



**ADAPT KERRY**

Women's Refuge  
& Support Services

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2027



## Foreword from Suzie Cox, Chair of Adapt Kerry Board

This is an important time for Adapt Kerry and as Chair of the board, I am honoured to be involved in creating our new strategic plan for the next three years, leading us into 2027.

We declare our vision to be a society where women and children are thriving, free from domestic abuse /coercive control.

While we are some way from achieving this vision, the management and staff and voluntary board, are committed to working towards it, through their daily work and with the guidance provided by this newly developed plan.

The strategic plan outlines our key priorities; to enhance our outreach support services, including legal support; building our clients' and their children's' resilience through mentoring and play therapies, and following the confirmation of funding, to build an expanded refuge to support the women of Kerry and their children, who are living with domestic abuse and or coercive control.

The process of developing a plan is thorough, where we find how we can remain relevant into the future. It is a robust engagement but a most important one. It is imperative that we examine where we have come from, celebrate what we have achieved and develop a plan so we can ensure that the organisation delivers on its mission and purpose, as it grows.

The board has also identified the need for the charity to incorporate into the strategic plan, the UN sustainable development goals and therefore we have listed them among our values. This plan will guide our initiatives over the coming years and strengthen our impact in the community. We will focus on gender equality, ending food poverty and adopting a sustainable energy programme.

All our team are highly skilled and fully committed to this service and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their dedication and the professionalism they show, every day.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the range of government agencies who have supported us in our work. We could not achieve what we do without their support.

We have also recently put in place a new strategic plan for the charity shop. The board recognises the importance the income and awareness this shop creates for the refuge and I extend my gratitude to the staff and volunteers of the shop.

I acknowledge the leadership shown by our General Manager, Catherine Casey, for her work and the work of her dedicated team at Adapt Kerry. I further acknowledge the work of the members of the Board, for their commitment in overseeing this new strategic plan, and for their support for the staff in making this plan a reality, for the benefit of all those women and their children who are experiencing or are impacted by domestic abuse/coercive control, in Kerry.

Susie Cox  
Chair







## Catherine Casey – General Manager

Adapt Kerry has engaged in a Strategic planning process at a time of great change for our Organisation. The introduction of the Domestic Violence Act 2018, which criminalised Coercive Control in intimate relationships has changed the landscape for women in Ireland. Other advances in legislation including the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 has introduced offences of stalking and harassment; non-fatal strangulation and non-fatal suffocation. These progressions have highlighted the horrors of so many women's lives and embedded protections for women, changing conversations and challenging cultures. While ADAPT Kerry envision a society where women and children are thriving, free from domestic abuse/coercive control; we are very aware women need support, protection and voice as they journey from entrapment to freedom. Adapt Kerry can provide a space for action by being a safe place for women and their children. A place talk, to stay, to reflect, to manage and to navigate systems and access a safer life.

Our Strategic Plan frames our work with women and children that experience domestic abuse/coercive control in a trauma-informed care approach centred on meeting the needs of women and children that engage with our service as well as promoting interagency practices that look to remove barriers for women and their children, barriers to their right to live a life free from violence, abuse/coercion. Our Plan affirms our organisation's position as a professional, informed, caring organisation. We renew our commitment to Listen, Believe and Support Women and their Children through the delivery of effective and informed responses. Responses that our informed by women who have used our services.

This plan along with our Implementation Plan will guide us through the challenges we will face over the next 3 years. We aim to progress our vision of an extended service, with additional units serving the women and children, as well as building our Drop in, Outreach, Advocacy, Support Group programmes and Childrens Services. This will assist us to address issues that face women looking to access refuge or support by increasing the number of units available to women and children who require refuge and increasing the services they receive while in refuge and while living in the community.

ADAPT Kerry recognises the valuable contribution of our funders in supporting our work with women and children. We have received great support from TUSLA the Child and Family Agency, CSVIC – the Commission for Support of Victims of Crime, CUAN – the National Office for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, Leader, EWSS TWSS, Dormant Accounts, Women's Aid, Safelreland, HSE. All of who have helped us and the women and children we support, navigate the pandemic and the cost of living increases. We recognise the work of individuals and groups that fundraise locally to support women and children.



We recognise the contribution that all our volunteers in our Charity Shop make in helping us provide resources. And all the people near and far that help us stock the shop through their kind donations and of course the shoppers!

We welcome the development and roll-out of the 3rd National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence; the establishment of CUAN, the National Agency under the Dept. of Justice. We look forward to working with all key stakeholders as we all strive to improve outcomes for women and children in Ireland.

I would like to thank Kathleen O'Meara for working with us on this Strategic Plan and all the women, staff, board members and agencies that help to inform the plan and the Implementation Plan. I look forward to overseeing the roll out of the plan and developing services and responses that will make a real and effective difference for women and children.

**Catherine Casey**  
**General Manager**



## Introduction

Adapt Kerry is a Women's Refuge and specialist Support Service for women and their children who are living with or who have been impacted by domestic abuse / coercive control, in Kerry.

Domestic abuse / coercive control is a persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by an abuser over a prolonged period designed to achieve obedience and create fear.

It may include coercion, threats, stalking, intimidation, isolation, degradation and control. It may include physical and/or sexual violence, control of a partner's finances, making her world smaller, undermining her self-confidence and independence, and impacting her emotional health.

There is now a growing understanding of the ways in which domestic abuse/ coercive control harms children who experience it, in many ways – emotionally, physically, socially, educationally, and impacting a child's key development goals. Children who grow up in families where there is abuse may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances.

Violence against women is a “devastatingly pervasive” global issue with one in three women worldwide having experienced physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner, and that this number has remained largely unchanged since 2011 (WHO, 2021).

A 2018 analysis of prevalence data from 2000–2018 across 161 countries and areas, conducted by WHO on behalf of the UN Interagency working group on violence against women, found that worldwide, nearly 1 in 3, or 30%, of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner.

## Our Purpose

As an organisation our purpose is to provide a woman and child-centred response to domestic abuse /coercive control in Kerry.

Our task as an organisation is to provide trauma-informed services and supports to women and children who live with and/or have experienced domestic abuse/ and coercive control.



## About Us

Adapt Kerry is a community-based NGO, a charity, a company limited by guarantee which is managed by a voluntary board of trustees.

We provide services and supports which are trauma informed, wrap around and holistic, and we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive, empowering environment for women, their children and our staff.

We were formed when a group of citizens came together in the late 1980's, initially to establish a Court Accompaniment Service for women who were forced to leave the family home due to domestic abuse. It quickly became clear that what was needed was a Refuge, in Kerry, for women and children experiencing and/or impacted by domestic abuse. The Refuge was opened in Tralee in October 1996 and since then thousands of women and children have come through our doors or have spoken to us by phone or through our outreach services around the county.

We have grown from a service which was initially run entirely by volunteers, to now employing a professional staff running a comprehensive service which includes the Refuge which can accommodate six families at any one time.

We run a 24-hour telephone support service, an outreach support service, court accompaniment and an advocacy service. We also provide children's therapy services.

We estimate that by the end of 2024, a total of 410 women and 70 children will have used our refuge, outreach, advocacy, drop-in and children's play therapy services, and we expect this figure to continue to grow.

We have embarked on an ambitious plan to double in size and locate our services in both Tralee and Killarney, while continuing our outreach, phone service, court accompaniment and children's services.

We work alongside and in partnership with local and state agencies whose work impacts the women and children who use our services, and to grow an understanding of the roots of domestic abuse / coercive control, and the measures which need to be taken to combat it.

## The context for our work

Our work is grounded in an analysis that domestic abuse / coercive control is primarily rooted in men's control of women, in a power imbalance between men and women, in a masculinity which allows men to control women and children as his possessions, and in a society and a world which generates this imbalance, tolerates it and finds it acceptable.

**Domestic abuse** is a major issue that profoundly affects the physical, emotional, social and financial wellbeing of individuals, for the most part women, and their children.

Domestic abuse refers to the use of physical, emotional force or threat of physical force, including sexual violence, in close adult relationships.

Domestic abuse includes abuse, including violence, perpetrated by a spouse, partner, son, daughter or any other person who has a close relationship with or lives with the victim.

The term 'domestic violence' goes beyond physical violence and can also involve emotional abuse; the destruction of property; isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support; threats to others including children; stalking; and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone.

While domestic violence can involve just one isolated individual offence of physical assault in a domestic relationship, the term is most often used to describe a pattern of repeated abusive and controlling behaviours that take place within an intimate or family-type relationship and may continue after the relationship has ended.

**Coercive control** is at the heart of domestic abuse, and it does not have to be physical. It is a persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by an abuser over a prolonged period designed to achieve obedience and create fear.

It may include coercion, threats, stalking, intimidation, isolation, degradation and control. It may also include physical and/or sexual violence.

Coercive control is all about making a woman's world smaller by trapping her, restricting her independence and freedom. A controlling partner may shut out her friends and family, control her movements, micro-manage what she eats or wears, restrict her access to money – all the time chipping away at her confidence and destroying her self-respect.

**We recognise** that domestic abuse/coercive control can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender. It can occur in more than one generation of one family. It occurs in same sex relationships and in relationships involving transgender people.

## Methodology

In May 2024 Adapt Kerry appointed consultant Kathleen O'Meara to work with the staff and Board to develop a new Strategic Plan. Kathleen used the Appreciative Inquiry approach as a key tool in the process of creating the new Strategic Plan. This is an approach to organizational change that focuses on strengths to build on; the promise of this way of working is that through engagement, the process itself generates self-determined change, and helps the organization move towards a shared vision of the future and the actions needed to make it happen.

A Steering Group was established to oversee and guide the process and met online throughout. A review of the outgoing plan and the work of Adapt was conducted, involving both staff and Board. Two Appreciative Inquiry workshops were held. An extensive round of interviews with external stakeholders were carried out to gather their perspectives. Women who have used Adapt's services were interviewed. A document analysis was carried out, to inform the strategic plan. Finally, the Areas of Action were drafted as a basis for the work plans to give expression to the Strategic Goals and guide the work of the organisation for the years to come.

An analysis of the political, economic, social and technological landscape was provided and forms part of this document.



## The landscape we are operating in

The political and legislative landscape which impacts our work has changed considerably since we were first established. The Domestic Violence Act, and its amendment in 2019 to include coercive control, has made both criminal offences under Irish law.

In 2019 Ireland also ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. The convention is a significant, international, legal instrument in combatting domestic and sexual violence. Its purposes are to protect women from all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence. It also aims to ensure the design of a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of such violence.

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The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and the establishment of CUAN, a statutory agency dedicated to tackling and reducing domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, have happened against a background of femicide and increased public awareness of gender-based violence in Ireland.

There is political unanimity around the resourcing needed for services like ours. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the need to continually advocate for and generate increased public understanding of the gender imbalance at the root of domestic abuse and coercive control, including among the political audience.

We are aware of the continual need to advocate for sufficient and ongoing funding for our services.

Economic success is driving and is supported by population growth and immigration resulting in an increasingly ethnically diverse population. A housing crisis which is affecting all parts of the country is causing political tensions on a number of levels: housing need is not being met across the country with rents and house prices increasing; secondly, the arrival of refugees from Ukraine since 2022, and from war torn, poor and climate affected countries, is creating local tensions which are being exploited by far right actors using social media to mobilise and foment racism and antimigrant violence.



This same housing crisis is a serious challenge for Adapt Kerry as it has become very difficult to house women and families from the Refuge, with some staying for months due to the lack of availability of suitable housing. Also, migrant women and refugee women, with their children, who are experiencing domestic abuse / coercive control are coming to Adapt for support. This is generating new challenges for Adapt to meet.

The agencies we are working with, which includes child and family services, An Garda Síochána and housing agencies are similarly managing a changing and often challenging environment.

Social media has become a playground for the far right and women are the target of increased levels of misogyny. Several male figures propagating a dangerous version of toxic masculinity which promotes misogyny are using social media to grow their audience among young men, and concerns have been raised about the impact of this on how young men then relate to women.



## Our Vision, Mission & Values

Our **VISION** is: A society where women and children are thriving, free from domestic violence /coercive control

Our **MISSION** is: To respond to women and children, living with domestic violence/coercive control, using the trauma informed approach, by providing wrap around services, supports, advocacy and information.

Our **VALUES**:

- We believe women and children have the right to live a life free from domestic abuse /coercive control
- We believe any woman or child who discloses their experience should be met with dignity and respect
- We listen to, and we believe women and their children, who are experiencing and/or impacted by domestic abuse/coercive control
- Our work is underpinned by the principles of Trauma-Informed Care, which are:
  - Safety
  - Trustworthiness and transparency
  - Peer support and mutual self-help
  - Collaboration and mutuality
  - Empowerment, voice and choice
  - Cultural, historical and gender issues

We believe women and children are experts in their own lives and our practice is founded in being non-directive and non-judgemental.

We are a learning organisation, collaborative and responsive.

We are professional, accountable and transparent in our work and in how we run our organisation. We operate to the highest standards of governance.







## Our Strategic Goals

We have adopted three Strategic Goals to guide and shape our work, and to give expression to our purpose as an organisation, during the lifetime of this strategic plan They are:

- 1. Growing and developing services and supports**
- 2. Expanding the service**
- 3. Being a well run, learning, collaborative, wellresourced organisation**

We have developed areas of action under each goal, which we have used to grow an Implementation Plan. This Plan will guide our work over the period of the Strategic Plan, consistent with our vision and mission, and true to our values.





# GOAL 1

## Growing and developing services and supports

- Crisis Response
- Legal
- Supporting Children
- Outreach
- Healing and Recovery
- Community Engagement

# GOAL 2

## Expanding the service

- Growing capacity
- IT
- Internal communications
- Staff Development
- New organisational structure

# GOAL 3

## Being a well run, learning, collaborative, well resourced organisation

- Financial controls, being professional
- Shop and fundraising
- Board development
- Policies, reporting, procedures
- Staff support and supervision

## Appendix 1

### Guiding Principles of Trauma-Informed Care (ref: SAMHSA, 2014)

- 1. Safety** - Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve feel physically and psychologically safe.
- 2. Trustworthiness and transparency** - Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency and the goal of building and maintaining trust among staff, clients, and family members of those receiving services.
- 3. Peer support and mutual self-help** - These are integral to the organizational and service delivery approach and are understood as a key vehicle for building trust, establishing safety, and empowerment.
- 4. Collaboration and mutuality** - There is true partnering and leveling of power differences between staff and clients and among organizational staff from direct care staff to administrators. There is recognition that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making. The organization recognizes that everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach. One does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic.
- 5. Empowerment, voice, and choice** - Throughout the organization and among the clients served, individuals' strengths are recognized, built on, and validated and new skills developed as necessary. The organization aims to strengthen the staff's, clients', and family members' experience of choice and recognize that every person's experience is unique and requires an individualized approach. This includes a belief in resilience and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. This builds on what clients, staff, and communities have to offer, rather than responding to perceived deficits.
- 6. Cultural, historical, and gender issues** - The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g., based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, geography), offers gender responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.

## Appendix 2

### List of organisations interviewed to gain external perspectives:

- |                             |                              |                               |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • CUAN                      | • Tusla Prevention,          | • Housing Department,         |
| • Safe Ireland              | Partnership & Family Support | Kerry County Council          |
| • Tusla Child Protection    | • Tusla Education            | • Kerry Rape Crisis Centre    |
| & Welfare                   | & Welfare Office             | • Courts Service, Kerry       |
| • Tusla Children & Young    | • Legal Aid                  | • Women's Collective          |
| People's Steering Committee | • HSE                        | • Kerry Women's Centre        |
|                             | • Garda Síochána Kerry       | • Family Resource Centres x 3 |

## Appendix 3

### United Nations Sustainable Development Goal

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals form a cohesive and integrated package of global aspirations the world commits to achieving by 2030. Building on the accomplishments of their predecessors the MDGs, the SDGs address the most pressing global challenges of our time, calling upon collaborative partnerships across and between countries to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion:

- Goal 1:** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- Goal 2:** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- Goal 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- Goal 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Goal 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- Goal 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
- Goal 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
- Goal 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- Goal 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- Goal 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Goal 12:** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- Goal 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
- Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- Goal 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.



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**CUAN**

An Ghníomhaireacht um Fhoreigean Baile,  
Gnéasach agus Insenebhunaithe  
The Domestic, Sexual and  
Gender-Based Violence Agency

Commission  
for the Support of



Victims of Crime



**TÚSLA**

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency