

**Over 20% increase in number of women and children receiving refuge  
from domestic violence in Kilkenny last year**

Amber Women's Refuge, the domestic abuse service for Kilkenny and Carlow, recently published its 2022 Annual Report, which details increases in the number of women and children receiving refuge from domestic violence at its Kilkenny based service throughout 2022.

45 women received refuge at Amber in 2022, an increase of 22% on the previous year's figures. 68 children received refuge, alongside their Mothers, which represents an increase of 21% on 2021. The majority of the women and children who sought refuge were from Kilkenny and Carlow.

In 2022, 58 women seeking refuge could not receive refuge at Amber as the refuge was full.

Highlights from Amber's Annual Report 2022 :

- 246 women accessed support and information via the service's 24/7 confidential Helpline
- 45 women received Court Support, Preparation & Accompaniment to obtain court orders
- 40 women participated in Amber's Group Support Programmes
- 25 mothers received Parenting support to help them with the challenges of parenting during or after an abusive relationship
- 16 children affected by domestic violence received one to one support
- 39 women received 246 counselling sessions
- 428 local secondary school students and youth group members completed Amber's StartSafe educational programme, which highlights the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships

"2022 was an extremely busy year for Amber, with increases in demand for many of our refuge and community-based services. There was a 22% increase in the number of women participating in our Group Support Programmes. These programmes are for women who are or have in the past experienced intimate partner violence. The number of counselling sessions received by women also increased by 14% from 2021, as women continued to seek to process the trauma of the abuse they had experienced." said Lisa Morris, Manager, Amber Women's Refuge.

Following research which showed that almost 75% of girls and 50% of boys (15years+) had experienced some form of emotional abuse from their intimate partners, in 2022, Amber launched the StartSafe programme for local secondary schools and youth groups to help support local teens to identify, develop and maintain safe, healthy relationships.

Last year, the service also began to deliver the Triple P positive parenting programme to Mothers parenting during or after abusive relationships. This programme is viewed as one of the most effective, evidence-based positive parenting systems in the world. Amber is currently the only domestic abuse service in the South-East to offer this programme to mothers who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

2022 also saw the development and roll out by Amber of a suite of supports to assist local businesses and organisations to develop workplace policies on domestic violence and abuse (DVA), put supports in place for their employees experiencing DVA and train HR/People Managers on spotting the signs, responding to disclosures of abuse and referring employees to specialist services. The Work Life Balance Bill, which makes provision for five days statutory leave from work per year for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, is expected to be enacted this Autumn.

Amber also delivered training last year to local non-domestic abuse specialist professionals, including representatives from TUSLA, HSE and the local Gardai, to increase their awareness and knowledge of DVA.

“In some respects, we saw a return to pre COVID-19 levels of demand for some areas of our service, namely the number of calls received on our 24/7 Helpline, which decreased last year from the number of calls in 2021. However, we found that while the number of calls decreased, women’s situations became increasingly complex, with extreme cases of financial abuse and coercive control hindering women and children from escaping abuse. Uprooting their children’s routines and schooling also remained a key concern for women seeking refuge.”

“The Housing Crisis is the single most critical barrier to women and children safely escaping violent homes and rebuilding their lives after abuse. Throughout 2022, we saw the effects of this on the ground for local women and children. The drastic decreases in both affordable rental accommodation and public housing remains a huge concern for local victim-survivors of domestic abuse. We are currently working with Kilkenny County Council on the provision of safe houses in the community for women and children leaving refuge.” continued Lisa Morris.

COVID-19 restrictions resulted in Amber having to postpone marking the 20 year anniversary of the refuge opening until 2022, the service’s 21<sup>st</sup> year of operation. Minister for Justice Helen McEntee, TD, visited the refuge to mark the milestone stating “I’m delighted to be working with Amber Women’s Refuge to show support of and solidarity with victims of domestic, sexual and gender based violence.”

Last year, Amber’s One Million Stars project, the inclusive community arts project for raising awareness of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), reached the milestone of over 150,000 stars woven by volunteer star weavers in 88 organisations across 22 counties. In May 2022, Amber hosted a Star Weave Jam in Leinster House, attended by 34 TDs and Senators from across the houses, representing an opportunity to ensure that the issue of violence against women remained top of mind for Government.

“Reviewing the work of our service throughout 2022, I feel proud of all that has been achieved in supporting women and children who are victim-survivors of domestic abuse. While funding remains a key concern, we look forward to the imminent launch of the new statutory agency tasked with tackling the scourge of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) in our society and to the move, in line with recommendations in the Third National Strategy for DSGBV, to a multi-annual funding framework from the Department of Justice. It is our hope that this move will result in frontline domestic abuse services, like Amber, being funded in a more sufficient and sustainable way. In line with increasing demand for many of our services, we are committed to expanding our needs- led services, both at the refuge and in the community, to women and children at the earliest opportunity.” concluded Lisa Morris, Manager, Amber Women’s Refuge.

Established in 1995, Amber Women’s Refuge provides emergency refuge accommodation, support and information services and a 24hr Helpline to women and children in Kilkenny and Carlow who are

victims-survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Amber also provides safe, inclusive, community-based support services in Kilkenny city and county and throughout rural county Carlow to women and children living with or fleeing the serious crime of domestic abuse. Amber's specialist team has over 200 years' experience working with and advocating for victim-survivors of domestic violence and abuse.

Amber Women's Refuge works to achieve equality and the right to live a life free from violence and abuse for all in our community.

1 in 4 Irish women and 1 in 7 Irish men will experience abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime. 1 in 2 women murdered in Ireland are murdered by an intimate partner/ex. Donations can be made at [www.amberwomensrefuge.ie](http://www.amberwomensrefuge.ie).

Helpline numbers :

Amber Women's Refuge                    0818 42 42 44

Men's Aid Ireland                        01 554 3811

**ENDS**

For further information :

Naomh Murphy, Communications & Training Officer, Amber Women's Refuge

085 859 8513

Note to Editor : Domestic Abuse includes emotional and psychological abuse, coercive control, sexual abuse, financial abuse, digital abuse including harassment and/or online stalking, as well as physical violence and threats of violence. Victims can be in different types of relationships, including heterosexual relationships, same sex relationships, transgender relationships and teenage relationships. Victims can be married, living together or dating. Domestic abuse affects people of any race, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, education level, class, disability or religion.