



**HAVEN
HORIZONS**

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minister Simon Harris launches Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-based Abuse Community of Practice

The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science, Simon Harris, has today (15 June) launched a Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Abuse (DSGBA) Community of Practice. The Community of Practice was developed in collaboration between Haven Horizons and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS).

Launching the Community of Practice at the Haven Horizons Office, Minister Harris said:

“This dedicated collaboration between TUS and Haven Horizons and the can-do attitude of both organisations has resulted in remarkable progress in a very short time. Strengthening the engagement and the dialogue between our researchers, community organisations, frontline professionals and wider civil society is critical to achieving our common goal of Zero Tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

Tackling sexual violence and harassment has been and will continue to be a particular policy priority for me and my Department. With the launch of the Third National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence Strategy, I have been very clear that the tertiary education and training sector must lead the way in changing cultures.

This Level 6 course developed by Haven Horizons and TUS is a good example of a practical initiative that is having a real-world impact. It gives frontline professionals new skills to identify and respond to domestic, sexual and gender-based violence and facilitates the interagency cooperation that will ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability.”

Madeline Mc Aleer, Research, Training, and Development Director of Haven Horizons said: *“Despite the unprecedented investment into services for victims of domestic abuse, 2022 was the deadliest year for women and children in Ireland in a decade - 12 women and 5 children were murdered. The Community of Practice, which is part of our Knowledge and Research Centre, seeks to address this.*

Connecting the lived experience of survivors with frontline professionals, academics, policymakers, and legislators has the potential to revolutionise the response to domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse. Currently, research in the field of domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse is fragmented and findings are not translated into practice, policy, and legislation quickly enough. The price of this disconnect has been paid by thousands of victims of domestic abuse and coercive control, some of whom have lost their lives.”

Welcoming the joint initiative between TUS and Haven Horizons President of TUS Professor Vincent Cunnane said, *“I am very proud to say that we have been on a journey with Haven Horizons for a number of years now, and this initiative represents a further deepening of our partnership. Haven Horizons had the passion and vision to bring together academics and practitioners in the field of domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse to influence real societal change, and TUS matched that passion and vision to help make that change a reality. The Community of Practice represents the logical next step in our partnership. It is the fusion of theory with practical experience and theory that will help propel the field forward and underpin more beneficial change in society that will benefit people in very real ways.”*

Minister Harris also presented certificates to members of An Garda Síochána who have completed the accredited Continuous Professional Development training, *“Reflecting on and Responding to Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control”* which was developed by Madeline Mc Aleer of Haven Horizons and Dr Lisa O’Rourke Scott from TUS. The course has been delivered by Madeline Mc Aleer six times to over a hundred frontline professionals including domestic abuse services staff, social workers, Gardaí, courts service personnel, probation officers, and staff from community-based services who come into contact with victims or perpetrators of domestic, sexual and gender-based abuse.

Chief Superintendent Colm O’Sullivan said: *“Having Gardaí of different ranks who have completed this interagency training has changed the way in which domestic abuse and coercive control are responded to and investigated in the Clare Division. The collaborative approach provides Gardaí and other agencies an opportunity to learn the latest trends and proactive responses to domestic abuse and coercive control.”*

Madeline Mc Aleer said: *“Education is powerful, but it is using our shared knowledge to influence and inform practice, policy, and legislation that leads to cultural, structural, and systemic change.”*

Colette Redington, co-founder of Haven Horizons, and Caoimhe Feerick, daughter of co-founder Mary Fitzgerald, presented Minister Harris with a copy of the book *‘Light on the Horizon’*.

'Light on the Horizon' charts the evolution of Haven Horizons, recording social changes over thirty years, challenging the cultural silence around relationship abuse and highlighting the need for prevention, education, and research.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For further Information/Media Interviews

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Background Information

Haven Horizons is a national voluntary organisation dedicated to ending domestic, sexual, and gender-based Abuse. It focuses on prevention activities including education, research, collaborative partnerships, and piloting best-practice models. Haven Horizons has established a National Gender-based Abuse Research and Knowledge Centre.