153	1,119,846

Approved by the Board of Directors on 28th March 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Bláthnaid Evans
Director

Aoibheann Treacy
Director

**“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 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
Cash flows from operating activities		
Net movement in funds	66,307	33,074
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation	89,554	92,583
Amortisation of capital grants received	(1,000)	(1,000)
	154,861	124,657
Movements in working capital:		
Movement in debtors	(6,487)	4,518
Movement in creditors	42,987	(117,186)
Cash generated from operations	191,361	11,989
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments to acquire tangible assets	-	(94,959)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Grants receivable	-	49,000
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	191,361	(33,970)
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January 2022	908,487	942,457
Cash and cash equivalents at 31 December 2022	1,099,848	908,487

Note

Out of the company's cash reserves it maintains a sinking fund reserve of €260,000 and designated funding reserve of €350,000 for the development of a dedicated centre to support children affected by domestic abuse. Restricted reserves forward are accumulated reserves from the current funder Tulsa, previous funder Dublin City Council and certain other specific grants awarded. Unrestricted reserves forward are reserves accumulated from previous funders since the incorporation of the company up until now along with income streams that are not restricted.

Extract from Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of Aoibhneas CLG Year ended 31 December 2022

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

We have audited the company financial statements of Aoibhneas Company Limited by Guarantee for the financial year ended 31 December 2022 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account), the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows and the notes to the financial statements, including the summary of significant accounting policies set out in note 2. 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", issued in the United Kingdom by the Financial Reporting Council.

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 2022 and of its surplus 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", as applied in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act 2014 and having regard to the Charities SORP; and
- have been properly 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 described below 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 ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard for Auditors (Ireland) issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority

(IAASA), and the Provisions Available for Audits of Small Entities, in the circumstances set out in note 3 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

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of the Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements 2022.

Note

A full copy of Aoibhneas CLG Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022 can be obtained through the Companies Registration Office (www.cro.ie) and the Charities Regulator (www.charitiesregulator.ie)

