



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An Garda Síochána – Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse

Importance of Victim Engagement and Risk Assessment

As part of the ‘16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence’ on Thursday 30 November members of An Garda Síochána from the Clare / Tipperary Division received domestic abuse awareness training in risk assessment and coercive control cases, at the Ennis campus of the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS).

The speakers were Detective Inspector David Finnerty, Protective Services Unit (PSU) Clare Tipperary Division, and Madeline Mc Aleer, Research, Training and Development Director of Haven Horizons with input from Detective Sergeant Paul English (PSU), Inspector Aiden Lonergan (Court Prosecutor), and Mairi McShea from Clare Haven Services, the frontline support services for victims of domestic abuse in Clare.

Madeline Mc Aleer said, *“Important new UK Research conducted by Andy Myhill of the College of Policing, London, UK on Risk Assessment reveals the impact that individual police officers have on the outcomes in coercive control cases - three things make a specific difference – the individual officer’s demeanour and attitude, their level of training and their understanding of what lies behind the questions in the risk evaluation tool that they use.”*

Detective Inspector David Finnerty from the Clare / Tipperary Division said, *“Targeted training for members of An Garda Síochána informs our understanding of the reality and complex dynamics of domestic abuse helping us to identify signs of coercive control.”*

The UK research also shows that frontline responders tend to focus on incidents of physical violence during risk assessment resulting in them missing the patterns of coercive controlling behaviour which carry a much higher risk of homicide.

“The training highlights the importance of the member’s initial engagement with the victim, which allows for an in-depth risk assessment to be completed. Once the risk has been identified appropriate and targeted measures can be made to assist the victim in ‘breaking the cycle of abuse’ and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions,” said Detective Inspector Finnerty.

Madeline Mc Aleer 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. Training for An Garda Síochána and all frontline professionals in contact with victims, perpetrators or children is essential to equip them with the knowledge to close the gaps in risk assessment and responses. Training must form part of a multiagency response if we are to ensure victim safety, hold perpetrators accountable, and ultimately save lives.”*

ENDS

Photos available via [this link](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Haven Horizons focuses on prevention activities - education, research, collaborative partnerships and piloting best-practice models www.HavenHorizons.com

Clare Haven Services offers refuge and support services to women experiencing domestic abuse www.ClareHaven.ie