

# Ethnic Minority Community Development Pilot Project 2018-2020

In Association with  
Tusla Child and Family Agency  
and  
Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service



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## Chairperson ODVSS

Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service CLG (ODVSS) was delighted to be part of the Ethnic Minority Community Development project. It is without doubt, that there has been significant amount of work completed to identify the barriers and gaps that prevent women from the ethnic community in coming forward for help over the last two years. Barriers such as language, finding the right service, shame, stigma, racism, immigration status, cultural and religion, need defined strategies if we are to break down and address the complexities of abuse. Inter- agency support and partnerships with key stakeholders is key to this success. I would like to commend the advisory group for their commitment in their contribution, to inform the work of the project and support Anna Heagney, the Ethnic Minority Community Development Worker. I want to express my thanks and gratitude to Tusla Child and Family Services for providing the funding for this project and their on-going recognition to support the most vulnerable in our community. We have experienced challenging times over the last few months with Covid19 and very quickly like all services we had to adapt and meet increasing needs of victims of abuse. Despite Covid19, Anna continued to implement strategies that advanced the project along and achieved the results. Anna has been a valuable member of the ODVSS team, and her work and dedication to the project has been outstanding. I want to express my thanks to all the ethnic minority groups who have met with Anna, provided information, engaged with surveys, focus groups, and one to one network meetings. Without this support the project would not have been possible and we would not have been able to identify the concerns and recommendations outlined in this report. Thank you to the domestic violence support services in the Midlands who, co-operated with the project providing valuable information from each County. I would like to thank the Manager of ODVSS Anne Clarke who guided the project development and supported Anna in her role as an ethnic minority community development worker. Finally, I would like to thank the Board of ODVSS for facilitating the hosting of the project and ODVSS will endeavour to preserve all the networks, groups and contacts made throughout this project.



It is imperative that we continue the excellent work that has been achieved by Anna and this project and build the capacity within the ethnic minority community to make women aware that support is available and that there shall be no barriers in front of them in seeking a life away from abuse.

*Molly Buckley*

## Acknowledgements

As the Ethnic minority development worker, I would like to thank ODVSS, Manager Anne Clarke and the Board of Management for your constant encouragement, support and interest in the project. I also want to thank Tusla for funding the project and the Advisory group for meeting with me and for all the support you have given me over the last two years. Ultimately a large thank you also to all the individuals, organisations and services who have met with me, spoken with me, given me information and included me in their developments in relation to ethnic minorities and domestic abuse. They are too many to mention, but I hope that the work they do will continue. The interest in 'breaking down' barriers for the minority groups in seeking support from domestic abuse will always be an important part of their agenda.

It has been an amazing journey and a great learning curve for me the last two years, and there is no doubt that there is an urgent need for more awareness and support for ethnic minority women and men, as well as structural improvements on a national level in breaking down the barriers that are facing ethnic minority victims of domestic abuse.

(Anna Heagney, Ethnic minority development, ODVSS)

## Abbreviations

BAME	Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CFSN	Child and Family Support Network
CIC	Citizen's Information Centre
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CWS	Community welfare service
DCIF	Dublin City Interfaith Forum
DP centre	Direct provision centre
DSGBV	Domestic, sexual and gender based Violence
DV	Domestic violence
EDIC	Employment, Development and Information Centre
EMDP	Ethnic minority development project
ENP	Exceptional Needs Payment
EROC	Emergency reception and orientation centre
FB	Facebook
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
GNIB	Garda National Immigration Bureau
HBV	Honour based violence
ICCI	Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland
IFI	Islamic Foundation of Ireland
INAR	Irish Network Against Racism
INIS	Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITIA	Irish Translators and Interpreters Association
LIN	Laois Integration Network
MRCI	Migrants Rights Centre Ireland
NCP	New Communities Partnership
SATU	Sexual Assault Treatment Unit
UNP	Urgent Needs Payment

## Executive Summary

In 2017, Tusla child and family agency commissioned a needs analysis of needs and gaps in domestic violence support service delivery in the Midlands (Offaly, Laois, Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon). One of the key findings of this report identified that women from ethnic minority backgrounds who were experiencing domestic abuse were not disclosing abuse or seeking support from the domestic violence support services. It was evident that significant barriers were preventing women from seeking help. The conception of this project aimed to address these barriers and examine and provide recommendations to support women in the ethnic minority communities who are experiencing domestic abuse.

An advisory group was established to include TUSLA, the Manager of Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service (ODVSS) and of Laois Domestic Abuse Service, Snr Child and Family Support Network (CFSN) Co-ordinator TUSLA Roscommon, AkiDwA and the Manager of EROC Ballaghaderreen. ODVSS was delegated to host the project and create the role of Ethnic Minority Development Project Worker (EMDP worker). As the project advanced, the advisory group added members to include New Communities Partnership (NCP), Dignity Partnership and the Manager of SafeLink, Roscommon. Following the drafting of a job description and competencies needed, the recruitment process commenced in September 2018 and Anna Heagney was employed in the role in October 2018. The advisory group and the project worker engaged in regular meetings that informed the project's direction and engagement. This advisory group contributed a multi-faceted approach and information, which was invaluable to the project. The first part of the project included research around domestic abuse in relation to the ethnic minority communities, noting different perspectives; culture, religion, and less common forms of family abuse. In parallel to this research, the project worker travelled around the Midlands and Co Roscommon, meeting with and introducing the project to the domestic abuse support services, as well as other front line stakeholders and organisations who work with ethnic minorities.

To gain more knowledge around the issues, the project worker also established contacts with and started networking with ethnic minority support organisations in other areas of Ireland, predominately in Dublin. In order to learn more about some harmful cultural practices such as, forced marriage, honour abuse, and female genital mutilation (FGM) and how to recognise and respond to these practices, the project worker attended a Shakti, Scotland Women's aid, two-day training in Edinburgh. These are harmful cultural practices that we in Ireland are not yet very familiar with. However these practices do exist in some cultures, and as Ireland is becoming increasingly multicultural it is essential to be mindful of these practices.

An initial survey went out to services and organisations in late 2019. 70 surveys were circulated via email, using SurveyMonkey. This generated 60 responses and identified the following three barriers:

- **Language**
- **Lack of childcare**
- **Lack of awareness of services offered**

A second survey aimed at women from any ethnic minority background, opened in early 2020. Some paper copies were used in groups, although the bulk of the surveys were distributed via WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media. This survey was translated into Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Romanian and Arabic. There were 227 completed surveys received, and the respondents were from 34 different minority backgrounds, the largest groups of respondents were from Pakistan, Lithuania, and Latvia.

### **The survey identified 6 large barriers**



Networking with stakeholders needed to be continued, to build strong relationships for future consultations with ethnic minority women, along with effective awareness-raising strategies that explained the project to front line organisations. In early 2020, the process of building trust and making contacts with minority groups and individuals, as well as making contacts with faith leaders was progressing at a steady pace. A visit to the two large Mosques in Dublin, proved an important step. The co-operation regarding awareness-raising has continued with the Muslim community, making plans for a nationwide campaign in the near future.

As strategies were beginning to form the arrival of Covid-19 dramatically changed the dynamics of the approach, as the whole of the country went into lockdown in March 2020. The project worker adapted new strategies and concentrated on raising awareness of the project by engaging with local newspapers, local radio and across social media platforms, to continue to spread awareness of the project. Other opportunities such as online webinars and training in Ireland, the UK and further afield provided valuable learning about domestic violence within the ethnic minority communities. A meeting with representatives from the Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit, in October started a discussion on how to go forward regarding addressing the risks, awareness-raising and protection measures within the ethnic minority communities.

Following the framework of a community development principle approach to build capacity within the community, the project worker formed new partnerships with the Russian community, the Pakistani community and the Muslim community, who were willing and enthusiastic to learn more about the project and address the complexities of the issue such as awareness-raising, investigate the role that culture plays and identifying barriers. These groups also express an interest in further training to gain a deeper knowledge about domestic abuse and to start the conversation in their communities.

**Identifying the findings in this report the following actions would be recommended:**

:

- Following two years of this research is imperative that the EMDP continues into a second phase to build capacity, engage with stakeholders and work with ethnic minority groups to encourage them to seek out community champions that can help to address some of the barriers which have been identified in this report.
- Develop a training road map and tool kit (cultural diversity and sensitivity) for other front line services that encounter and work with ethnic minority communities – examples; DP centres, housing, social work, family resource, centres, teachers, GPs. This training should include awareness about culturally harmful practices such as FGM, HBV and forced marriage.
- Provision of adequate resources of trained and accredited translators and interpreters for frontline services.
- Training for frontline service providers on how to work with an interpreter.
- In addressing the language barriers, information material be made available on DV support services' and other websites in the top currently used languages.
- Adequate search engine profiling of DV services online, in the most common languages, for all frontline support services.
- Diversity in volunteers and staff in DV services to include the ethnic minority community, should be considered.
- Training and awareness for frontline DV services around culturally harmful practices such as FGM, HBV and forced marriage.
- Continued co-partner awareness campaigns with ethnic minority groups and faith Communities to raise awareness of signs of domestic violence and the rights and responsibilities regarding these issues in Ireland.
- Ethnic minority victims of domestic abuse, regardless of immigration/visa status, should be allowed to access refuge and other protective services while waiting for the process of their own independent visa application.

## **Recommendations continued**

- Development of a strategised 'best practice' approach by the Gardai when supporting ethnic minority victims of abuse where a language barrier is present.
- Full access to trained & accredited interpreters in family law courts.
- The development of a national educational learning programme on domestic abuse and the ethnic minority communities.
- National domestic violence awareness campaigns should aim to target ethnic minority groups in their own language.
- For all domestic violence support service to be adequately resourced to provide specialised support to meet the need within the ethnic minority communities.
- Visa for DV victim dependants should be fast tracked or given a temporary visa to be able to access funds.

# **Domestic abuse support services in the Midlands and Co. Roscommon**

## **Offaly Domestic Violence Support Service (ODVSS)**

Tullamore, Co Offaly

<https://www.odvss.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/odvss>

## **Laois Domestic Abuse service**

Portlaoise, Co Laois

<https://www.laoisdomesticabuseservice.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/LaoisDomesticAbuseService/>

## **Roscommon SafeLink**

Boyle, Co Roscommon

<https://roscommonsafelink.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RSL20>

## **Esker House, support and refuge**

Athlone, Co Westmeath

<http://www.eskerhouse.ie/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EskerHouseDVservice>

## **Westmeath support**

Mullingar, Co Westmeath

<https://www.swwada.ie>

<https://www.facebook.com/westmeathsupportserviceagainstdomesticabuse>

## **Longford Women's Link**

Longford, Co Longford

<http://www.lwl.ie/services/domestic-violence/>

<https://www.facebook.com/LongfordWomensLink/>

## **Ethnic Minority Community Development Project**

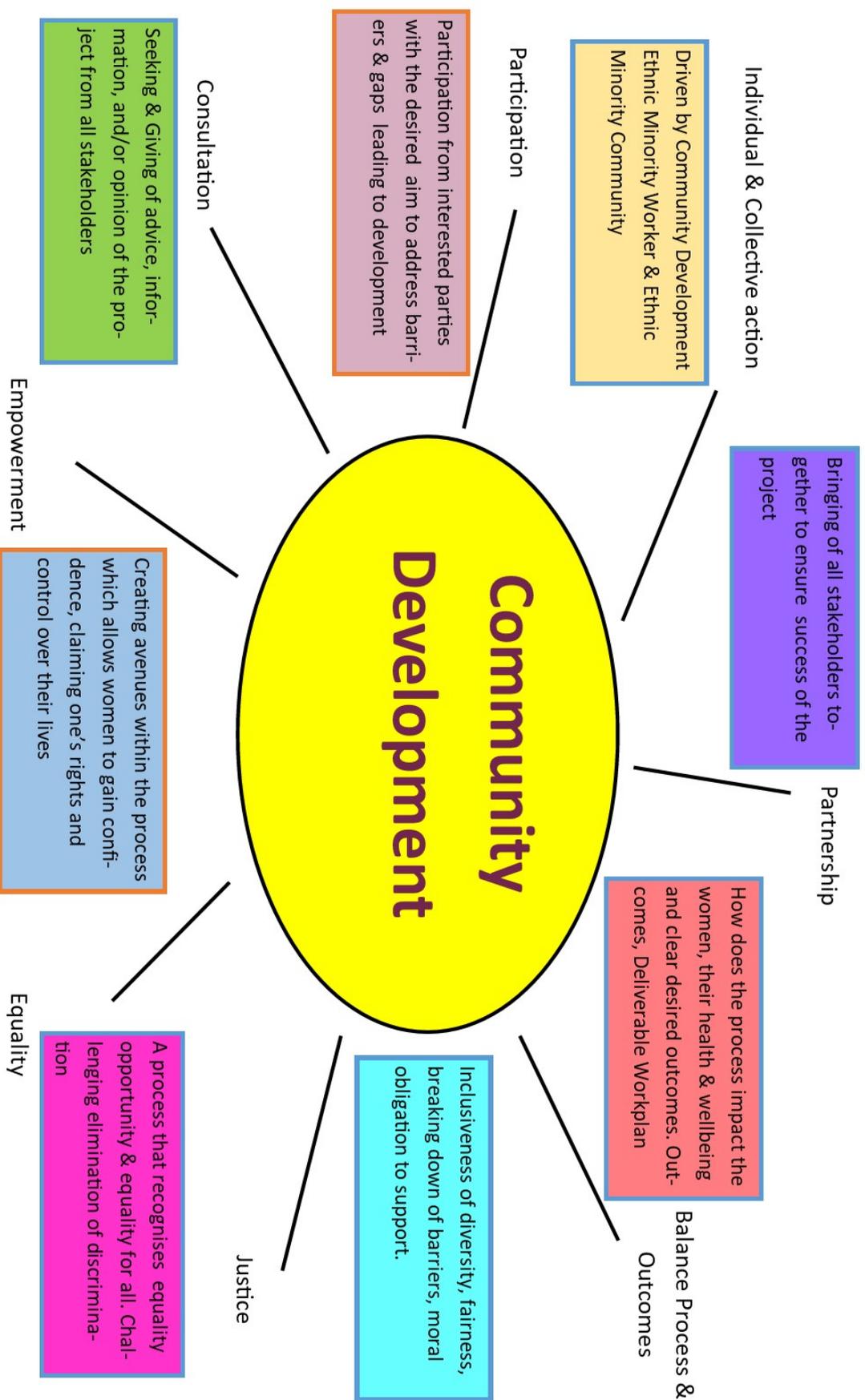
Domestic abuse knows no borders and regardless of where you are from or what your cultural background or religion is, the power and control by one person over another in an intimate or family relationship can present itself. Regardless of if you are affluent or coming from a deprived background, if you are gay or straight, if you are a person with a disability or not, if you are young or old or if you are male or female; domestic violence and abuse can happen in any section of society, anywhere in the world.

Following a Needs analysis in the Midlands and Co. Roscommon, a gap was identified in the provision of support services for individuals from ethnic minority communities, who may be experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The needs analysis was commissioned by an established cluster group consisting of TUSLA DSGBV Services, Offaly Domestic Violence support service (ODVSS), Esker House Women's Refuge and Domestic Abuse Support Service, Laois Domestic Abuse Service, Roscommon Safe Link, Longford Women's Link and Westmeath Support Service Against Domestic Abuse.

A new Ethnic minority community development post was created and advertised in August 2018. An Ethnic minority development project worker started in October 2018, based in ODVSS in Tullamore, Co Offaly. The aim of this pilot project was to identify the barriers that affect ethnic minority women/men experiencing abuse and why they are not accessing domestic violence support services in the Midlands. The project would also examine strategies that will increase the referral pathways into support services by establishing networks and interactions across the Midlands. The project was adapting a community development perspective (Fig. 1 - overleaf)

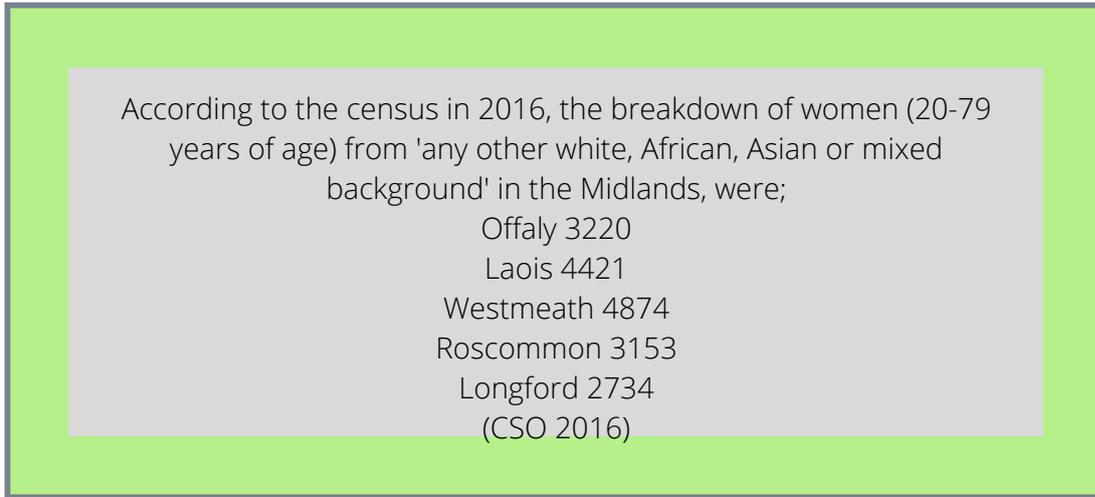
Following the appointment, an advisory group was formed with the remit to support the role on an informed basis. This group has a cross-section of stakeholders who could contribute to the project. The initial group included TUSLA, The Manager of ODVSS and Laois Domestic Abuse service, Snr CFSN Coordinator TUSLA, AkiDwA and the Manager of EROC Ballaghaderreen. As the project advanced, the advisory board added members to include NCP, Dignity Partnership and the Manager of Roscommon Safe Link. The advisory group has met seven times since the commencement of the Project the last two meetings were conducted remotely using Zoom.

## Principles of Community Development in relation to Ethnic Minority



(Fig. 1)

## Early development and networking



**A 2014 FRA report suggests that *one in four women* will experience domestic violence. With that in mind, over 4600 ethnic minority women could currently be experiencing abuse in the Midlands**

Considering these figures and the increase in people seeking asylum in Ireland, the Ethnic minority development project is a timely undertaking and the interest in the project has been very positive.

The first part of the project included research around ethnic minorities and domestic abuse, noting the different perspectives, cultures, religions, as well as other forms of domestic abuse that are more associated with some of the newer communities in Ireland. It was important to establish contacts and networks with organisations working with ethnic minority groups in the Midlands and other parts of Ireland.

The project was introduced to the domestic abuse support services in the Midlands and Roscommon. These meetings also served to ascertain a baseline measure of the level of ethnic minority clients accessing their services for support and to gain insight into perceived barriers for minority women accessing support, as identified by the services.

### **Further networking and awareness-raising in the Midlands**

The next stage of the project involved continuous networking in the Midlands with stakeholders. This phase concentrated on effective awareness strategies that explained the project to front line organisations to buy-in and to build support.

This part of the project also involved initiating connections with ethnic minority women, faith leaders and identifying groups of individuals who are interested in being part of spreading awareness about domestic abuse in their communities. Building trust with the ethnic minority communities proved time-consuming. The geographical area is large and it was also important that the project would build up relationships with organisations, like family resource centres and other services that already work with the minority communities.

In March 2020, the Covid-19 lockdown meant that the methods of working had to change. The more preferred way of working, meeting face to face, had to move to use a mobile phone and online meetings, as well as learning to use zoom and other medias for communicating. This made it more difficult for the project worker to meet with and engage with women from different nationalities particularly in relation to communicating with groups with varied levels of English.

This part of the project did make way for easy access to training and information gathering from other jurisdictions, via online medias. The time was also used for planning the development of training and information material for services and community domestic abuse champions.

The time during lockdown was perfect for putting the EMDP on social media. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are up and running with a great response. Local papers and local radio were approached and attention was given to the project through these medias. Training and information material for ethnic minority communities and frontline services started to form during this time, as close working relationship with minority individuals and groups was difficult during this time of restrictions on account of Covid-19.

To even begin to understand the diversity of culture, the first steps in learning have to be generalised (as opposed to stereotyping). It is important to remember that everyone has to be treated as an individual and not take for granted that someone from a specific culture will behave in a specific manner.

"The single story  
creates stereotypes,  
and the problem with  
stereotypes is not  
that they are  
untrue, but  
that they are  
incomplete"

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



# Methodology

The aim of this pilot project in the Midlands area was to get a larger picture of the barriers facing members of the ethnic minority communities, should they need support regarding domestic abuse.

A great deal of research took place, nationally and internationally, to gain insight and knowledge into the diversity of cultures. Domestic abuse is a sensitive matter and it takes time to build up trust within the communities, to get to the stage where it is possible to talk about the issue.

## Initial research

Online conducted surveys with domestic abuse support services and organisations working with ethnic minorities in the Midlands, was the starting point. This survey snowballed to services outside of the Midlands, which are included in the results.

Paper-based and online conducted surveys with Ethnic minority individuals went out in early 2020 and this survey was translated into Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian and Arabic.

A review of national and international research in relation to domestic abuse and ethnic minority women/men have been part of the work the whole way through.

## Meetings

- Face-to-face meetings with domestic abuse support services in the Midlands
- Meetings with refugee resettlement workers in the Midlands
- Meetings with An Garda Siochana and immigration officers
- Visits to the EROC centre in Ballaghaderreen
- Face-to-face meeting with SATU in Mullingar
- Face-to-face meetings with Educational Training Board tutors in the Midlands
- Meetings with representatives of Local Development Companies in the Midlands
- Meetings with Parents first and Community Mothers in Offaly and Westmeath
- Visit to the County Council in Longford
- Visit to the Mosque, Islamic centre in Portlaoise
- Meetings with Faith leaders in Roscommon and Longford
- Information sharing with Citizen information centres
- Visit to Maternity hospitals in Mullingar and Ballinasloe
- Working relationship with the Intercultural co-ordinator in Portlaoise
- Presenting the project to Public health nurses and Tusla child and family integrations support
- Continuous visits to Direct provision centres in Westmeath, Offaly and Laois
- Face-to-face meetings with Family resource centres in the Midlands

## **Interactions and training with various organisations**

- Online meetings with representatives from New Communities Partnership and Migrants Rights Centre
- Attended webinars/training/discussions with ICI, NWC, NCP, AkidWa, MRCI
- Attended Mother and toddler group in Direct Provision Centre, Westmeath
- Attended IOM 'Protect' project focus groups, meetings and training

## **Research, networking and training with UK organisations working with ethnic minority women and domestic abuse**

- SHAKTI Scottish women's aid, training, Edinburgh
- BHK training, UK online - Harmful practices
- Mena Kumari, H.O.P.E, UK training sessions online
- Adhar training - 'Working with community groups (BAME and DV)
- Createequalz - 'Unpicking culture in domestic abuse for black and brown women' UK online
- UCD Institute of Antiracism and Black studies - 'Introduction to Black studies taster course' - Eburn Joseph

This report presents the findings from the primary and secondary research. It explores the issues and barriers that ethnic minority women may encounter regarding seeking support, should they experience domestic abuse. It draws on the project's research, national and international work, seeking forms of 'best practice' from jurisdictions with a longer and more extensive history of working with ethnic minority communities, aiming to reach conclusions and make some recommendations. It also identifies ideas of how to develop a community-based approach to working with the minority communities, building trust by involving the minority community members in creation of awareness and training materials.

## **Meetings with ethnic minority groups and individuals**

- EDI (Employment, development, and information centre), Longford Meeting with a group of women from China, Poland, Philippines and Latvia
- Cluain Ard, community group, Longford. A group of women from Iraq and Ghana.
- Roscommon meeting with a woman from South Africa
- Offaly meeting with a Polish DV survivor
- Women in Direct Provision centre, Westmeath from various nationalities
- Direct Provision centre in Offaly working contact with two women from Africa
- Meeting with Lithuanian women in Offaly
- Meeting with woman from Latvia in Offaly
- Group meeting with DV survivors in Roscommon from Brazil and Slovakia
- Working relationship with Slovakian DV survivor in Roscommon
- Group meeting in Vita House in Roscommon with women from Brazil and Lithuania
- Presentation to women in cookery group run by Offaly local development company, women from Syria and Afghanistan
- Meeting with African women's support group in Westmeath
- Online meetings with Chinese group, Russian speaking group and women from Pakistan

## **Meetings with faith communities**

- Face-to-face meetings with a Pastor from 'Redeemed Christian Church of God', Longford, Pastor of 'Light for the people, International church, Roscommon and with a Pastor 'Born again Christians' Roscommon
- Two meetings with the Sheikh of Islamic Cultural Centre Dublin (ICCI) and one with the Sheikh of Islamic foundation of Ireland (IFI)
- Online meeting and phone conversations with Dublin City Interfaith forum
- Phone conversations with Pastor of Seventh Day Adventist Church president and with Methodist Church Ministers in Offaly.
- Face to face meeting with Sr Trinita (Interfaith, Laois)
- Face to face meeting with women's welfare officers in Portlaoise Mosque, in ICCI in Dublin and with Amal Women's association, working in the IFI Mosque

## Barriers Identified

Language and communication

Difficult to find the right service to use and not aware what DV services can offer

Shame and stigma and fear of being rejected by own community

Fear of racism or prejudice

Immigration status issues

Cultural or religious issues

## Language and Communication

**59%**

of 227 respondents  
indicate that  
this is a barrier

**6 out of 7**

of the Moldovian respondents have  
used an interpreter

**98**

of the 227 respondents have  
needed help with interpretation

**10**

of them got help from someone  
under 18 years of age

*"There are 300 languages in South Asia but  
there is no clear-cut translation for domestic  
abuse"*

(Menon 2019)

Having experienced the trauma of domestic  
abuse, but not having words for it will make it  
very difficult to explain what has happened to a  
stranger having to use a foreign language.

According to the ethnic minority survey, language is the largest barrier. This can be a barrier from the very first instance, finding a word in their language, realising that they are being abused to telling someone about the abuse all the way to fully understand what is happening in court.

*"If we call out to a domestic abuse situation and there is a language problem,  
we need to find out what has happened and it could be the perpetrator who  
we speak with if that is the only person in the house speaking English  
(Garda, Offaly)*

The perpetrator could, in this instance, minimise, and blame the victim for the altercation. This situation could be dangerous for the victim and would make it harder to report any abuse again.

# Interpreters

*'It is important to work with interpreters in order to deal with cultural complex trauma'*  
(April Dawn, Createingequalz, discussion 2020)

An ITIA survey in 2017 shows that the cost of an interpreter ranges between 15 and 80 euro with a median of 30 euro.

Phelan writes about the problem of interpreters not being professional in court by, for example, 'not interpreting word for word'.

(Legal interpreters in the news in Ireland, 2011)

*'We trust that the interpreters are well trained and professional and will translate word for word only'*  
(Longford court)

Four of the Midlands Courts (Roscommon, Offaly, Longford and Athlone) all state that any ex parte hearing i.e. protection order/interim barring order/emergency barring order, does not grant an interpreter. It is then at the Judge's discretion to decide if there is a requirement for an interpreter for subsequent court appearances i.e. Safety/Barring order. When the applicant meets the respondent at a hearing for safety/barring order, and if the Judge has granted an interpreter, both parties (if they need an interpreter and speak the same language) often have to share the same interpreter.

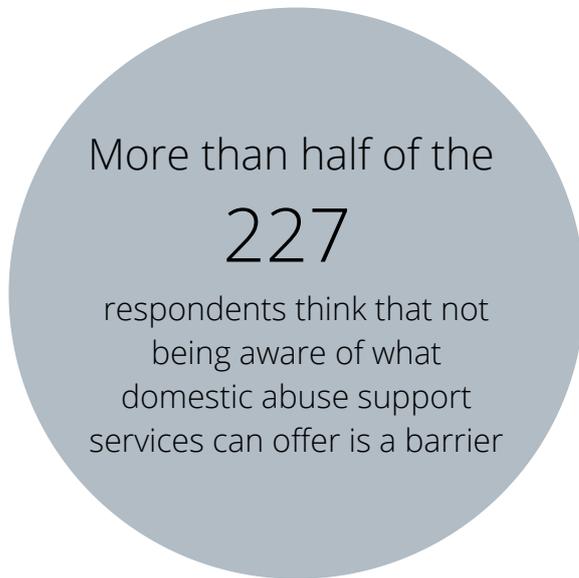
*'The court service does not pay for two interpreters of the same language on the one day'*  
(Roscommon court)

Domestic abuse support services in the Midlands use Women's aid telephone interpretation service/  
Mobile phone/  
Professional interpreter in person  
(Survey 2019)

Coming from a different culture may result in interpreting something that you say into something completely different - make sure that the person you are talking with has understood exactly what you mean. This can also happen with interpreters so if in doubt, really check that what you have said is understood.  
Communication - Message sent - Not always received  
(NCP 2019)

## Difficult to find information about the right service to use

### Not aware of what domestic abuse support services can offer



According to the respondents, not knowing where to go and not knowing what the specific service can offer is the second largest barrier. Domestic abuse support services are the type of support services that you might not realise exist until you find yourself in a situation of domestic abuse and need help. For minority communities, some coming from highly patriarchal societies where the male more generally dominates the family group and the hierarchy of extended family provides an imbalance of power, domestic abuse could be minimized or not even recognised as abuse (Husain, 2019).

*I tried to ring the Court, because someone had said that I should do that. I thought I was ringing the Court office, but I had dialled Roscommon SafeLink instead. It was great as I got to speak with a support worker, she was so helpful.*

*(Slovakian participant in focus group RSL Boyle)*

Spreading awareness about domestic abuse and what the services can offer in the way of support is an important part of the service provision. Domestic abuse and mental health are taboo subjects, but the last decade or so, has seen a significant change in knowledge around mental health. This has come about by spreading awareness and speaking up about the issue of mental health. By starting the conversation about domestic abuse we are making a move forward..

'Muslim women don't know that there are support services for DV in Ireland. They think that they have to go to Imam'.

*'I found it very hard to find information about where to go and what the services could do. I went to CIC where I was told that there is a domestic violence support service that I could attend. One day I went to the door, but I turned back and didn't go in. When I realised that it had become really dangerous for me and my baby, I decided to go again and this time I rang the door bell. I got a lot of support from ODVSS and I think that without this support I probably would have been dead by now.'*  
(Polish client, ODVSS)

34%

of all the 227 respondents think that the best way to spread awareness about domestic abuse would be from a 'member of their own community'

35%

think that it would be useful if the support service could come to visit the minority community to talk about their services

This Republic of Congo respondent thinks that it would be helpful to have minority background staff in the support services.

*'To integrate in your staff, migrant background people to work with you in order to facilitate or allow a comprehensive approach when accessing the communities'*  
(Republic of Congo respondent)

"We know that BME women prefer to use specialist services.....  
There's a real risk that a lack of specialist services could deter them from seeking help"  
(Virdee, 2019)

## Shame and stigma and The fear of becoming rejected by own community

33 out of 54

Lithuanian speaking respondents think shame and stigma is a barrier

Shame and stigma is one of the largest barriers for Pakistani women

62.5%

57%

of the Russian speaking respondents indicate that shame and stigma is a barrier

More than

40%

of the Pakistani respondents identify the 'fear of becoming rejected by own community' as a barrier

Shame and stigma is generally a large barrier associated with reporting domestic abuse. Women's aid impact report 2019 found that 40% of the 937 respondents (with no specific ethnicity) indicated that stigma/shame/self-shame was a reason for not speaking with anyone

*'Honor is like the weather, you can't change it'*

*'Blood is thicker than water, honor is thicker than blood'*

*'Honor is an unwritten book of rules  
of what I can or can't do,  
it's the biggest issue in an Asian woman's life'*

(Bal Howard - Harmful practices training, 2020)

To belong to a community can give a person social status, protection and security. It can also be harmful, for example, if an Asian woman is experiencing domestic violence, she can potentially be doubly victimised; first by the abuse and then again by the community which she belongs to. There could be a risk of multiple abusers who might collude in the abuse; partner, parents, siblings, in-laws or other wives.

Some minority communities bring with them a highly conservative culture, where male violence might be used as a tool to control women and girls. In these highly patriarchal communities 'shame and honour' is used to reject women who do not conform. (Hannana Siddiqui, 2018)

*'More awareness of that it is not acceptable, women need to know that if they come forward they will get support - encourage women not to feel shame...'*  
(Direct provision centre participant, IOM meeting 2019)

According to April Dawn (Createingequallz) when something happens to an individual from a collectivist community, that person will think about the community before she/he will think about themselves. If a woman leaves the abuse, she might not be able to come back to the community, which has so far 'protected' her. It can also be dangerous to go back to the home country due to the perceived 'dishonour' of leaving a marriage.

Shame is affecting other nationalities also as this Lithuanian woman expressed.

*'Keep it in the family - shame'*  
(Lithuanian woman, Vita House group meeting)

Honour and shame are not only affecting women, it is part of life and anyone in the community can be affected. In a BBC Newsnight interview, this Asian man who was abused as a child shows how 'he had to stay quiet to keep the honour' and not put shame on the family or on the perpetrator.

A British Imam explains how they are trained and to keep the family honour intact is ingrained from early childhood - even if you have experience abuse. This man relays how he was sexually abused when he was 10-11 years old. He was afraid for his life to speak out about it. About 10 years ago, he became suicidal, having kept this shameful secret for so long. He is now a family man and works as a teacher and an Imam. He eventually told his family about what had happened to him. They didn't want him to report or pursue the perpetrator, keeping the honour intact and not bring shame to the family and the perpetrator.

(BBCNewsnight 2017)

## Fear of racism and prejudice

28 out of 68

of the Pakistani respondents think that fear of racism or prejudice is a barrier

The Portuguese speaking survey showed

31%

of the respondents believe that the 'fear of racism or prejudice is a barrier'

2020 has seen a worldwide increase in awareness about racism, with the 'Black lives matter' campaign, sparked by the killing of George Floyd.

Ebun Josep (2020), explains that while this attention is positive - racism and prejudice are both issues which are deeply rooted and needs a complete culture change.

*'I was in a refuge when I was asked 'Why do you people engage in arranged marriages?' - 'It's not my fault that I come from this culture, It made me feel responsible for my situation and I was depressed and not able to eat or feed my baby'  
(Pakistani woman)*

Black, Asian or minority ethnic women who are finding themselves in a situation trying to get out of an abusive relationship, might have a real or a perceived fear of being met by racism, prejudice or stereotyping. There might be a conception that service providers will base their response on believed cultural, ethnic or religious stereotypes (Women's Aid, UK).

*'Services are looking at the domestic violence as cultural and don't want to interfere'  
(Participant in IOM focus group 2019)*

INAR explains racism as:  
Any action, practice, polic, law,  
speech, or incident which has the  
effect (whether intentional or not)  
of undermining anyone's  
enjoyment of their human rights,  
based on their actual or perceived  
ethnic or national origin or  
background, where that  
background is that of a  
marginalised or historically  
subordinated group

Prejudice is an unjustified or  
incorrect attitude (usually  
negative) towards and  
individual, based solely on the  
individual's membership of a  
social group.  
(McLeod 2018)

## Immigration Status Issues

Immigration status issues  
as a barrier was identified by

55%

of the  
Pakistani respondents

24%

of Portuguese speaking  
respondents mentioned  
worries about immigration  
issues

This is a very real barrier for anyone who is on a stamp 3 or stamp 4 dependent visa. Often, in a domestic abuse situation, the perpetrator, who holds the visa which the victim is dependent on, will not assist the victim in renewing the visa. This will render the victim undocumented.

*"He would say that he would report me to the guards, so I was afraid of standing up to him" she said, "I am still undocumented"*

*In this interview, Ajmal explains about numerous accounts of abusive spouses, who are using the immigration status as a tool to isolate and spread fear about deportation in a bid to isolate their partners.*

*"They use it as a tool to keep them quiet, they say, 'you're undocumented, if you go to the police they send you back to Pakistan',"*

*(Dublin Inquirer, 2020)*

'No one should be forced to remain in an abusive relationship in order to preserve their permission to remain in the State. If you are the victim of domestic abuse by a dependent family member you may qualify to apply for an independent residency status in the State. Dependent immigration permission refers to a right of residence that the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) has granted to non-EU citizens based on their marriage to or relationship to an Irish, EU or non-EU national who has the right of residence in the State'

(Immigration council of Ireland)

## Statement from Migrants Rights Centre

'Currently, individuals from a migrant background who become victims of domestic violence cannot escape their unsafe situation due to severe shortcomings in the immigration process regulated by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS).

Victims of domestic violence should have their application processed with urgency due to the unsafe situation they are in. But in reality, victims of domestic abuse are being left in an even more precarious situation due to unreasonable waiting times and uncertainty of their applications for independent status.

The Department of Justice and Equality should implement formal legislative schemes and remove the current barriers for migrants who are victims of domestic violence to access services that are meant to protect them.

It must also make the entire process more compassionate and people-centred to avoid re-victimising individuals, as well as prioritise funding to key and unrestricted services that support victims of domestic violence.'

(Migrants Rights Centre Ireland, 2020)

There is no access for undocumented people to social welfare payments. The only payments which could be secured is an ENP or a UNP, but these payments are at the discretion of the CWS and there is no automatic right to these payments (MRCI)

*'Woman A grew up in Pakistan and in 2015 she married her husband who is also from Pakistan but who already had a secure immigration status in Ireland. She came with him to Ireland, to start a new life with him here, having escaped poverty in Pakistan.*

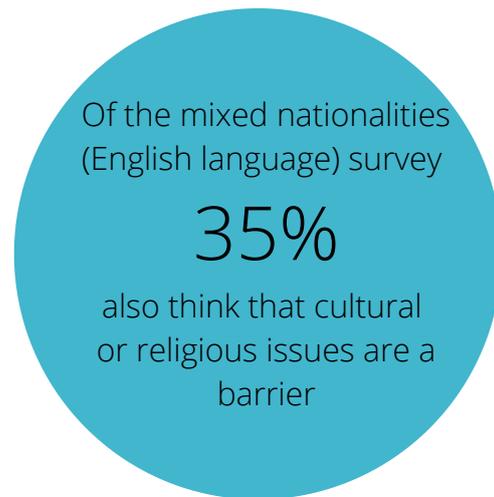
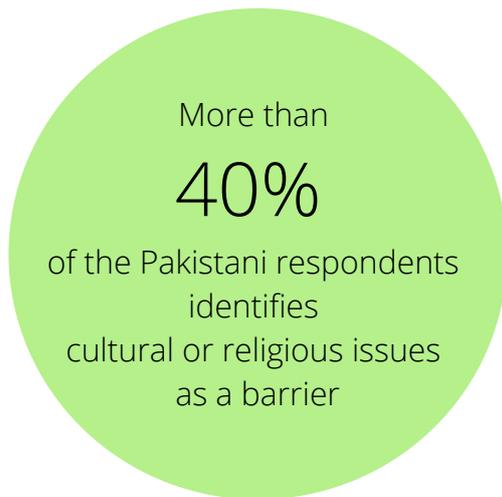
*Soon after the wedding he started to drink, take drugs, visit prostitutes, he physically abused her and he didn't give her food or money. This treatment carried on while she was pregnant. Woman A was in Ireland on a Stamp 3 Visa as a dependant and he subsequently didn't support her in renewing her Visa. She made the decision to leave when her husband threatened to hit her child. She spent time in two refuges, where she could feel safe and try to come to terms with the situation. As she at this stage was un-documented she had no access to any state benefits and consequently she wasn't able to stay in the refuge and is now living with a friend. She has applied for her own independent Visa but it is taking a long time and in the meantime she can't work and is not eligible for any support.*

*She keeps telling me that she thinks that Irish people generally are so welcoming and helpful, but she has met with a couple of threatening or uncomfortable situations. In one situation she was made to feel that she was somewhat responsible for her situation because of her culture and one when she was told by a social welfare officer that she would report her and have her sent back to Pakistan.*

*By not supporting his wife to renew her stamp 3 visa her husband was in a position to hold the power and control over her life as he continuously threatened to report her to Gardai and have her sent back to Pakistan. She was too afraid to seek support with this threat hanging over her. Now she is trying to make the best she can, staying with a friend with her young daughter, with no income, while she is waiting for her visa application to come through.'*

## Cultural or Religious Issues

Culture is defined in the Cambridge dictionary as;  
*The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time*



### Generalising vs. stereotyping

To be able to present an overview of culture and religion, the information in this report are generalised. Culture is dynamic and changing. Complex and inter-related factors play a role in how an individual is moving on a continuum of cultural norms depending on for example, embracing new norms while adapting to life in a new country. It is important not to stereotype and believe that everyone from a specific culture will conform to a specific pattern.

Bal Howard (BKH training) encourages professionals to not be afraid to challenge the fact that religion and culture/tradition exist on the opposite end of a spectrum

Culture  Religion

*'In my culture, women are not even aware what is the domestic violence, because they grew up watching this that it becomes norm to them'*  
(Pakistani srespondent)

*'The groom pays a bride price to the bride's father; this could be seen as he own his wife'*  
(African mixed support group, Westmeath)

## The main religions in Ireland (2016 census)

Roman Catholic	- 3,729,100
Church of Ireland (Anglican)	- 126,400
Muslim	- 63,400
Orthodox	- 62,200
Other Christian	- 37,400
Presbyterian	24,200
Hindu	- 14,300
Apostolic or Pentecostal	- 13,400

In some religions, it is expected that the head of the household will discipline the rest of the household as he sees fit. This is seen as a duty and not as failure. In that context, both people in the relationship may accept some level of violence or control as normal and correct. In these instances, having peers and religious leaders of the same religious faith, particularly prominent members of the faith, who are willing to condemn abuse as wrong, or even illegal in Ireland, and to encourage the couple away from accepting this as normal is important. (M. Gennari et.al. 2017)

Additionally, religions - particularly those where people have been persecuted - can be suspicious of the motivations of those outside the faith. Having peers from that religion who can counsel either one person or the couple is essential. The couple, or the individuals, may not engage fully or completely honest with someone who is not of their faith, which limits the amount of work you can do with them on your own (If you are not of their faith).

*'My work is within the Muslim community and in this community we have about 80 different cultures'*

*Sheikh Hassan ICCI, Dublin*

*'The biggest barrier is my religion and the shame. I had great support from the domestic abuse service and from Jigsaw, social work and the school'*

*(South African woman, 2019)*

## Covid-19 reflections

Reports from domestic violence support services in the Midlands, show that the helplines were quiet for the first couple of weeks, but since then there has been a deluge of helpline domestic violence support services and the Gardai. Women's Aid recorded a 39% increase in calls since March and Offaly domestic violence support service saw a 100% increase in helpline calls. The calls were mostly in relation to coercive control, financial and physical abuse.

**Offaly Domestic violence support service** noted a double increase of clients from Ethnic minority communities between January to September 2020 compared the same time frame in 2019. 40% were from women from Eastern Europe. ODVSS highlighted a worrying difficulty for minority clients during lockdown when accessing court. The lack of interpreters in the family law court, made it very difficult for them to understand exactly what the orders mean and what was said in the courtroom.

**Esker House** saw an increase during lockdown - the service saw an increase in the past 6 months compared with last year's figures of women from ethnic minority groups accessing the outreach team for support due to experiencing domestic abuse. While this increase was not a large increase, it observed that the level of violence and harm perpetrated by the male alleged perpetrator had increased significantly. This included severe acts of physical and sexual violence. Many women from any ethnic minority communities who contacted Esker House outreach team for support spoke about: "feeling trapped" due to COVID-19 restrictions, in a sense, the COVID -19 restrictions added another layer of control which was often used by the alleged perpetrator to inflict further abuse and harm.

While the COVID19 has exacerbated levels of violence in the home and led to an increase of isolation to the female victims, Esker House outreach team has significantly increased their awareness-raising through social media , in an attempt to reach all women who are living with domestic abuse.

**Longford women's link** reports a 50% increase of ethnic minority clients contacting them during lockdown and have worked with 106 minority clients this year. The service produced leaflets in different languages, earlier in the year. The leaflets are carried in the Garda patrol cars and the referral rates of minority victims by Gardai have increased. The leaflets can also be found on the Women's Link website.

**Roscommon Safe Link**, reports one ethnic minority client during the lockdown. This service also reports an uneasiness of not being able to contact vulnerable women for fear of the alleged perpetrator having full control of what is communicated during the lockdown, thus threatening the safety of the woman.

**Westmeath Support Service** against Domestic Abuse is reporting a trend of married Eastern European women contacting the service, experiencing domestic abuse and wanting to return back to their home country.

**Laois domestic abuse service** experienced an increase in women living in direct provision centres seeking support in relation to DV, additionally there was an increase in support provided to partners of participants of the MEND programme who were from minority communities, and an increase from women living in the community with status/residency.

## Covid-19 reflections continued

According to Garda statistical reports and Safelreland's data launched in November 2020, Domestic violence services recorded a *significant 25-30%* rise in victims of abuse seeking support *almost 3500* women contacted a dv service for the first time this period and *38000 helpline calls* were recorded (Safelreland 2020) Initiatives like Garda operation Faoiseamh, #Still here, the Department of Justice awareness and Safelreland campaigns contributed to a wraparound approach to raise awareness that domestic violence support services were still open and supporting clients.

Domestic abuse support services noticed an increase of different ethnic minorities accessing the services, Eastern European women, some of who wanted to leave and go back to the country where they had come from. Observations of an increase in the level of violence and harm perpetrated by male alleged perpetrators, which included severe acts of physical and sexual violence. Women spoke about "feeling trapped" due to the restrictions.

With GPs, schools, family resource centres and other frontline services being closed, meaning that places where normally contacts could be made and information could be sought, wasn't available at this time. Important services like family resource centres, adult education centres, citizen's information centres where all closed for face to face contact.

The ethnic minority development survey for minority individuals showed that 52% of 227 respondents believe that language and communication are barriers to seeking support. More than half of the respondents also indicated that the difficulty in finding the right service to use is a barrier to seeking support. The information about supports available, offered by most of the national campaigns was mainly in English, which added to the difficulty in finding supports. Another aspect of the language barrier was the lack of interpreters in family law court, during this time, which made it very difficult for non-English speakers to understand exactly what the orders mean and what was said in the court room.

A study in the UK by Public Health England found that (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) BAME people are more likely to die from Covid-19. This information could have made ethnic minority people less likely to go outside to look for support.

SATU in Mullingar reported that although they didn't see a change in help-seeking from ethnic minorities, it could have become more difficult for the women to seek support as schools were closed, GPs didn't take appointments and public transport was restricted. The lockdown had a big impact on direct provision residents. People with other vulnerabilities such as poverty (often from an ethnic minority background) and this in tandem with a language barrier made it a difficult time to report sexual violence. An increase in domestic, gender-related and marital rape during the period was noted.

## Covid-19 work changes - challenges and opportunities

The sudden change of working from home and not meeting people face to face affected the whole country in March of 2020. During this initial time, the project concentrated on building up awareness through various media outlets. Local newspapers, local radio and social media, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

It became increasingly difficult to meet with minority women, although social media, mobile phones and zoom gave opportunities to reach far and wide. This increased the awareness as well as the possibilities to attend trainings and webinars, not only in Ireland but also in the UK and Europe.

As the project concentrated on awareness raising about the development through local papers, local radio and through social media, connections were made which, have proven to be valuable. Two Facebook groups, Russian speaking and Pakistani women are now spreading awareness on their social media pages and are starting to avail of DV awareness training. The project linked in with and networked with organisations in the UK that work with ethnic minority women. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have made the project more visible.

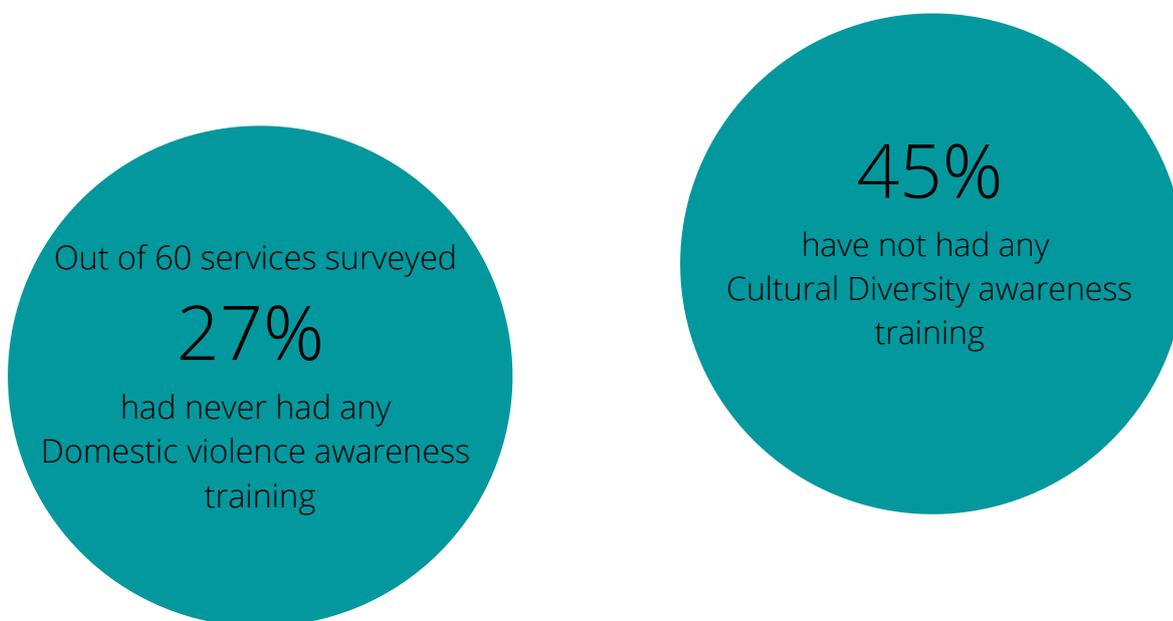


Many ethnic minority groups have Facebook (FB) pages or WhatsApp groups. EMDP is currently working with a group formed by women from a Russian speaking FB group and the same with a FB group for Pakistani women. The groups have so far one dedicated person, each who can answer messages and calls and are able to provide information about local domestic violence support services.

The initial call for someone who is experiencing DV is comforted by contacting someone who is speaking their language and who knows about their culture/religion. This gives the caller a great sense of support. The information given is not miscommunicated or misunderstood, as long as the receiver has an understanding of domestic abuse and how to signpost the person to a support service. This also means that the women may be able to keep in contact with their own community members, for support, even during a lockdown.

This communication using the victim's language and with someone who has some knowledge of the persons cultural background is an important step towards spreading awareness about what domestic abuse is, what rights women have in Ireland, what type of support services exist and what they can do for someone who is looking for help. Domestic abuse support services working with the ethnic minority communities, like the Russian and Pakistani groups, in reaching out to potential victims in the minority communities, could increase the referrals to DV services during a lockdown.

Services and organisations in the Midlands, that are working with Ethnic minority communities build trust and working relationships with individuals and families. This places them in a great position to support. Information and awareness about domestic violence and ethnic minority culture would support the organisations around response and action.



(From the survey of organisations and services)

## Direct Provision Centres

The project has had contact with and interacted with 5 of the Direct provision centres in the Midlands which hosts females or family residents;

Lissywollen, Athlone, Co Westmeath  
Temple Direct Provision centre, Co Westmeath  
Banagher Direct Provision centre, Banagher, Co Offaly  
Marian Hostel, Direct Provision centre, Co Offaly  
Abbeylax Direct Provision centre, Co Laois  
Rathdowney Direct Provision Centre, Co Laois

Lissywollen, Temple and Banagher have a very active volunteer group supporting the residents. Having contacted this group, the project worker was invited to take part in some activities in the centres. The mother and toddler group in Lissywollen DP centre proved to be a good place to meet mothers of all ages and to interact with them for an hour or so every other week. This interaction, unfortunately stopped with the lockdown.

The importance of creating trust and familiarity with women can not be overstated. The women in the centres tell me that they can find it hard to trust each other. A group of women from the Marian Hostel DP centre donated a blanket, which they made during the summer, to ODVSS. This introduced some of the women in the centre to the project and a small group of them are now working with EMDP on producing leaflets and spreading awareness within the centre.



Blanket made by residents in  
Marian Hostel DP centre  
Tullamore and donated to ODVSS

The project contacted the managers of the Direct provision centres who all reported no incidents of domestic violence during the initial lockdown. The confinement was trying though for some of the DP residents. The below message was sent to a Direct provision volunteer organisation in the Midlands.

*'Right now I feel very sad and depressed. This lockdown is affecting all of us. This situation is causing fights between couples. I hear a woman scream, but there is nothing I can do to help'*  
(DP centre resident, Midlands)

## Domestic Abuse Community Champions



Meeting with members of women's group ICCI and Amal women's group

The complexity of ethnic minority communities in relation to social-cultural-linguistic-religious-familial-gendered norms, are barriers for individuals from ethnic minority groups to self refer, should they experience domestic abuse. According to Women's aid, UK, often domestic abuse survivors want to confide in someone they know or trust. For migrants who might not have family around, this could be someone in their own community. To have community champions who know how to deal with a disclosure, can be crucial in a situation like this, either opening or closing the opportunity for the victim to get safe and correct information and support. There is also a big opportunity for community champions to start the conversation, spread awareness and get together to make their voices heard (Women's Aid, UK).

The Domestic abuse Champions' network was rolled out in Oxfordshire in 2015 and is now covering that whole county. This program is recruiting and giving a two day training to Champions from many different organisations and groups. The network is constantly updating information and organising network meetings. This summary report is showing three main themes of the benefits of the training:

- Awareness
- Knowing what to do
- Knowing where to go

(The Impact of the Domestic abuse Champions' network, summary report 2019)

The EMD project has been working with a group of Pakistani women who are interested in taking part in learning more, to be able to spread awareness in their community. Although the initial contact person is living in Dublin, the group now has members from Co Roscommon and Westmeath also.

The project has had two meetings with this group online and the group has got their first two-hour training in domestic abuse awareness and response..

During lockdown the project got in contact with the Principal of Culture Association of 'Russian Ireland'. She is from Westmeath and supported the project by sending out the survey on the Association's Facebook page, creating a great response. After that, she involved a team of women who all speak Russian and we spoke and 'met' online to talk about how to spread awareness and how to deal with any calls which she frequently gets from women who are experiencing domestic abuse. She completed the 'Children first E-learning program' and the group will be offered to receive training in how to recognise, respond and report disclosures of domestic abuse.

The project has started conversations with a group of women led by a woman from China in Longford and also started working with Vita House in Roscommon town, in order to set up a group from the Brazilian community. Covid-19 restrictions made it difficult to continue these conversations online, caused by language difficulties.

# Culturally harmful practices

## Female Genital Mutilation - FGM

Based on 2016 data collected by Ireland's Central Statistics Office, an estimated 5,790 women and girls living in Ireland had undergone FGM. We also know that as many as 1,632 girls living in Ireland are estimated to be at high risk. Female Genital Mutilation Act 2012 states that it is illegal for a person to perform FGM in Ireland or to take a girl to another country to undergo FGM.

## Forced Marriage

It is not known how many forced marriages happen in Ireland. A forced marriage occurs when a person is pressured into a marriage they do not consent to, or cannot consent to due to age or disability. The Domestic Violence Act 2018 came into force on 1 January 2019, and criminalises the act of forcing someone to enter into a ceremony of marriage, or removing a person from the State for such purposes.

## Honour Based Abuse

The concept of 'honour' is for some communities deemed to be extremely important. To compromise a family's 'honour' is to bring dishonour and shame which can have severe consequences. The punishment for bringing dishonour can be emotional abuse, physical abuse, family disownment and in some cases even murder. There are often multiple perpetrators.

Despite the lack of data regarding these types of harmful practices, there are reports of both FGM and forced marriage, in Ireland. Ireland's first FGM conviction happened in January 2020 (Ryan, 2020). A story in the Independent, about an Irish woman being rescued after being taken to Bangladesh to enter into a forced marriage was the first such case to be reported in Ireland in July 2020 (Coyne, 2020). It is important for frontline services to be aware of the practices, how to deal with a disclosure and where to refer cases to.

## Meeting with Assistant Garda Commissioner Hilman and Superintendent Corbett

In March 2019 the EMD project worker attended a meeting in Portlaoise run by Laois Integration network (LIN). At this meeting Dr Dave McInerney, spoke about his work in the Garda Siochana with minority communities in Dublin. This resulted in a zoom meeting with Assistant Garda Commissioner Hilman and Superintendent Corbett, Garda National Diversity & Integration Unit, in October 2020. We discussed how we could work together, going forward to address the risks, awareness raising and protection measures.

## Domestic Abuse and Faith

Domestic abuse is a part of the society that faith communities and particularly faith leaders can do something about. Leaders of faith communities are respected, and this puts them in a prime position to speak out against and spread awareness about domestic violence.

Before the Covid-19 lockdown, the project worker met with two Pastors in Roscommon. This happened with help from Catia da Nova (Vita House family resource centre) who works with the Brazilian community in Roscommon. With the help from Cllr. Uruemu, a visit to the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Longford was made available.



The first meeting with Sheikh Hussein and Summayah Kenna (Head of community welfare department) in the Islamic cultural centre Ireland

It proved a time-consuming exercise to locate and plan to meet with Pastors and Priests around the Midlands. This resulted in positive contact with Dublin city interfaith forum (<https://www.dcif.ie/>). The link with this organisation will enable support with spreading awareness of the EMDP to faith groups around the Midlands.

In an effort to find out how to reach the Mosques in the smaller towns in the Midlands, the EMD approached Dublin's two large Mosques, ICCI (Islamic cultural centre of Ireland) and IFI (The Islamic Foundation of Ireland). The EMD project worker was invited by Summayah Kenna (Head of Community Welfare Department, ICCI) to meet with Sheikh Hussein (ICCI), this meeting happened in January 2020. Their interest in spreading awareness within the Muslim community was expressed by the Imam and resulted in a second meeting with Sheikh Hussein and Sheikh Yahya (IFI), this time we discussed the possibility to conduct a national awareness campaign involving all the Islam leaders in Ireland.

In January, the EMDP visited Amal Women's association, a support group which is situated in the Islamic Foundation of Ireland Mosque on South Circular road, Dublin.

According to some answers from Pakistani survey respondents, creating awareness within the faith communities would be welcome.

*'Places of worship and kids schools. Pamphlet placed in ethnic shops and restaurants' (Pakistani respondent)*

*'Information dissemination through local mosque and local free paper. (Pakistani respondent)*

*'Getting clerics on board! Molvion ki bohat suntey hain log' (Pakistani respondent)*



The second meeting with Sheikh Hussein (ICCI), Summayah Kenna (ICCI) and Sheikh Yahya (IFI)

## Ethnic Minority Community survey

The survey was conducted online via WhatsApp, Facebook using SurveyMonkey

Total respondents **227**

**114** are from the Midlands/Roscommon area

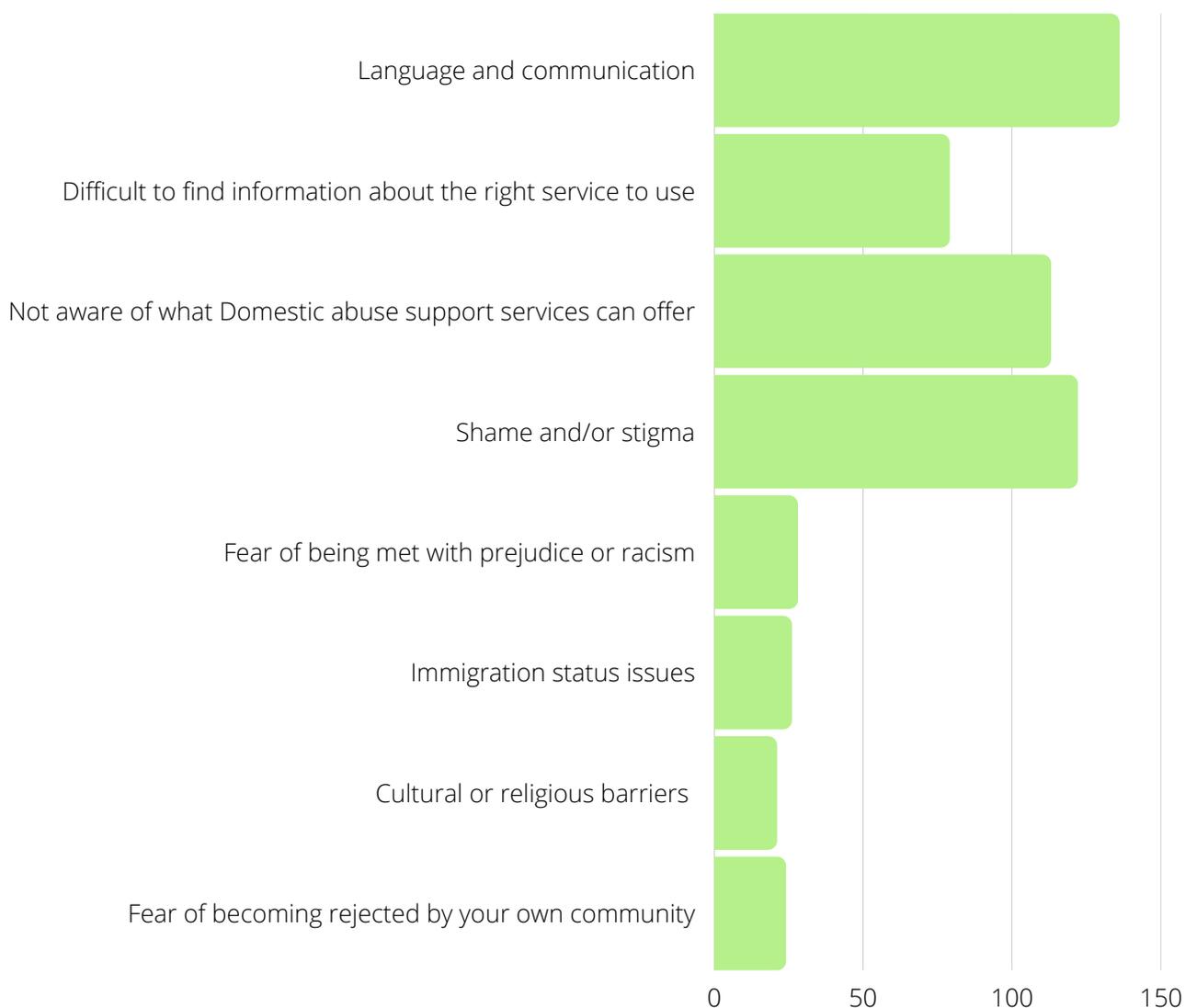
**112** from 'any other county in Ireland'

**171** of the respondents have lived in Ireland for over 5 years

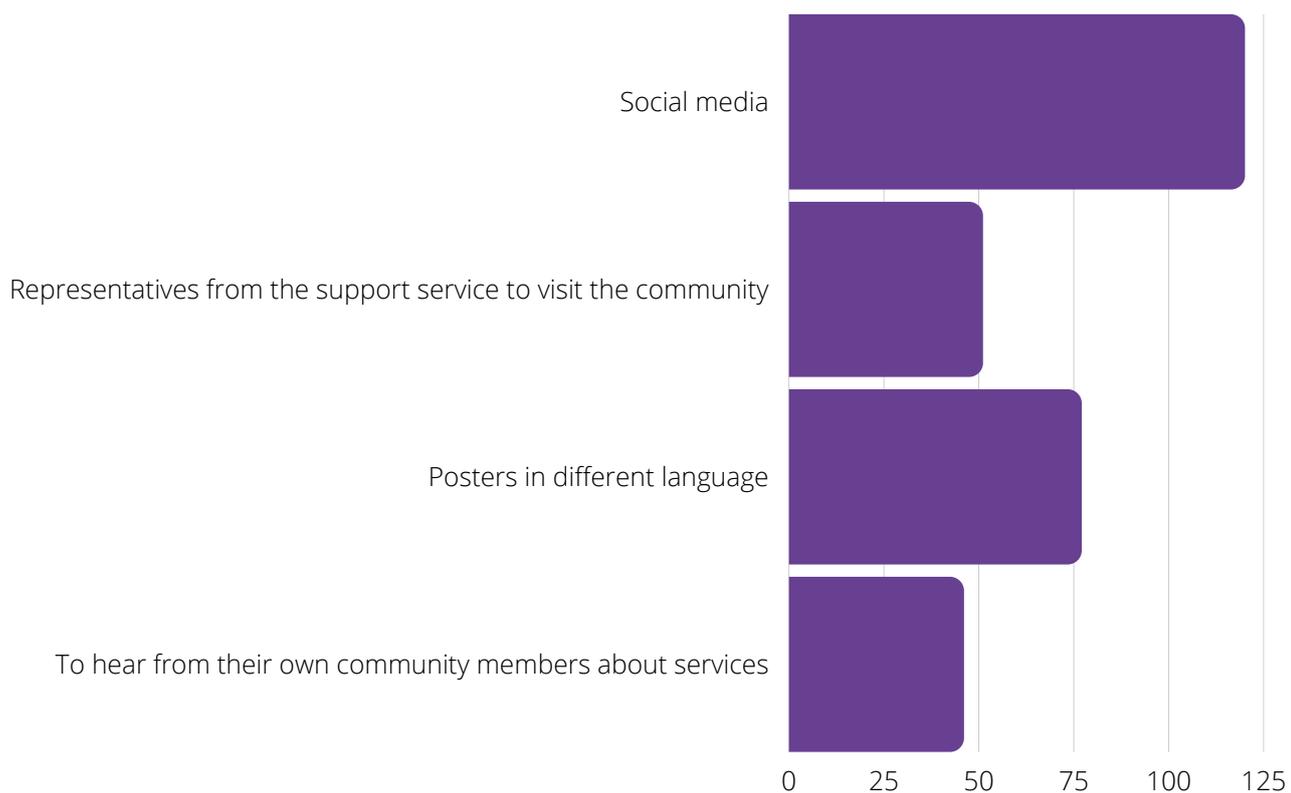
The respondents indicated that they are from **34** different countries

The largest groups are from Pakistan, Lithuania and Latvia

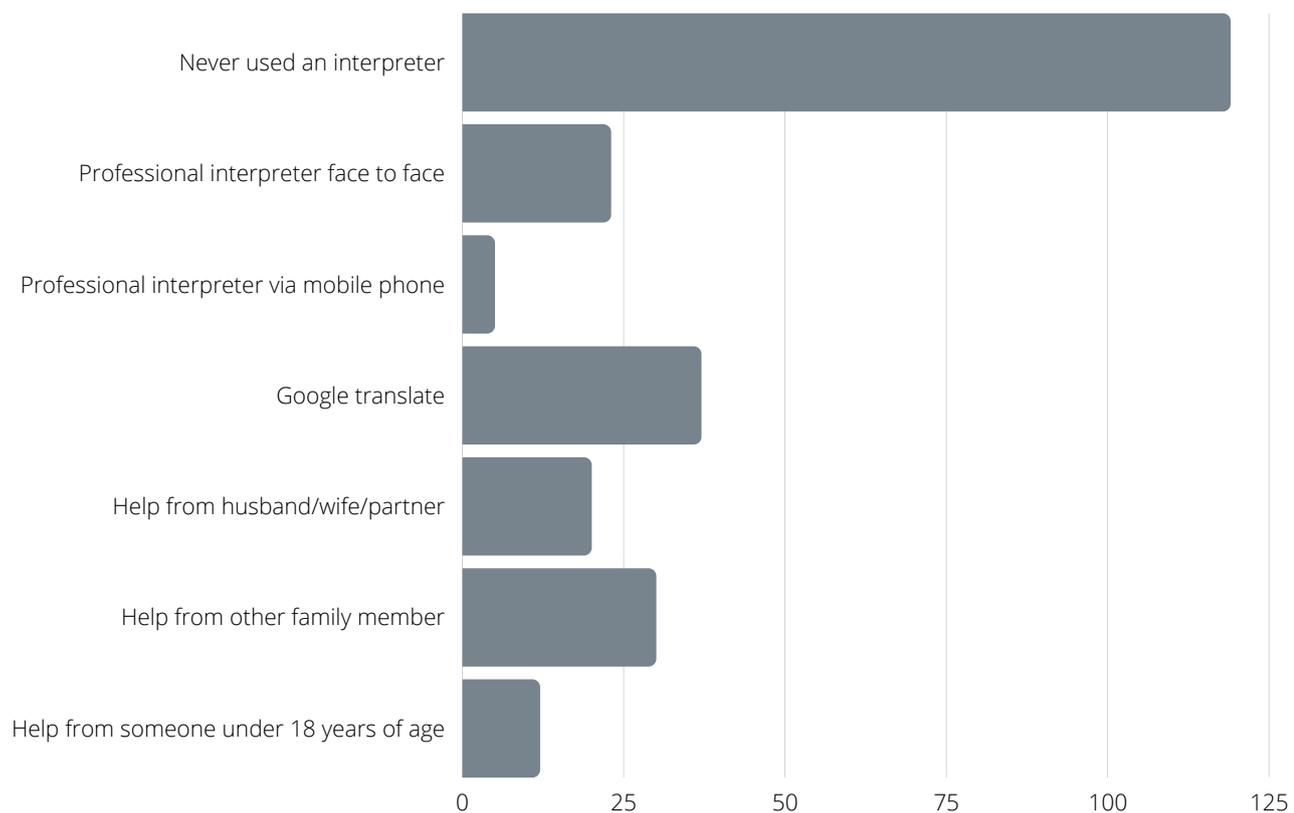
### *Barriers as indicated by ethnic minority respondents*



*Ethnic minority respondents views on how to best spread awareness*



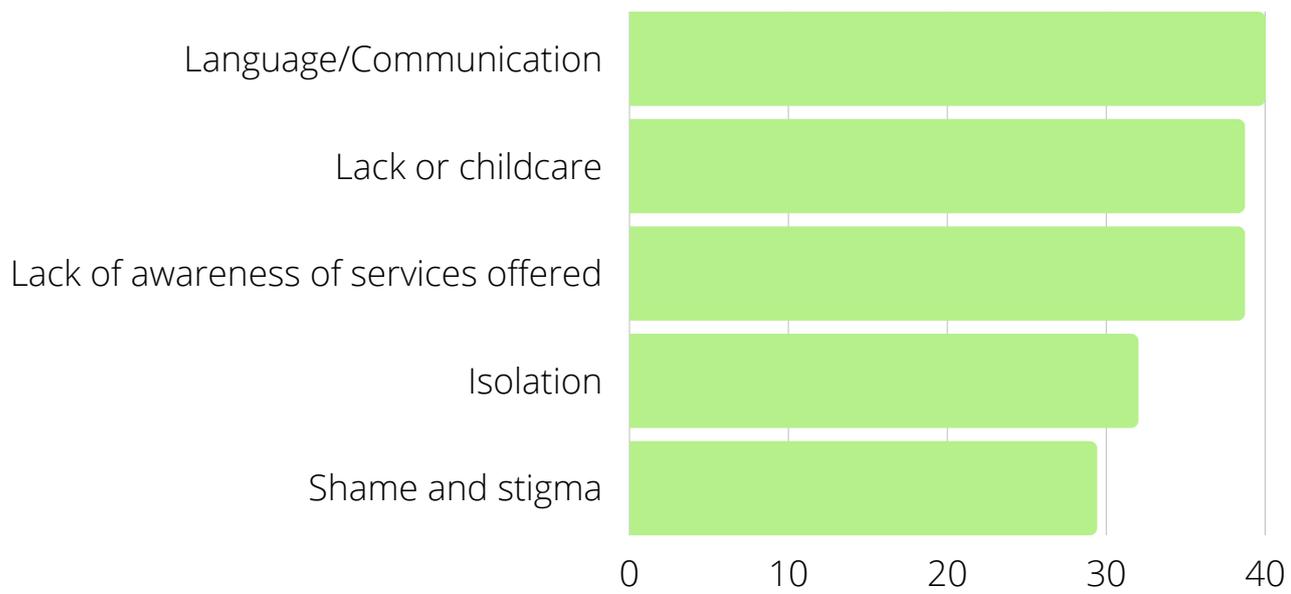
*If you ever had to use an interpreter since coming to Ireland? Who interpreted for you?*



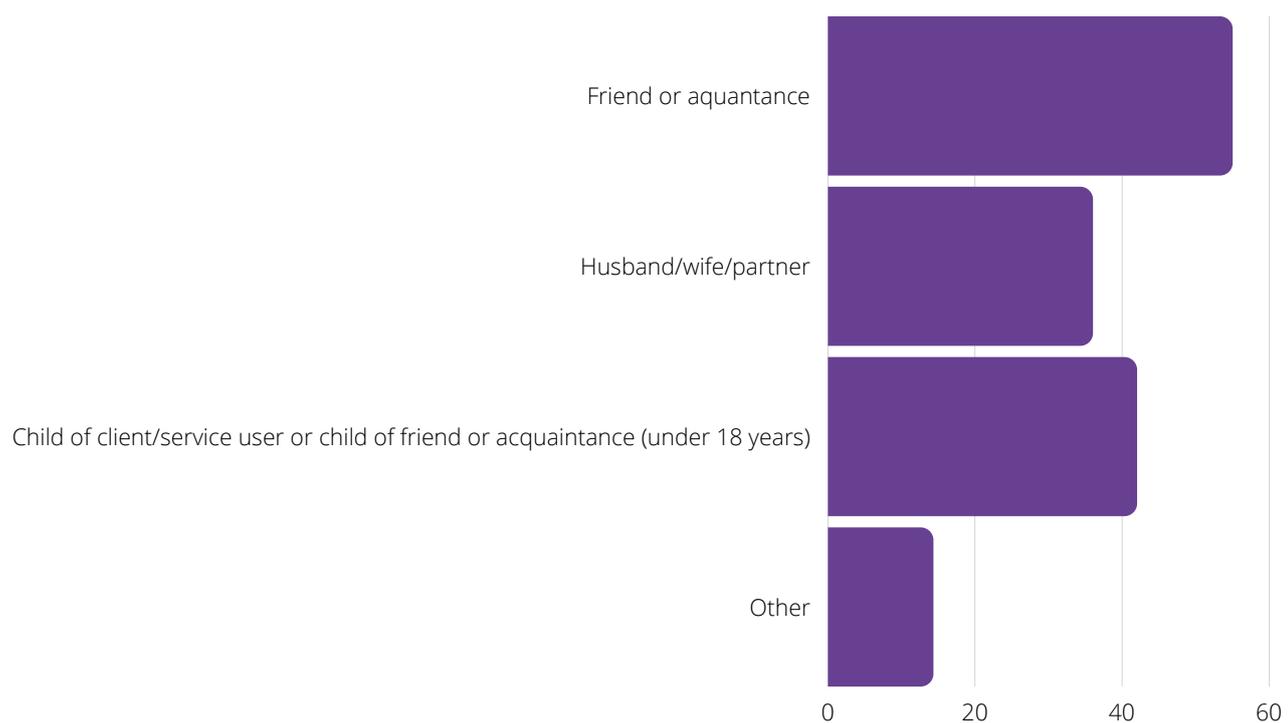
## Survey of organisations and services

The survey was conducted online via email using survey monkey, Initially **70** surveys were sent out. A total of 60 survey were returned completed.

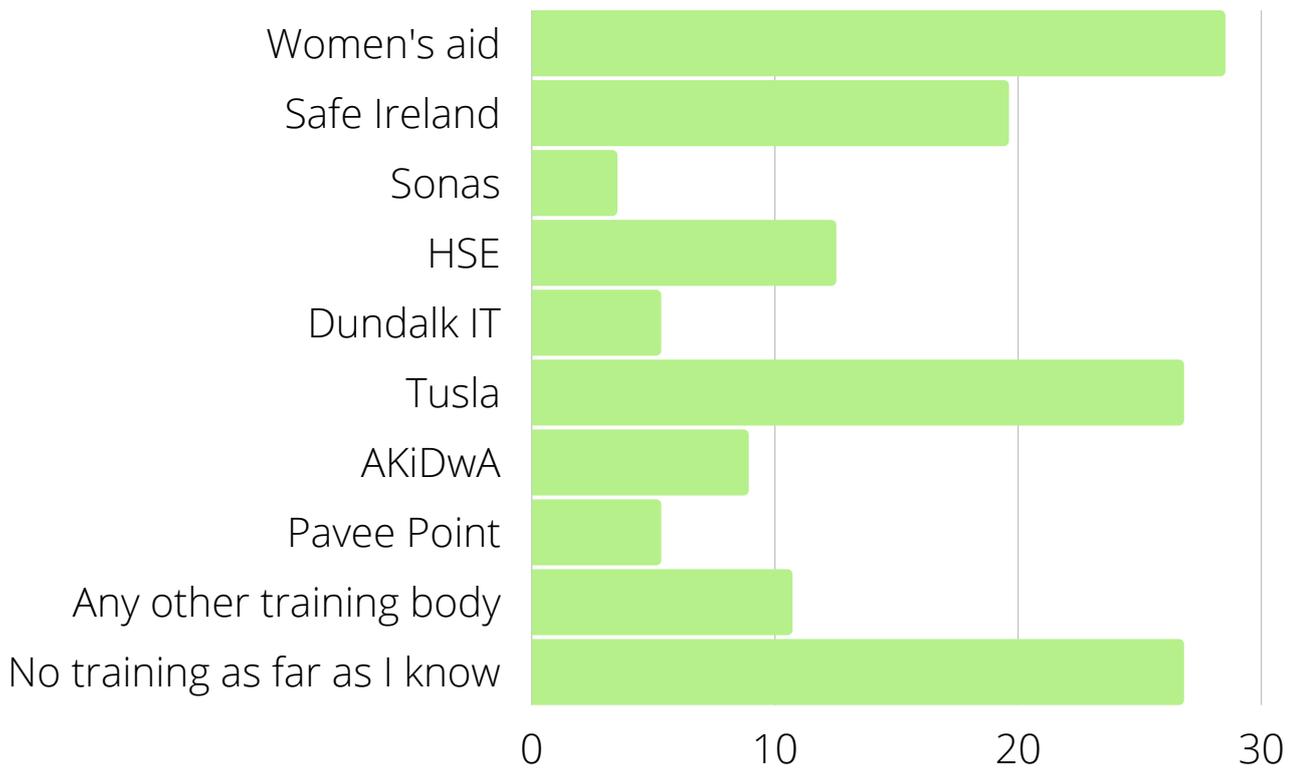
### *Barriers as perceived by services*



*When asked if clients/service users ever use any of the following to help with interpretation, the services indicated that they often used;*

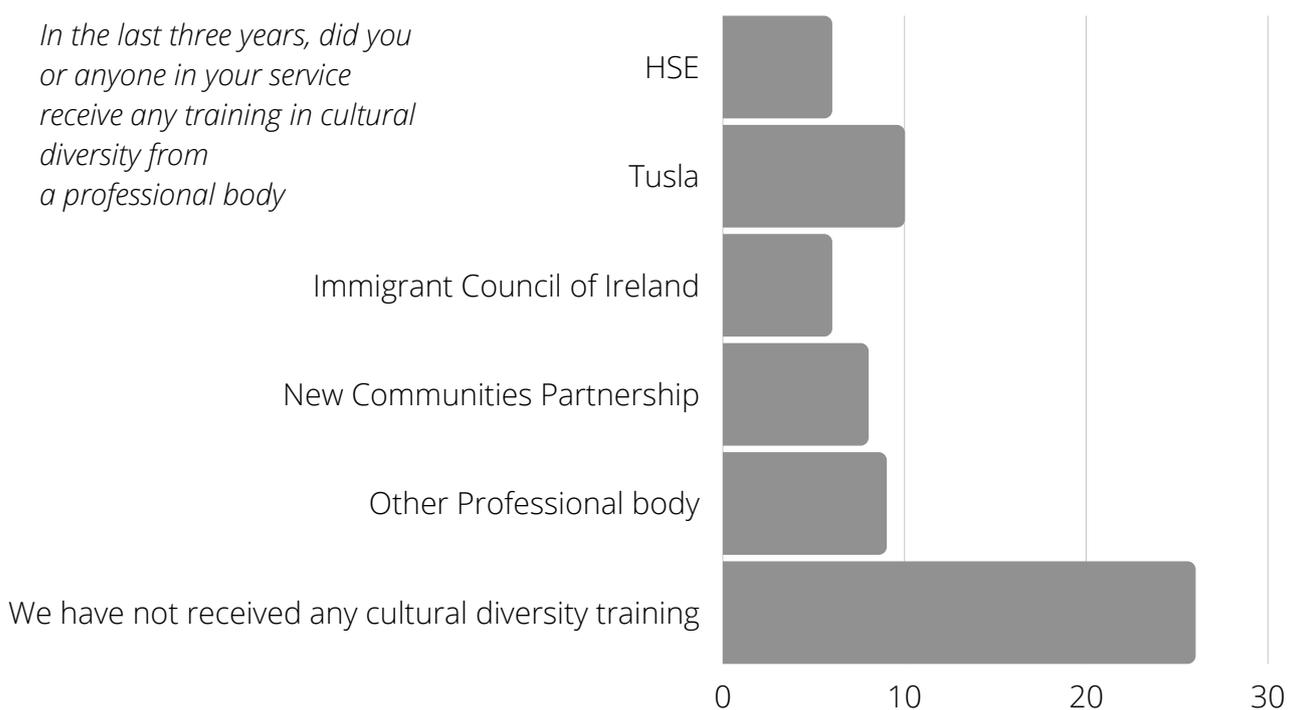


*In the last three years, did you or anyone else in your service avail of any DSGBV awareness training from a professional body*



*24 respondents think it would be useful to get DSGBV awareness training*

*In the last three years, did you or anyone in your service receive any training in cultural diversity from a professional body*



# Conclusion and recommendations

The Ethnic Minority Development pilot project in the Midlands/Roscommon area which was developed out of a needs analysis in 2017, has identified some of the barriers which affect the ethnic minority communities in seeking support from a domestic violence support service should they experience domestic abuse. Secondary research and training in relation to ethnic minority communities took place by studying existing national and international research and information and attending training in the UK. Visits to other parts of Ireland for networking and awareness-raising about the project with main services and organisation supporting ethnic minorities was carried out in the early stages.

The project worker identified and contacted stakeholders and organisation around the Midlands, introducing the project and spreading awareness. A survey aimed at these services and organisations was circulated in September 2019 and showed that the services identified three main barriers;

- Language
- Lack of childcare
- Lack of awareness of services offered

The continued networking with services in the Midlands resulted in identifying the different ethnic minority communities in the area. A survey aimed at ethnic minority individuals was created and translated into Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian and Arabic. This survey identified many barriers of which the six largest were identified as;

- Language and communication
- Difficult to find the right service to use *and* not aware of what DV services can offer
- Shame and stigma *and* fear of being rejected by own community
- Fear of racism or prejudice
- Immigration status issues
- Cultural or religious issues

Two groups of women (Pakistani and Russian speaking group) are in the initial stage of working with the project spreading awareness and support on their Facebook pages. Meetings with the Muslim community and the Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit, discussing ways of going forward and addressing awareness-raising, has been taking place in 2020.

## **With the information gathered in this report the following is recommended:**

- Following two years of this work it is imperative that the Ethnic Minority Community Development Project continues to a second phase to continue to engage with stakeholders and work with ethnic minority groups to encourage them and build capacity to seek out champions that help to address the barriers which have been identified in this report.
- To develop a training road map and tool kit (cultural diversity and sensitivity) for other frontline services that encounter and work with ethnic minority communities - examples; DP centres, housing, social work, family resource centres, teachers and GPs. This training should include awareness about culturally harmful practices such as FGM, HBV and forced marriage.

- Provision of adequate resources of translators and interpreters (trained and accredited for frontline services)
- Training for frontline service providers on how to work with an interpreter..
- In addressing the language barriers, information material to be made available on DV support services' and other websites in the top currently used languages.
- Adequate search engine profiling of DV services online, in the most common languages for all frontline support services.
- Diversity in volunteers and staff in DV services to include the ethnic minority community, should be considered.
- Training and awareness for frontline DV support services around culturally harmful practices such as FGM, Honour violence and forced marriage
- Continued co-partner awareness campaigns with ethnic minority groups and faith communities to raise awareness of signs of domestic violence and the rights and responsibilities regarding these issues in Ireland.
- Ethnic minority victims of domestic abuse, regardless of their visa status should be allowed to access refuge and other protective services while waiting for the process of their own independent visa application to come through.
- The development of a strategised 'best practice' approach by the Gardai when supporting ethnic minority victims of abuse where a language barrier is present.
- Full access to trained and accredited interpreters in Family Law Courts.
- The development of a National educational learning programme on domestic abuse and the ethnic minority community.
- National DV awareness campaigns should aim to target the ethnic minority groups in their language.
- For all domestic violence support services to be adequately resourced to provide specialised support to meet the need within the ethnic minority communities.
- Visa for DV victims on a dependent visa should be fast tracked or given a temporary visa to be able to access vital funds.

We are accepting and respecting everybody's cultural and religious heritage. It is important to raise awareness about the level of cultural diversity in Ireland and how to recognise the barriers to help-seeking. The goal is to be able to support every victim of domestic abuse.

# Ethnic minority survey respondents interpretation of Domestic abuse

Violence can be moral, physical, at the level of national interest and discrimination. It is very difficult to be in this situation (Armenia)

The worst kind of abuse (Pakistan)

Beating, constant pressure, control of every step (Moldova)

It is much more than physical abuse, it could be emotional, financial, sexual. But woman only come out for help when violence becomes physical (Pakistan)

Facing problems at home, like fighting beating (Ghana)

Hitting your spouse, verbal abuse, marital rape (Pakistan)

Miscellaneous violence- physical, when beaten, moral-humiliate and sexual (Russia)

Verbal, faith (Latvia)

Start from childhood, innocent comments, teasing etc. (Philippines)

As a disrespect to feelings and needs to other individual, in matter to meet own needs, with no empathy. Just pure calculating. Absence of feelings and shame. (Slovakia)

Not allowing a person to live as themselves without complete control over them (Irish Muslim)

This is moral, physical suffocation (Latvia)

Infringement of freedom (Latvia)

The feeling of fear (Moldova)

Very common nowadays (Brazil)

If someone hurts you by words by hand or their actions (Pakistan)

It's like a prison of the soul. The abuses are 4 walls of jail, handcuffs...Always waiting for you. (Brazil)

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