



Laois Domestic
Abuse Service

Tomorrow Starts Today

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2024



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Foreword

Foreword by Marna Carroll, Service Director and
Therese Walsh, Chairperson

2022 marks 16 years since Laois Domestic Abuse Service was established to support women subjected to domestic abuse in our community. Laois Domestic Abuse Service is a non-governmental organisation, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. It is also an autonomous organisation governed by a voluntary board of management.

As the only service for women in County Laois, the board and staff worked tirelessly over a number of years, to develop the offering of the service, and in 2019 we began working with children and young people subjected to childhood domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is anything but straightforward, and the service works with deep complexity on a daily basis. In response to this, the service provides specialised services in line with good practice.



Our response was to mobilise, and act quickly to maximise opportunities for women and children to reach us; and our incredible staff and committed Board members deserve wholehearted gratitude for their work.

The Laois Domestic Abuse Service team was challenged over the last two years, but not only did they rise to the occasion, they went over and above what could be reasonably expected. We felt a great unease, and fear at the beginning of the pandemic, for women and children subjected to abuse. Our response was to mobilise, and act quickly to maximise opportunities for women and children to reach us; and our incredible staff and committed Board members deserve wholehearted gratitude for their work.

Working to develop a strategic plan over the past 2 years has afforded us an opportunity to reflect the way we work and set our priorities. This document is an important resource for the organisation and will help to guide us in focussing our energy and resources, strengthening our work, and directing our response to a changing environment; but serves as an impetus for change too. It is an ambitious document, but we are confident that the organisation, with our partners, can achieve the goals set out.

Laois Domestic Abuse Service will continue to value engagement with a wide range of agencies and partners, which informs and enriches our work. We aim to build on the good working relationships developed with stakeholders including Tusla, the Department of Justice, the public, our partners in the community and most importantly our service users over the course of the Strategic Plan. This plan recognises that there will be issues and developments relevant to supporting the achievement of a safe Laois for women and children, and we will remain cognisant of emerging issues.

To that end, we in Laois Domestic Abuse Service look forward to supporting the implementation of the 3rd National Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence Strategy and to meeting the many challenges and opportunities that promote the safety of women and children in Laois.

To conclude this foreword, I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all LDAS staff, our board, our partners in the community, private and statutory sector for their support in assisting us to respond to the need of women and children in Laois over previous years and we welcome the opportunities our strategy will provide in the years ahead

Marna Carroll
Service Director

Therese Walsh
Chairperson

MARCH 2022

01 About Laois Domestic Abuse Service



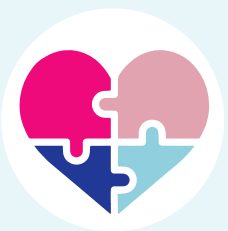
VISION

We believe in a world where women and children are treated as equals, respected, heard, valued and can live safely in their homes. Our vision is for communities where domestic abuse is condemned, where ending violence against women and children is everyone's responsibility, where a legal system holds abusers to account and is accessible, fair and transparent, and where there is adequate state support for those who need it in order to be safe.



MISSION

Laois Domestic Abuse Service is a feminist organisation providing services to support women and children subjected to domestic abuse and coercive control. We help support them to identify their needs, harness their resources and make changes they need to live a life free from domestic abuse. We do this by providing practical support, emotional support, information and guidance. We do this through one-to-one support, legal accompaniment, referrals to other services, group support and specialised children's support.



VALUES

Listening: we know that every woman's story is unique, and she is uniquely placed to help herself. We listen carefully to what she has experienced and what she needs so we can provide the most appropriate and useful support to her. We seek and listen to her feedback on whether we are giving her the help she needs in the way that she needs it.

Empowerment: we know that every woman has the capacity to make the choices she needs, given the space and the support to do so.

Safety: we provide a space in which a woman will be respected, valued and cared for, and a support experience that is free from hurt, manipulation, judgment, rejection and abuse.

Hope: we believe that given the right support and resources, women can create safety for themselves and their children. We help women to seek and find hope for a life without abuse.

Feminism and Equality: We view domestic abuse from a feminist intersectional perspective, meaning that we work to change society so that women and men have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. We recognise that domestic abuse is largely a problem of male violence against women and children. We recognised the systemic barriers that women encounter in terms of their social, political and economic power as the context in which domestic abuse occurs. We recognise the role that ethnicity, ability and other experiences play in women's experiences of abuse and violence and their capacity to be safe and find appropriate support.

OUR SERVICES

Laois Domestic Abuse Service provides a range of services to people subjected to domestic abuse in Laois. These services include:

One to one Support and Information Sessions: Individual sessions with a worker to provide information, discuss the person's situation and options, and advocate on their behalf.

Court Accompaniment: Accompanying people to a range of court hearings, such as: domestic violence, access and maintenance hearings, criminal court hearings, and judicial separation or divorce hearings.

Group support: Facilitating and hosting group support programmes for women who have experienced domestic abuse.

Counselling: Providing access to licenced therapists and counselling.

Referral service: Referral, practical support, and signposting to refuge services and other relevant specialist services.

Partner support for MEND perpetrator: Providing support to the partners of male participants of the MEND perpetrator programme.

OUR TEAM AND BOARD

Our team consists of the following:

- Service Director
- Deputy Service Director
- Domestic Abuse Support Workers
- Child and Young Person's Support and Development Worker
- Legal/Criminal Justice Coordinator
- Office Manager

We are governed by a voluntary Board who work in line with the Charities Code of Governance.

Our Board includes:

- Therese Walsh (Chairperson)
- Mary Miller
- Megan Forest
- Jeremiah Glavin
- John Scanlon

OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

Core Funders: Tusla, Department of Justice

Funding Supporters: The Courts Service, HSE National Lottery Fund, Community Foundation of Ireland, Leader/Laois Partnership and local donors

Memberships: We are a member of Safe Ireland, the National Women's Council and Laois Chamber



02 Context

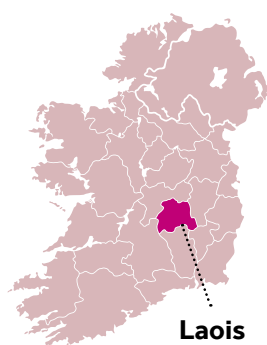
OVERVIEW

This section provides a brief socio-demographic and research background to our work in order to highlight the context in which our service is provided at a national and local level.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

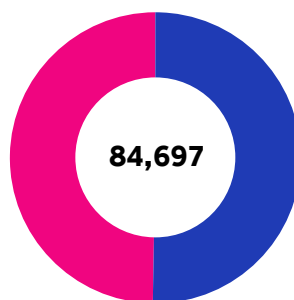
Population by Gender and Age

The county of Laois has an approximate population of 84,697, spread across three principalities: Portlaoise, Borris in Ossory-Mountmellick, Graiguecullen-Portlington. This figure is a 5.5% increase from the 2011 census, and represents an overall increase of 26% from 2006. Of this number, approximately 50.5% are male, and 49.5% are female, with an average age of 35 for the whole population.



Population and Demographic Overview

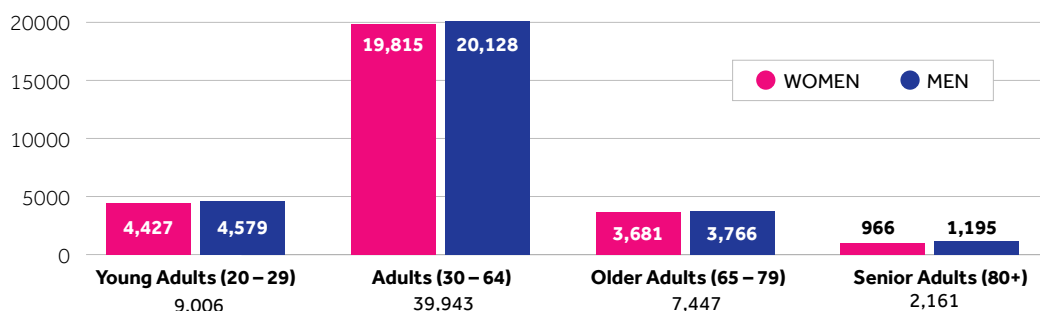
Female
41,886
(49.5%)



Male
42,811
(50.5%)

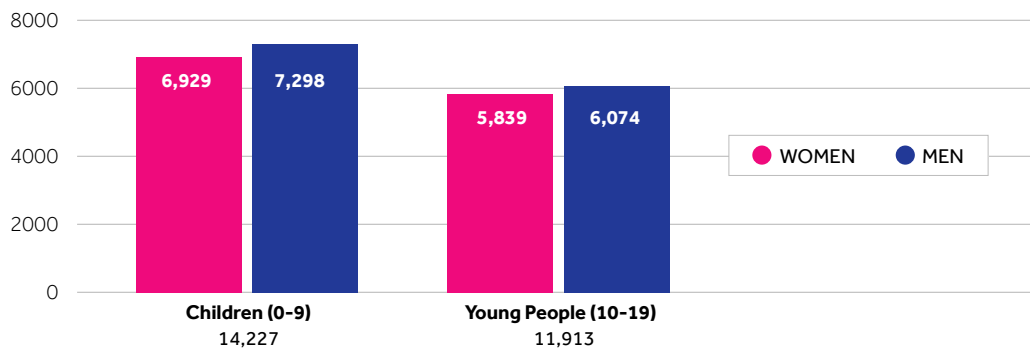
Approximately 69% of the population (n=58,557) are age 20 years or older, of which 49% are female, and 51% are male. More details of this breakdown can be seen below in Table 2.

Adult Population by Age Brackets and Gender (CSO, 2016)



According to the 2016 census, approximately 31% (n=26,140) of the total population are aged 19 years or younger.

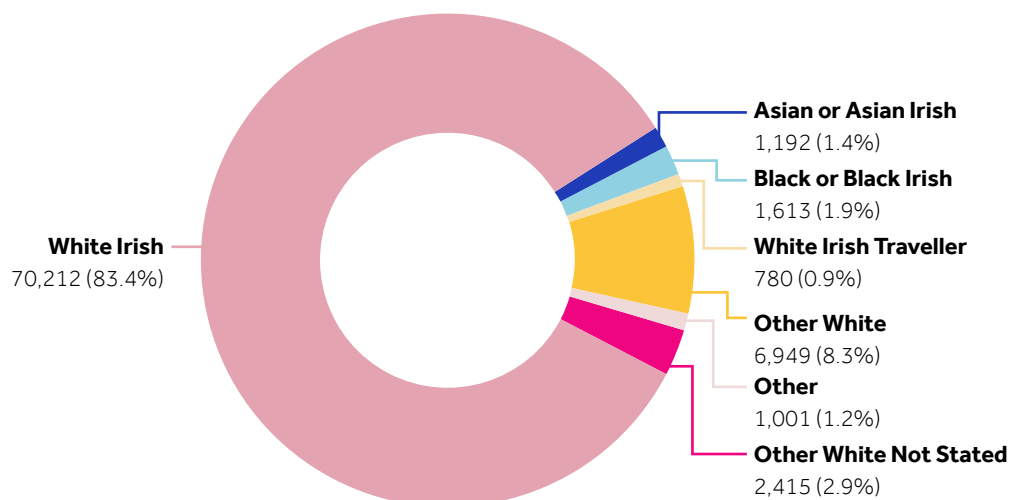
Population of Young People by Age Brackets and Gender (CSO 2016)



Cultural and Ethnic Backgrounds

The county is populated by approximately 85% white Irish, with 1.4% Asian or Asian Irish, 1.9% Black or Black Irish, and 8.3% white from UK and EU countries. Approximately 11% of residents in Laois speak English as a non-primary language, and of these, approximately 20% report their proficiency in English as average or below.

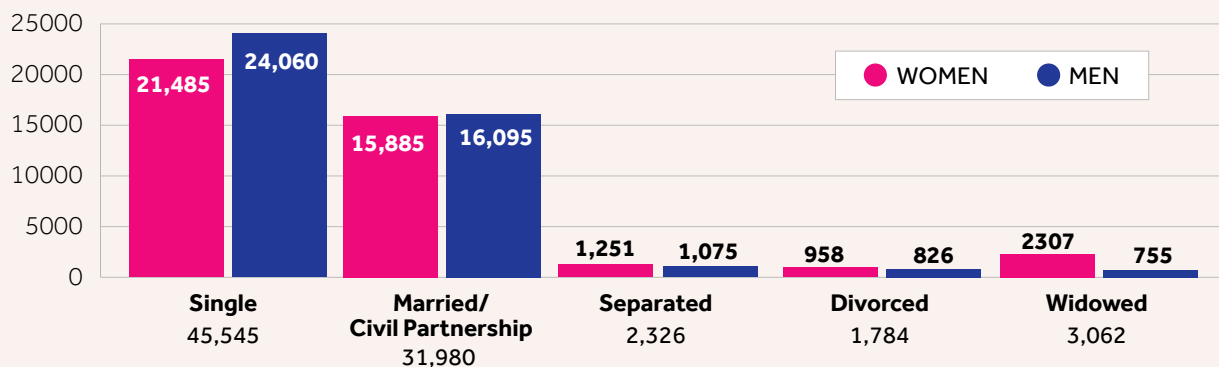
Ethnic Background of Laois Residents (CSO 2016)



Marital Status and Employment

Within the total population, approximately 38% (31,980) of people reported to be married or in civil partnerships, 54% (n=45,545) reported to be single, and 8% (n=7712) reported to be separated, divorced or widowed. According to the 2016 census, there are in excess of 22,000 families in the county.

Marital Status of Adult Population (CSO 2016)



Within the adult population, the 2016 census found that approximately 53% reported to be in active employment. Of this number, approximately 56% were male, and 44% female. Of adults who were not in employment, education or retired, approximately 20% of people are not currently in employment, with 8.5% reporting to be unemployed, 4.6% unable to work due to disability, and 9.4% caring for their families.

Table 1: Employment Status of Adult Population (CSO 2016)

Principal Status	Female	Male	Total
At work	14,883	18,658	33,541
Searching for first job	295	321	616
Unemployed	2,375	3,077	5,452
Student	3,342	3,150	6,492
Home Care	5,610	394	6,004
Retired	3,618	4,459	8,077
Unable to work – Disability	1,431	1,539	2,970
Other	188	545	733
Total	31,742	32,143	63,885

Deprivation

According to the 2016 Pobal HP Deprivation Index¹, there are 15 small areas which are categorised as disadvantaged, with scores in this category ranging between -15.5 and -10.0. While this number is an improvement from the total of 45 small areas in 2011's index findings², only 12 of 97 small areas in Laois are currently classed as 'average' or above. This gives an overall county-mean score of -5.1, which is below the national mean of -4.2. The areas most affected by disadvantage in Laois are: Mountmellick Urban ED, Doonane ED, Rathdowney ED, Dangans ED, MountRath ED, and Portlaoighise Urban ED.

¹ <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/hp-deprivation-index-scores-2016>

² <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/pobal-hp-deprivation-index>

SERVICE PROVISION CONTEXT

Service Provision in Ireland

There are a wide range of services in Ireland which provide support and promote the safety, security and wellbeing of women, children and other people who have experienced domestic violence. These services provide a critical range of supports, from emergency or overnight refuges, to individual emotional support and counselling, to practical advice on safety and legal rights. At the time of this strategic plan, there are 38 domestic abuse services operating in towns and cities across Ireland, with at least one active service operating within each county.



Over 3,000 requests for refuge could not be met during this time, indicating there is a dangerous lack of refuge places for women and families.

These services, however, have historically been under tremendous pressure to meet the overwhelming need for domestic violence support in Ireland. For example, in the Safe Ireland 2017/18 annual review of their service, they report that over 1,400 people had been housed in emergency accommodation, and over 8,000 people received support within one year. These services work tremendously hard to ensure the safety of women and children in Ireland, however, despite this effort, over 3,000 requests for refuge could not be met during this time, indicating there is a dangerous lack of refuge places for women and families³. In addition to these difficulties, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a significant burden on service provision in the country⁴.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Domestic Violence Support Services

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a consistent and troubling increase in domestic violence reported internationally. While there are many potential reasons for this, it has been noted that factors such as lockdown measures and physical and social distancing have contributed greatly towards this increase. These circumstances, while necessary, have resulted in a situation in which survivors had limited access to information of services and supports, limited access to social and health services, and limited access to legal and protection services.

In addition to the many challenges this creates for women, children, and other people in need of support, it also caused severe disruption in the operation of service providers themselves. In a report on the impact of Covid, UN Women noted that in addition to the practical challenges of service disruption, many services were unable to adapt due to a lack of resources⁵. Further to the increased demand that was seen, the report noted that it was likely that the latest reported figures of domestic violence during COVID-19 were an underestimation of the true rate. This signifies an urgent need for governing bodies to reprioritise the safety and wellbeing of survivors of domestic violence, and invest in the services which support them in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic.



There can be significantly more difficulties for young people who are from minority, stigmatised or vulnerable background.

Within the Irish context, this sharp increase in demand for domestic violence supports has also been observed. For example, Safe Ireland reports⁶ that in the first six months after the lockdown measures were introduced:

- » Approximately 3500 women contacted a domestic violence support service for the first time.
- » Over 33,000 helpline calls were received.
- » Over 40,000 direct, single support sessions were provided.
- » The highest volume of people seeking support within a single month was experienced.

³ https://www.safeireland.ie/about/transparency/annual-review-reports/#dfliip-df_7096/3/

⁴ https://www.safeireland.ie/policy-publications/#dfliip-df_8398/1/

⁵ Women, U. N. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and service provision: UN Women rapid assessment and findings.

⁶ Safe Ireland (2020). Tracking the Shadow Pandemic – A report on women and children seeking support from Domestic Violence Services during the first 6 months of Covid -19

In addition to these figures, Safe Ireland notes that there has been a significant increase in requests for emergency accommodation and refuge. While approximately 191 women and 288 children were accommodated in refuges each month, there were a further 1351 requests for accommodation that could not be met over the course of the six months. In a further report, it was noted that this trend continued into the over additional lockdowns, with average of 2k women and 550 children receiving support per month in fourth quarter. Of these, 2,445 women and 496 children were accessing services for the first time, and 808 requests for refuge accommodation could not be met⁷. Here, the decrease in support for these services, coupled with the rising trend of domestic violence has further endangered the lives of vulnerable people in Ireland.

Urgent Need for Residential/Refuge Services

Overall, between the months of March to December 2020, there were a total of 2,159 requests for emergency accommodation or refuge that could not be met by domestic violence services. While this number is concerning, it is not surprising considering there are approximately 141 refuge places available in Ireland. In 2020, as an effort to address this significant lack of provision, Safe Ireland partnered with Airbnb to provide emergency accommodation to people in need of support. This has been a critical tool in ensuring the safety of women and children, however, it is vital that adequate, dedicated supports to be properly funded and maintained. This highlights the urgent need for increased funding to be made available for domestic violence services⁸, and the need to substantially expand the number of refuge services available in Ireland.



According to the convention, there is approximately 300 fewer refuge spaces below the minimum provision recommendation.

Within the context of Laois, there are no residential or refuge services for people experiencing domestic violence or abuse. Currently, in cases where refuge is urgently needed, victims of domestic violence will need to travel to one of the nearest refuges, located in Kilkenny, Tipperary, or Kildare. These services, however, are already under a considerable burden in trying to meet the needs of women and children within their counties, which is significantly worsened when trying to cater to counties which do not have their own designated refuge service. In addition to the substantial pressure placed on individual services, for many, this distance causes these services to be completely inaccessible. For many people seeking support, especially in the case where refuge is needed for children, excessive distance to services can act to disincentivise victims of domestic violence to seek out services and support.

In line with the recommendations outlined in the Istanbul Convention, there is a minimum requirement for a government to make available one family refuge space per 10,000 people. This figure has, however, been under dispute in Ireland, with some having interpreted this to mean one refuge space per 10,000 adult women. The Irish government has now only committed to providing services at this reduced rate. Nevertheless, according to the convention, there is approximately 300 fewer refuge spaces below the minimum provision recommendation. In addition to the need for increased refuge spaces, there is also a need for a decentralisation of services, in that victims in rural areas face substantial difficulties in accessing services. To address this, in a recent Tusla report, there is a recommendation that no individual person should be more than 30 minutes proximity to a service which provides refuge⁹. Taken together, it is evident that there is an urgent need to invest in the expansion and development of domestic violence services, and for additional funding to be made to currently operating services.

⁷ Safe Ireland. (2020). Tracking the Shadow Pandemic 2 – A report on women and children seeking support from domestic violence services September 2020 – December 2020.

⁸ Safe Ireland (2020). Tracking the Shadow Pandemic – A report on women and children seeking support from Domestic Violence Services during the first 6 months of Covid -19

⁹ REFERENCE REQUIRED

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Overview

This LDAS strategic plan takes its basis from numerous previous strategies and frameworks designed to combat gender based domestic violence, and promote the safety and dignity of women, children, and other people experiencing, or at elevated risk of experiencing domestic violence. These policies are discussed in further detail, however, a summary of the key relevant points may be seen in the figure below.

Strategy/Policy	Relevant Points
Better Outcomes Brighter Futures¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Recognition that domestic violence is a key factor leading to children being put at risk and entering the care system. » A need for interagency communication and the establishment of information coordination protocols between support services. » The right of young people to be safe from neglect or harm, and from experiencing or witnessing domestic violence or abuse. » The need for consolidated legislation that protects young people from any kind of violence, domestic or otherwise.
National Youth Strategy¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The right of young people to be safe and protected from harm, including within the home. » Recognition of the additional difficulties for those who are already stigmatised, such as people of colour, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ people. » The need for people seeking refuge to be recognised and treated as an at-risk group.
National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The need for interagency coordination between support services. » The need for services to be linguistically and culturally accessible to migrant victims. » The need for increased funding to be made available for domestic violence support services, particularly to NGOs. » Recognition of the specific needs of different groups such as people of colour, people with disabilities, older people, members of the Traveller community, and LGBTQIA+ people.

The Istanbul Convention

These strategies and policies have provided a critical amount of context to this plan, however, in addition to these, this plan takes a significant amount of its positioning from the Istanbul convention. While this includes the recommendations for minimum service provisions, the convention notes that it is vital to centre the “safety and empowerment for all women and girls in their diversity”. Here, protections and support should be provided and made available to any woman without discrimination. This strategy develops upon this principle, recognising the systemic foundation of gender-based violence, and commits to serve all women who need support.



The non-discriminatory implementation of the Istanbul Convention is essential to ending violence against all women, since some groups of women face specific barriers and experience multiple discrimination in their access to protection and assistance. These include, for example, women with disabilities, women from national minorities, LBTI (Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) women, women from rural areas, migrant women, asylum-seeking and refugee women, women without a residence permit, girl children, older women, homeless women, women in prostitution and women using psycho-active substances. It is crucial to ensure that measures to end gender-based violence extend systematically to these groups of women, are accessible to them and tailored to their specific needs.”¹³.

10 Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) (2014), Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020, Government Publications, Dublin.

11 Department of Children and Youth Affairs DCYA. (2015). National youth strategy 2015—2020. Dublin, Ireland: Government Publications.

12 Cosc. (2010). National strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence 2010–2014.

13 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts>

03 Developing this Strategy

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The planning process for this strategy was instigated in early 2020, in the weeks leading up to the beginning of the Covid-19 global pandemic. Originally envisioned as being undertaken through in-person consultation over the first half of 2020, as with all aspects of our service provision, the consultation was paused, and then moved online in early Summer of that same year. The consultation was also paused to facilitate the successful relocation of the service to new premises in Autumn 2020, with all consultation being finalised by January 2021. The consultation process involved all of our key stakeholders including:

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	SUMMARY OF INVOLVEMENT
Staff	Consultation through survey and several strategic development workshops to understand views on current challenges and strengths of the organisation, as well as to identify main strategic priorities
Board	Consultation through survey and two strategy development workshops to understand views on current challenges and strengths of the organisation, as well as to identify main strategic priorities
Service users	Consultation through online survey to review the effectiveness of services as well as gaps and opportunities
Safe Ireland	Consultation through interview to explore strategic/sector level considerations

HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM SERVICE USERS

Overview

Service users were asked to rate out of 10 the services offered by Laois DAS. The average score is given to each service based off the 12 respondents' ratings. Average scores for the six services ranged from between nine to ten out of ten. Respondents praised the diligence of LDAS staff in going the extra mile to both get them into services or to refer them onto services that they needed.

Service User Review of Services

The following figure shows the average score for each service sorted from the most positively to the least positively evaluated (Score: 1- Poor to 10 – Excellent).

Service User Review of Services

Referral to refuge (n=5)	10.0
General support and advice (n=11)	10.0
Legal support, court accompaniment etc. (n=10)	9.7
Counselling (n=8)	9.4
MEND Partner support (n=6)	9.2
Group support (n=5)	9.0

Breakdown of Responses: Service User Review of Services

Respondents were asked as to why they scored the services as they did. Respondents answers are thematically analysed below.

Referral to refuge, score 10/10.

Respondents cited the helpfulness of the LDAS staff in laying out options that were available to them and getting them into the service:



Nicola was fantastic at helping me get into a refuge with my children

RESPONDENT 4

General advice and support, score 10/10.

Respondents noted the kindness of the staff, the staff's ability to make them feel heard and the guidance the staff provided through their journey from their first engagement with the service:



So kind and listened to everything and guided me through everything

RESPONDENT 1

Legal support, court accompaniment etc., score 9.8/10.

Respondents referred to the continuous support given to them by the staff of LDAS. Staff accompanying service users to court made them feel more at ease with the legal process and appreciated the guidance provided when they needed it, staff would also follow-up with service users to make sure that there were no outstanding issues with the service users after a legal appearance.



I felt isolated in court but knowing someone was there, I didn't feel so alone and I had someone to ask anything I was worried about

RESPONDENT 11

Counselling, score 9.4/10.

Respondents noted that counselling allowed them to better understand their own experiences, at their own pace and in some cases provided support and advice with on-going issues related to their own experience of abuse or the courts in a supportive non-judgemental manner.



I was in counselling with Ruth she was brilliant from day one never pressed me to talk and let me talk about what I needed again like Nicola I will be forever grateful to Ruth

RESPONDENT 7

MEND Partner Support, score 9.2/10.

Respondents noted that staff provide helpful and supportive guidance:



Lavina [LDAS Support Worker] is such a valuable resource to me for this journey I am on I would be so lost without her

RESPONDENT 1

Group support, score 9/10.

Respondents noted that staff support them to make informed choices about their future through the group support:



They told me all the options available to me

RESPONDENT 1



Summary

While the findings from the consultation provided reassurance to the team that there was positive regard from service users for the support they provide, they were keenly aware that the pandemic impacted on their ability to comprehensively consult with the people who have benefitted from their service, and regardless of such positive feedback, are committed to finding ways in which the service could continually improve and grow.

04 Implementing and Monitoring this Strategy

The implementation of this strategy will be led by the service director with the support of the team, and overseen by the Board. It is important to note that for ambitious actions, new cross-level structures or sub-committees may be established to progress them, in particular in relation to the development of a refuge service for the county.

To ensure the strategy can be progressed in line with organisational capacity, annual implementation plans will be developed, which will be reviewed intermittently.



05 Strategic Goals

Theme One

Build and Improve Our Services



Goal 1 Build a Refuge for Women and Children in Laois

WHY THIS ACTION?

Currently clients in County Laois who require safe accommodation or refuge from domestic abuse cannot access it in the county. This has wide ranging consequences for the women and their children. For those who do accept referrals to refuge in other counties, they face barriers in terms of transport to refuge services, and then interruption of access to important services in their own community such as healthcare, schools, childcare and other essential services. For many travelling to another county is not feasible for them so they remain in unsafe homes, or move to overcrowded and unstable housing situations with friends or family. The staff, Board and clients were all enthusiastic about undertaking an ambitious goal to establish a refuge service in County Laois.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

By 2025, a new refuge will be built in Co. Laois that can support a minimum of 6 women and their children fleeing domestic abuse to be safely housed, temporarily, in their county while they seek safer long term housing accommodation. By the end of this strategic period, the organisation will be sufficiently prepared and the building project progressed to 75%

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A Working with our partners in Laois County Council, identify a site and acquire planning permission to build a refuge with a minimum of six units	Q1 - Q2 2022
B Develop a business plan and agree funding for refuge staffing with Tusla	2022 - 2023
C Commence, manage and monitor the building of the refuge	2023 - 2024
D Develop all resourcing plans, policies, procedures	2024 +

Theme One Build and Improve Our Services



Goal 2 Seek Funding to Extend Women's Support Service

WHY THIS ACTION?

The demand for LDAS services has increased so significantly over the past 4 years that the team have had to limit the extent of support that they can provide to individual women, in order to ensure as many women as possible have access to crisis support. This means the important work done prior to a woman reaching crisis point, or after she has exited crisis where emotional and practical support can help her to avoid crisis again, cannot be guaranteed. The increase in demand and complexity of cases for our services has not been matched with an increase in resources to meet this demand. Our team believe that women and children living in Laois deserve better than this.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

LDAS will have a robust full-cost model detailed, and funding sought and awarded to extend our 1-2-1 and legal support from 1 full-time equivalent staff to three full-time equivalent staff in 2023, with further review of this in 2024.

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A Undertake a full cost review and business case for the extension of services.	Q1 2022
B Through this process, review the organisation of work with the team to establish whether legal support and other psycho-social support functions should be segmented to different roles or remain as dual functions of the same roles.	Q1 2022
C Through dialogue with core funders seek additional funding to meet demand and provide fair and appropriate working conditions to our team.	Q2 2022

Theme One Build and Improve Our Services



Goal 3 Consolidate and Develop our Children's Service Provision

WHY THIS ACTION?

Having recently introduced the Children's service and spent time developing our model, we are ready to consolidate and extend our model. This means formally reviewing and developing our assessment and referral procedures and communicating this to our partners, as well as pursuing funding to extend our capacity, which is in high demand amongst our clients. In addition, we will endeavour to promote good practice and peer support through the promotion of a professional network of those working with children of domestic abuse clients.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

We will have an embedded children's service that is supported by a strong suite of policies and procedures, and is available to all who need it

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A Establish a sub-group on the team to redevelop the needs assessment, service delivery and referral processes, policies and procedures for children's group and 1-2-1 service provision.	Q2 2022
B Pursue funding to extend the availability of children's service provision in order to meet demand for 1-2-1 support and extend access to groups such as Non Violent Response and the childrens' group recovery programme.	Q3 – Q4 2022
C Engage in a collaborative process with service partners in the ALL Project (professional practice group for working with children living attending domestic violence services) in order to re-ignite and improve the group's impact for workers by developing a group terms of reference.	Q1 2023

Theme One

Build and Improve Our Services



Goal 4

Establish a Formal Client Feedback and Engagement Strategy

WHY THIS ACTION?

While the team regularly check in with our clients to ensure we are meeting their needs as best we can, this is largely done on an informal basis. We will seek to explore opportunities to formalise and embed client feedback in our service, both on the quality of our service, and in opportunities for service review and design where opportunities arise (e.g with the development of new services or significant changes to services). It is important to note that LDAS is a small service that works with people who are often at a crisis point in their lives, so any system we develop will reflect this intimate culture, and the sensitivity around engaging people in non-essential work who are directing their energy to achieve safety and security.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

We will have a variety of mechanisms through which women using our service can feedback to us, and can be engaged in service review and design where opportunities arise. We will be confident that our services not only reflect what we believe is working and needed for the women we serve, but will have their perspective on this too.

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A Undertake research to develop a suite of options for client engagement to present to the team	2023
B The team, in collaboration with services users, will identify a number of options for client engagement and develop processes around this. This may include regular options such as a small number of formal questions at particular points seeking feedback, formal annual client engagement surveys or others	Q1 - Q4 2024

Theme Two Strengthen Our Core



Goal 5 Achieve excellence in Governance Standards

WHY THIS ACTION?

The Board and management identified as a priority that our organisation is governed by a committed, skilled and diverse group. We seek to ensure we are working in line with good practice in undertaking our duties to govern our organisation and be accountable to our clients, our funders and to the public. We will do this by ensuring we have appropriate structures, compliance measures and processes in place to achieve this.

WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

Our Board is confident that we exceed sector standards in governance, and provide the leadership and support our team need in order to ensure excellence in management, service provision and employee well-being.

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A Achieve and report on compliance with the Charities Regulator code in line with key milestones identified by the Charities Regulator.	Q4 2022
B Building on work previously instigated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Undertake a Board skills and diversity assessment, as well as agreeing standards in terms and rotation, in order to develop a board recruitment strategy that will ensure our governance group is appropriately skilled and representative b. Develop a brief implementation plan with agreed times, targets and review mechanism 	Q4 2022
C Develop an organisational risk register to be reviewed annually	Q1 2022

Theme Two Strengthen Our Core



Goal 6 Undertake a Formal Review and Redevelopment of Staff Support and Supervision

WHY THIS ACTION?

The LDAS team reported that they feel supported and engaged in their work. However, the team also agreed that there is potential for improving how performance management supervision and support is undertaken. The team identified an opportunity to explore creative ways of providing supervision and support to one another that would maximise capacity to work effectively together, to provide support to one another, and to hold each other to account in achieving shared goals to provide the highest quality services to women and children. The remuneration of all support workers in line with sector norms and standards including payment of fixed expenditures such as cost of living wage increases, pensions will be prioritised from 2022 onwards.

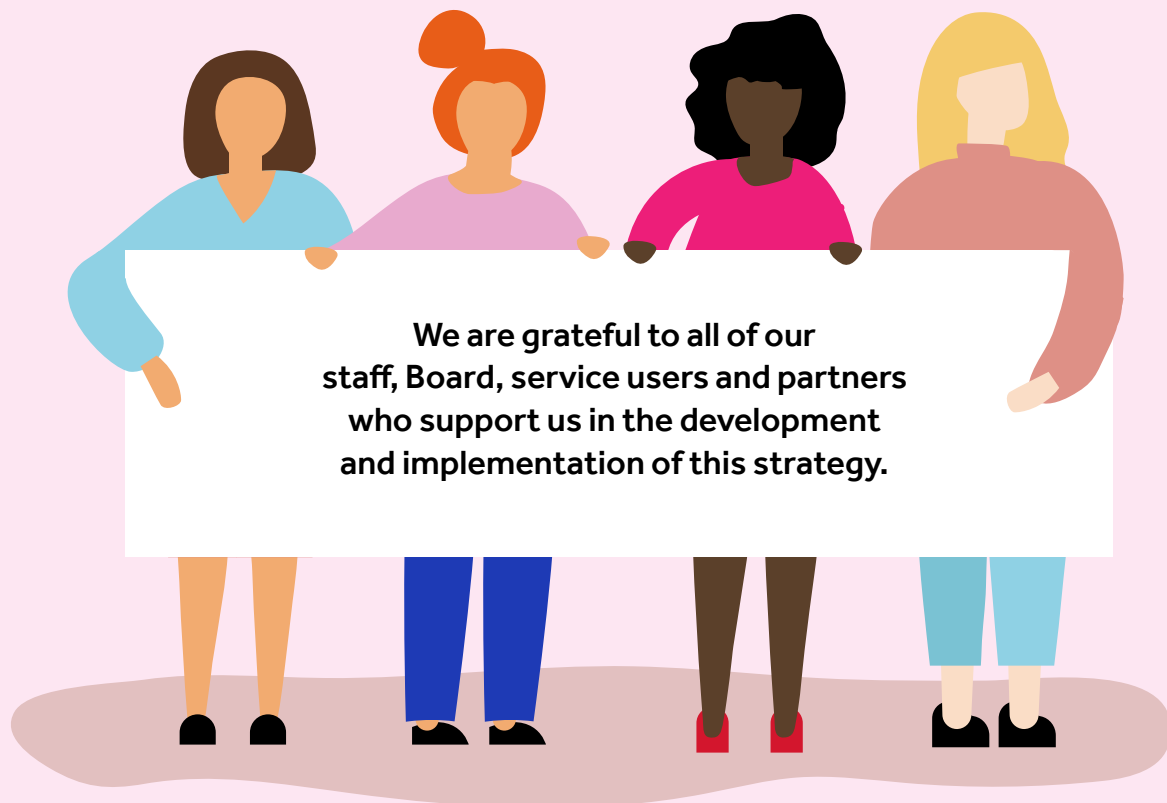
WHAT WILL CHANGE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION?

We will have a supervision system that has been collaboratively developed by the team, that uniquely reflects our needs and our culture, and clarifies our values, approach and processes for support and supervision. This will include peer-level supervision across the team as well as management supervision. The system will also consider

DETAILS

ACTION	TIMELINE
A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create a plan to collaboratively review and develop, over a number of sessions, LDAS staff support and supervision in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Values informing staff support and supervision » Roles » Processes e.g. peer supervision, management supervision, external supervision » Agendas e.g. workload, case management, professional and personal development goals, team dynamics, reflective practice b. Agree roles and responsibilities for developing any supporting documentation required – policies, procedures, agendas, templates c. Agree a review timeframe and mechanism 	Q1 – Q2 2022
B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the new system on a pilot basis for six months 	Q3 – Q4 2022
C <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a formal review, make any needed and agreed changes and embed a reviewed staff supervision and support system 	Q1 2023

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