

10 Key issues affecting Domestic Abuse services in Ireland

10 key issues currently affecting domestic abuse services in Ireland, based on recent research and reports:

1. Limited Refuge Accommodation

- There is a severe shortage of refuge spaces, with nine out of 26 counties lacking any domestic violence refuge at all. Even where available, accommodation is often shared and may be unsuitable for victims, especially those with children^{[1][2]}.
- Refuge spaces are frequently full, leading to daily refusals for women seeking safety^[1].

2. Housing Crisis and Homelessness

- The broader housing crisis means victims often remain in emergency accommodation or refuges for prolonged periods due to long social housing waiting lists, exacerbating stress and instability^{[1][2]}.
- Domestic and gender-based violence is a significant driver of homelessness among women and children, with many forced to choose between abuse and homelessness^[2].

3. Inadequate Funding and Investment

- Domestic abuse services have historically suffered from underinvestment, resulting in overstretched resources, inadequate running costs, and difficulties retaining experienced staff^[3].
- Recent funding increases are welcomed but are seen as only a partial solution to long-standing deficits^[3].

4. Staff Retention and Recruitment Challenges

- The sector faces difficulties in retaining and recruiting qualified staff, partly due to pay inequality and demanding working conditions^[3].

5. Gaps in Service Provision for Men

- There are no dedicated refuge services for male victims, leaving them with limited options and at risk of homelessness if they flee abusive relationships^[1].

6. Barriers for Migrants and Language Issues

- Migrant victims face additional barriers, including language difficulties and lack of intercultural awareness among legal professionals, making it harder to access support and justice^[4].
- Social isolation and lack of knowledge about rights further complicate access to services for non-Irish nationals^[4].

7. Fear, Stigma, and Underreporting

- Fear, stigma, and self-blame prevent many victims from coming forward, with about one-third suffering in isolation and telling no one about the abuse^[5].
- Persistent social attitudes and victim-blaming continue to be significant obstacles^[5].

8. Challenges in Legal and Court Systems

- Victims face stressful court experiences, including long waits, multiple adjournments, and difficulties accessing appropriate support during legal proceedings^{[4][1]}.
- Training for judiciary and court officials on domestic violence issues is needed to improve victim experiences^[2].

9. Impact of COVID-19 and Social Isolation

- The pandemic intensified isolation and control for victims, with lockdowns making it harder to seek help and increasing the intensity of coercive control^[1].
- Service providers faced additional challenges in delivering timely support during lockdowns^[1].

10. Need for Policy and Interagency Coordination

- There is a need for better interagency data sharing, case management, and coordination to ensure a comprehensive response to domestic abuse^[2].
- National strategies must prioritize victim-centered outcomes and ensure policies are gender-proofed to address the specific needs of those affected by domestic abuse^[2].

These issues reflect a complex set of challenges that require ongoing attention, investment, and policy development to ensure effective support for all victims of domestic abuse in Ireland.

1. https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/id/eprint/17716/1/DD_a_welcome.pdf
2. <https://domesticabuse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Domestic-Abuse-10-Point-Plan-PFG-08.05.20.pdf>
3. <https://www.safeireland.ie/additional-e6-8m-funding-for-domestic-abuse-services-warmly-welcomed-2/>
4. [https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2024-02/Migrant Experiences of Domestic Abuse in Ireland 2023.pdf](https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2024-02/Migrant%20Experiences%20of%20Domestic%20Abuse%20in%20Ireland%202023.pdf)
5. <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-informed/news-events/media-releases/domestic-abuse-disclosures-at-a-record-high-in-2023-according-to-womens-aid/>