



Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre C.L.G.

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021

#### **OUR VISION**

'Creating an environment where women and children will be safe'

#### **OUR MISSION**

'To work with others to prevent domestic violence and homelessness and to offer safe accommodation and support to women, children and families'

#### **OUR VALUES**

'We provide informed support in a caring way'

'We empower women to take control of their lives'

'We collaborate as a team and with others who can help women,

children and families'

'We aim to work to the highest standard and best practice'

'We are transparent in our work and how we conduct our

business'

'We are an agent for change'





1121

CRISIS CALLS RECIEVED THROUGH OUR HELPLINE



INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS CARRIED OUT WITH WOMEN

#### **DWCR - Annual Report 2021**



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# Voices of our Service Users



The place is comfortable, clean and all the staff are lovely, friendly, and helpful. All of you helped me with papers/forms, emotional support (even with small things), this I won't never forget about.

You guys make in the people life very good things.



First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to everyone at the Drogheda women's refuge, each one of you played a very important part in ensuring that I was safe and received the best advice and services.

When I first approached the women's refuge in Drogheda, I have to say I didn't know what to expect but it was the only option I had at a time, and it sounded like the only place that I needed at the time . My story was heard empathetically, I was allowed to express myself without any distraction.

That night I was given a place to stay as I didn't have anywhere to go. The staff were really helpful, all facilities were available to anyone, even the food stuff were plenty. I was accompanied by Alison and Michelle several times to the court, I would have been lost without them to be honest. I couldn't imagine being alone in court as my ex would often come and intimidate me in front of everyone. It really meant a lot to me. Thank you!

I was given the right information to detail that helped me get to where I am today , so if not for Drogheda Women's refuge, I wouldn't be where I am now!



Thanks for helping me a lot always, to the outreach workers, support worker and refuges manager, thanks to all. Just because of you and Drogheda Refuge, I am happy now. Thanks to all women's refuge's, You are very precious always in my heart



#### **Padraic Grennan**

#### **DWCR Chairperson**

# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2021

At the beginning of 2021, the board of DWCR faced many challenges. Following on from the completion of a staff review in late 2020, we went about responding to the recommendations outlined in the report. A key recommendation was to change the whole organisational structure, build a strong management base and increase our core staffing to achieve a safe, optimum 24 hour rota.

With Covid-19 still snapping at our heels and the Refuge managing various ways to work with women and children experiencing domestic violence we wondered how this would influence our decisions. The Manager, Susan and the Finance Manager, Irene worked hard to calculate how this would would go and how much would the costs would be to the Refuge. By mid spring we made the bold move to recruit new staff to cover this new rota and began a significant recruitment process.

While the board membership shifted significantly in 2020, we were keen to ensure that this momentum would continue and that we had the right skills to drive the company forward. We were delighted to add Elaine McGinty to the board in September. Sadly we lost Paddy and Deirdre from the Board this year. Their input and dedication was an inspiration to us all. they are missed.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to my fellow board members, who continued almost seamlessly in their work.



Thankfully as always we had a supportive relationship with Tusla, who ensured that additional costs incurred due to the pandemic were met without delay. In addition to the essential ongoing funding we receive from TUSLA their openness to acknowledge the difficulties we were experiencing in the in restructuring, and they continued to support us in this process.

2021 saw the Board turn our focus to good governance and practice. We submitted our plan on to the Charities Regulator in October, which was approved, and we began the process of implementation through our sub-groups.

We also began the tender process for a facilitator who will help us develop our strategic plan in 2022. We look forward to this exciting process and the sense that anything is possible.

Lastly, I am delighted to express my gratitude, on behalf of the board, to the staff and management of Drogheda Women & Children's Refuge. It is a genuine privilege to pay tribute to their dedication and courage in maintaining the excellent standard of the services, in such continued difficult circumstances, provided to the women and children who access our supports and services.

# MANAGERS REPORT 2021

The new year of 2021 brought a promise of hope and freedom from Covid-19, with the reduction in cases and the arrival of vaccines, though we continued to take maximum precautions for women and children accessing our services, and our staff team. The new year also brought recommendations from the staff review carried out in 2020. The board, Management, and staff began the process of organisational change within the refuge, striving to develop the service to meet the ever-growing demand.

The Covid 19 Pandemic shone a light on the pervasiveness of domestic violence in our country. Domestic Violence is a national issue and can profoundly impact women and children as well as society as a whole. Provision of good quality, effective supports to woman and children affected by violence and abuse is crucial.

A key part of the change saw the introduction of the 24-hour optimum Rota. In June 2021, we submitted a successful business plan to Tusla, that would ensure funding for core staff to fulfill this work and provide a full and safe rota and quality service for women and children experiencing domestic violence. With this came a huge recruitment drive in order to expand and meet the needs of the service. We were successful in recruiting new Day Support, Night Support workers and a Childhood Support Worker alongside the Support Services Manager.

With the whole new Support Staff team we recognised the need for continuous professional development for our current staff and new recruits. In the Autumn we set out a calendar of workshops and training to achieve this.

The workshops and training included:

- Trauma informed practice
- Transgender Awareness workshops
- Care Planning and Key working skills
- Coercive control
- Domestic Violence Awareness workshops

#### Susan Keogh

#### **DWCR General Manager**



- Trinity College Dublin course "The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children"
- Level 6 Leadership with LMETB
- Play Therapy
- Mental Health First Aid

Even with the whole process of organiastional change in 2021, there still remained a gap within the organisation to deliver awareness raising and education work in society in order to effect change. We are seeking to address this through our training programmes for staff to build our confidence and capacity in this area of service provision. This development process will continue into the whole of 2022.

We continue to acknowledge that by working collaboratively with our clients and community agencies we can play a role in preventing domestic violence and enhancing safety. 2021 saw us engage more in local and county talks and events around domestic abuse.

Throughout the year we participated in the development of the new ESafe CRM system, supported and developed by Safe Ireland & Enclude. Staff training on the system will begin in early 2022 and will mean that the refuge will move from paper records to an online recording system. We look forward to this new change and how it will impact on our work and how we record and deliver our services.

## **Our Supports & Services**

#### Refuge

At Drogheda Women and Children's Refuge we offer six self-contained units and five single rooms for women and children experiencing domestic violence and homelessness. This is safe short term crisis accommodation.

The refuge is a 24-hour service operating 365 days a year with trained staff working around the clock to deliver on site support to those impacted by domestic violence and homelessness. The helpline also operates 24 hours day 365 days a year.

The refuge has an onsite registered childcare facility for children to access. The childcare team also work in conjunction with mams to identify all the strengthens and needs of the families which access refuge.

2021 brought many challenges to refuge life with Covid impacting the service and our service delivery. Covid directly affected the number of admissions which in turn meant that our number of refusals were at an all-time high of 495, 82% of which were due to lack of space in refuge. However, the refuge did support 74 women and 100 children.

While society became stagnant due to Covid the support team within refuge used alternative ways to ensure the women and children accessing refuge continued to feel supported and working

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ADVOCACY CALLS ON BEHALF

**OF WOMEN & CHILDREN** 

on identified support plans. Support visits continued through zoom and over the phone supports.

The refuge applied for funding which allowed for the purchase of tablets so that the women could engage with supports and the children could utilize this for the completion of their schoolwork. In addition to refuge, we provide a community-based support service which enables women to stay within their home while accessing information, advice and supports around domestic violence.

Both refuge and outreach provide supports that include:

- Initial and full assessments
- Practical and emotional supports
- Support regarding housing, finances, legal, health and advocacy
- Court accompaniment
- Domestic violence educational work
- Self esteem building and affirmation work
- Interagency collaboration
- Counselling

# **Support Services Manager**

#### Chelsea Johnston



In late November 2021 we welcomed our new Support Services Manager, Chelsea Johnson. Chelsea's arrival marked the end of a recruitment drive to build the Support & Outreach team, and

strengthen the 24-hour rota. The full team now in place ensures we deliver high quality supports and services to the women & children living with domestic abuse.

#### **Outreach Support**

The aim of the outreach service is to provide support for women experiencing domestic violence within the community, thus enabling them to remain in their home. The service works with women in the community, focusing on prevention and early intervention through awareness raising and providing educational supports to women around domestic violence. We also work alongside other professionals in an awareness raising piece regarding referral pathways.

Like refuge our outreach service also incurred setbacks such as the closure of Drogheda Courts which brought us in to 2022 before we saw any reopening's. A key piece of the work is to undertake court accompaniments to assist and support women in seeking court orders, and the court closure remained a barrier to providing our full support services in 2021.

In 2021, our outreach team supported 105 women within the community, and made 177 support visits.



ADVOCACY &
INFORMATION CALLS MADE
BY OUR OUTREACH SERVICE

#### **Transition Housing**

We secured a Transition House in 2017, to support post-crisis victims of abuse with additional and/or complex needs. Families who move to the Transition house continue to be supported by our Outreach team for the duration of their time there. Due to the presenting complex needs, the outreach team support women around risk assessment and safety planning, and linking them in to appropriate services and community supports to prepare them to permanently move on.

2021 saw the tenant in our transition house secure her forever home and she moved out in April 2021. We were delighted for her to have the opportunity to begin a new free and safe journey with her children.

Refurbishment work was carried out on the house and supported another family to move in in May.

#### **Therapeutic Supports**

A very positive step in 2021 was our successful application for funding towards adult and child counselling. The funding streams under the Commission for the Support of the Victims of Crime has enabled the Refuge to develop an offsite and onsite low cost counselling service for both adults and children. Two Psychotherapists were contracted in June 2021 to support both. The services offers up to sixsessions at low cost to women and children living with the trauma of domestic abuse.

From June to December 2021, thirty one women were referred to counselling and fifteen of these went on to complete their full sessions. Eight children attended counselling sessions in 2021.

By the end of 2021 it was identified that we would need to expand the service and seek additional funding to expand and secure the sustainability of the service. Additional wrap around therapeutic supports for children were also identified as a priority and explorations for additional funding will happen in 2022.

# **Supports for Children**

















Our onsite childcare service offers a range of services to women and children; pre-school, drop in and afterschool. We open for 50 weeks of the year and offer the different Government funded schemes – ECCE scheme and the National Childcare Scheme.

We are Tusla registered and implement Aistear, the national curriculum. 1008 children availed of the service in 2021

#### Domestic Violence Support to women and children

The children services team understand that the parent/child relationship requires special consideration. The team supported mothers to help them understand the impact family violence can have on their children. Helping mothers to understand attachment, to identify their children's experiences and how they can support their children in their recovery.



#### The team do this by:

- Conducting parenting assessments
- Domestic violence educational and awareness workshops
- Activity programmes for mothers and children
- 15 hours childcare per week
- Sign posting to additional support services

We work with children individually and in groups to help children transition into refuge and support children in making sense of their domestic violence experiences. The core focus of the work is to provide predictable and safe spaces for children to have their stories heard and validated.

#### The team do this by:

- Key worker systems for children
- Breakfast/homework clubs
- How it looks to me
- Individual tailored learning programmes
- Safety Planning
- Referral pathways to Counselling and therapy services
- Play sessions
- Holiday/Seasonal programmes
- Trips and outings in the community

### **Developments in Childcare over 2021**

Two Community Employment Childcare participants qualified in the QQI Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Successful recruitment of a part-time Childhood Support Worker, for the afternoon childcare service, specialised domestic violence awareness and educational work with mothers and children. We operated on a reduced service during the early phases of the year due to COVID, but continued to engage with women and children in refuge and in the community.

#### The team did this by:

- Providing tablets to children in refuge to conduct weekly link in's and offer support for remote schoolwork
- Conducting parenting assessments through zoom
- Providing children with a range materials, toys, and activities to do in the unit's week to week
- Allocating individual play sessions in the childcare room and outdoor play area to families

#### **Continuous Professional Development**

Our full time Childhood Support Worker completed her QQI Level 6 in therapeutic play skills. From this she developed in house workshops with children.

Throughout the year the children availed of a range of child centre non directive workshops:

- Sensory play
- Creative Arts
- Story time and puppet making
- Clay modelling
- Bubbles and water play
- Music and movement



#### **TLC KIDZ Programme**

As part of our vision to deliver on ongoing support programmes to children we teamed up in 2021 with Meath Domestic Violence & Support Services to look at how we could work collaboratively to establish and deliver the TLC KIDZ programmes in both Louth & Meath. With funding supports from TUSLA a both services developed a Memorandum of Understanding and a Programme Coordinator was recruited to begin the process in October.

#### What is TLC KIDZ?

- The programme is a 12-week, psychoeducational group programme for children and mothers recovering from domestic abuse. It is an evaluated programme developed in the UK.
- The programme aims to help children heal from the impact of domestic abuse and to help mothers in understanding their child's experiences and support their recovery.
- It promotes the wellbeing of children and mothers through validating their experiences, safety planning, social support, teaching appropriate expression of difficult emotions, and enhancing communication between children and mothers.







2021 was another eventful year for the shop. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all our Staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the year. I would like to thank Theresa Judge (Shop Supervisor) for all her hard work with providing support and training to the staff and volunteers. One of the most important functions of a supervisor is to create willingness amongst the staff to perform to the best of their abilities which she did, thank you. Through her expertise, knowledge, and guidance, the staff have done an amazing job in the shop, with their welcoming presence and beautiful display of stock and window displays which are a vocal point for every seasonal event.

CATEGORY	INCOME VS EXPENDITURE 2021
INCOME	41,001
EXPENDITURE	14,588
PROFIT	26,414



Recruitment challenges brought on by Covid meant we operated the shop with very limited staff but our team of five took on the challenge successfully. I would also like to thank Catherine Bermingham (Housekeeping Manager) and her team for all their hard work in implementing our donation Covid procedures. Catherine does a fantastic job in organising twice weekly the drop off, of donations and supplies to the shop. Thank you.

Our Social media platforms have become the new way forward for advertising our products available in the shop. Theresa provided endless posts for our followers to view and enjoy every week.

We signed the two-year lease commencing on 23rd November 2021 with Melcorpo Commercial Properties Unlimited Company. I would like to thank B V Hoey & Co. re Finnuala Ryan and her team for all their support with this process.

We became members of the Irish Charity Shop Association in June

The shop closed its doors once again in 2021 for 4.5 months due to covid restrictions covering a period of 20 weeks. As you know the revenue generated from the shop goes towards the running cost of Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge Centre, but this much needed source was no longer available to the service during lockdown, but I would like to thank our landlords Melcorpo Commercial Properties for their understanding and support during this difficult time.

Through hard work and determination, the staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes to prepare the shop for reopening and our loyal customers old and new welcomed us back.

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

Henry Ford

2021 and they have provided great knowledge and support to us.

A business plan for the charity shop was developed in September. This report demonstrated the need for a part time shop Manager on the floor, to deliver a quality service in the shop, increase revenue and reduce any potential risks. The board supported the plan, and we aim to begin the recruitment process in 2022.

Though the shop was closed for 37% of the year it did generate a profit of over 26k which is a testament to the hard work of the staff. Thank you. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the board, Susan (Refuge Manager) and Carmel (CE Supervisor) for their support.

#### **Irene Kilroy**

# Community Employment Scheme

The Community Employment is an essential part of DWCR service provision. The schemes supports eligible people who live in the general area, to gain valuable work experience and on the job training in social care, reception, support work and customer care. These skills and experience aim to support the participant to go on to further education or secure a permanent position in the field. Without the support of these participants the Refuge service could not function as effectively as it does.

In 2021 there was a total of 26 participants in Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge Community Employment Scheme consisting of 18 care staff, 1 Caretaker, 3 Housekeeping staff and 4 in the Butterfly Boutique. We were also granted an extra 3 CE places for our Butterfly Boutique in 2021.

There was not much movement of participants as most had been granted extensions due to pandemic. However, we did have two staff successfully move from CE to Support & Night Worker positions in the Refuge. We also had other CE members progress onto working with the Irish Traveller Movement and another CE going onto work in the area of disabilities.

Staff review took place in 2021 which changed the structure of the staff team and opened up new opportunities for CE staff by creating new roles in the main office, this was a very positive outcome as CE staff can experience other elements such as key working, support planning.

2021 was a year where a lot of key pieces of training took place, in areas such as Transgender Awareness, Cultural competency, Key working, Report writing, and more specialised Domestic Abuse awareness and all the staff were trained in Trauma Informed Care

#### **Testimonial from a past CE participant**

"I thoroughly enjoyed experience on CE in Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge and enjoyed being part of the team. Training was fantastic especially Trauma Informed care, helpline training and applying this in my role in the main office and Reception.

I would one hundred percent recommend for anyone interested in developing and learning in the caring field. It gave me the confidence to go for the Job in Homeless field and to apply what I have learned with me. The support from all the staff I can never thank enough"

Janelle.



#### Finances 2021:

Financial and training monitoring took place remotely in May 2021 and went well.

All financial accounts are prepared by Matthew Walsh and Associates in Dec. for yearly rollover in January 2022.

#### 2021 Spending:

Wages: €314,966.24
 Training: €9,045.00
 Materials: €10,283.58

### **OUR BOARD**

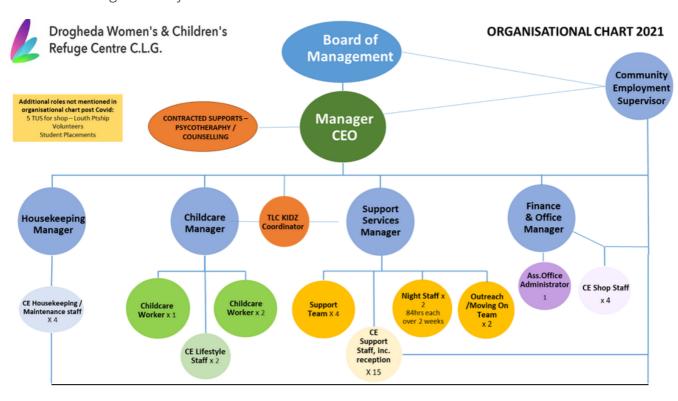
The voluntary Board of Management of Drogheda Women & Children's Refuge CLG is made up of a mixture of statutory, local community group representatives and professionals from the private sector. They represent a wide array of backgrounds, experience and expertise, and bring a rich mix of skills, resources, and leadership to their governance role.

- The Board meets every month and in 2021 the Board comprised of:
- Padraic Grennan ......Chairperson
- Deirdre Mc Ternan ......Company Secretary
- Anna Shakespeare......Director
- David McKeown ......Member
- Antoinette Rourke
   Director

- Brenda Finnegan
   Director
- Frances Byrne ......Director

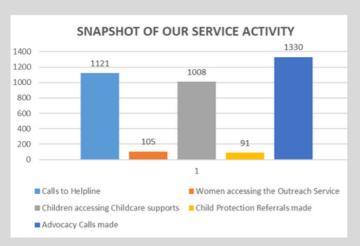
### **OUR STAFF TEAM**

Following the completion of a staff review over 2020 early 2021 an organisational restructure was developed. A large recruitment drive was carried out to ensure an optimum 24 hour rota populated with Core Support Staff. Two full time Refuge Support staff and two Night Support workers were recruited throughout the year to achieve this aim.



# Our activities at a glance

The data below gives an insight in to the activities of Drogheda Women & Children's Refuge and highlights some changing patterns in our service use that helps us to meet demand and also adapt and improve the services we provide on an ongoing basis in line with our clients' needs and our strategic goals.



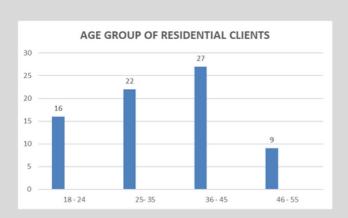
- Our outreach team worked with 105 outreach clients. Through the provision of individual support sessions, legal supports, and advocacy, 103 of these women were supported to remain in their own homes.
- Direct service provision continues to be a key element of our daily work. Our support team carried out 3887 individual support sessions with women. We made 1, 330 advocacy calls on behalf of women and children.
- Helpline is often the first point of contact for women experiencing domestic violence. It is a vital service. In 2021 our team answered 1121 calls through the helpline. Of the 73 women admitted to refuge 53 of these were as a result of their helpline call.

REFUGE ACTIVITY

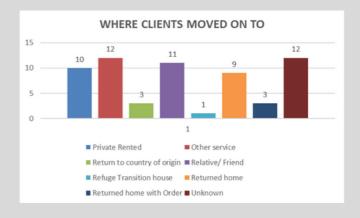
428

378

- Of the 73 women admitted, 52 were fleeing a D.V. crisis. 21 were in homeless crisis. this figure is up slightly from 2020 due to increased movement after the Covid lock downs
- Of the 100 children admitted, 89 experienced or witnessed domestic violence, 11 were homeless
- Of those women in refuge 77% of perpetrators were husband/partner, 15% were ex-husband/ex-partner.
- 82% of our refusals were due to lack of space.



- 400 350 300 200 100 Children Refusals to Refusals to Women Average Average admitted to Admitted to length of stay length of stay Refuge Refuge Refuge (Single (Children) Women)
- 22% Aged between 18 24 yrs
- 30% Aged between 25 35 yrs
- The above figures show that DV is quite prominent in 18 to 35 age group
- 36% Aged between 36 45 yrs
- 12% Aged between 46 55 yrs
- Of the 12 women that moved on to other services, these included; mental health, homelessness & other refuges
- Due to the continued closure of Drogheda Courts & women having to access the court in Dundalk, the Outreach service could not fully document how many women secured orders as they met with Dundalk supports upon reaching court
- Despite the ongoing challenges of finding private rented, 10 women successfully secured long term housing



### **APPENDIX 1:**

#### **Annual Accounts 2021**

**Drogheda Womens & Children's Refuge Centre Company Limited by Guarantee INCOME STATEMENT** 

for the financial year ended 31 December 2021

		2021	2020
	Notes	€	€
Income		1,206,383	1,132,499
Expenditure		(1,153,122)	(1,036,777)
Surplus before interest		53,261	95,722
Interest receivable and similar incor	me	17	56
Surplus for the financial year		53,278	95,778
Total comprehensive income		53,278	95,778

Approved by the board on 5 September 2022 and signed on its behalf by:
Antoinette Rourke Director
Anna Shakespeare

Director

# Drogheda Womens & Childrens Refuge Centre Company Limited by Guarantee BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 2021

<b>N</b>	lotes	<b>2021</b> €	<b>2020</b> €
Fixed Assets	10163	C	C
Tangible assets	6	737,769	849,444
Current Assets			
Debtors	7	23,676	13,752
Cash and cash equivalents		609,430	582,518
		633,106	596,270
Creditors: amounts falling due within one ye	ear 8	(62,540)	(84,657)
Net Current Assets		570,566	511,613
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		1,308,335	1,361,057
amounts falling due after more than one ye	ar 9	(712,672)	(818,672)
Net Assets		595,663	542,385
Reserves			
Retained surplus		595,663	542,385
Equity attributable to owners of the co	mpany	595,663	542,385

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the small companies' regime.

#### Approved by the board on 5 September 2022 and signed on its behalf by:

Antoinette Rourke Director	
Anna Shakespeare	
Director	

# Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre Company Limited by Guarantee NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the financial year ended 31 December 2021

#### 10. State Funding

Agency TUSLA

Sponsoring department The Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Grant Programme Domestic Abuse

Purpose of the Grant Core Staff Salaries

Term Annual

Grant Amount €540,775

Expenditure Amount €526,924

Grant deferred at year end n/a

Amount Received in the year €540,775

Grant Revenue

Restrictions on use Core Staff Salaries

Remuneration in excess of €60,000 There were no staff in receipt of remuneration in

excess of €60,000.

Agency Pobal

Sponsoring Department The Department of Children & Youth

Grant Programme CCS/ECCE/AIM

Purpose of the Grant Contribution towards Child Care staff salary

Term Annual

Grant Amount €19,466

Expenditure Amount €6,569

Amount deferred at the year end N/a

Amount received in the year €19.466

Grant Revenue Revenue Grant

Restrictions on use Child care staff salary

# Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre Company Limited by Guarantee NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS for the financial year ended 31 December 2021

**Agency DEASP** Sponsoring Department Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection Grant Programme CE Scheme Salary & Running costs of the CE scheme Purpose of the Grant Term Annual Total Grant €339,635 (Employee Benefits /Pensions - Not Applicable) Expenditure €339,635 Amount deferred or due at year end n/a Amount received in the year €339,635 Grant Revenue Grant

CE Scheme Salaries and Participant Development

Agency	Louth County Council
Sponsoring Department	Department of the Environment
Grant Programme	Bednights and Retainers
Purpose of Grant	Running costs of the Refuge, outreach and accompaniment core staff salaries
Term	Annual
Total grant	€51,740
Expenditure	€51,740
Amount deferred at year end	N/a
Amount received in the year	€51,740
Grant	Revenue Grant
Restrictions on use	Restrictions on use Provision of Emergency Accommodation and Support Services

Restrictions on Use



# Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre C.L.G.

#### **CONTACT US AT:**

**RECEPTION:** 041 9844998

24 HOUR HELPLINE: 041 9844550

**OUTREACH SERVICE:** 085 8744238 / 085 8744158

Web: www.droghedarefuge.org





Drogheda Women & Childrens Refuge Centre

We would like to thank our funders for their ongoing support to the continuation of our supports and services in 2021. A special thank you to Safe Ireland to whom we owe our national voice, training & networking opportunities.











