



HAVEN HORIZONS

National Domestic Abuse Prevention Centre

**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Life-Saving Books Spark All-Island Dialogue on Coercive Control

A new cross-border partnership is working to highlight the dangers of coercive control and protect victims in domestically abusive relationships.

The '5 Books That Could Save Your Life' event took place yesterday at the Atrium, in The Department of Justice, on 16 October. It spotlighted the red flags and tactics of coercive control and its connection to domestic homicide.

Madeline Mc Aleer, Research, Training, and Development Director, Haven Horizons, who coordinates the project, said: *"I wanted to find an effective way to raise public awareness on this important topic and to reach different audiences. If we don't understand coercive control and its link to domestic homicide, and how a coercively controlling relationship can move from honeymoon to homicide, more victims will die."*

Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe, CEO of Cuan, said: *"A major focus of Cuan's work this year has been on storytelling and encouraging victims and survivors to tell their story. The 'five books' project also places the power of storytelling at its heart. All the books celebrated today by Haven Horizons give an invaluable insight into the phenomenon of coercive control, and what we all need to do to tackle it in our society."*

Haven Horizons, a national organisation dedicated to the primary prevention of domestic abuse and coercive control, set up the project and developed a partnership with two Belfast-based organisations, Reclaim the Agenda and Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid, to explore an all-Ireland approach to preventing coercive control and domestic homicide. The Shared Island Civic Fund, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, funds the project.

A panel used 5 seminal books as a springboard to consider why the rates of coercive control and domestic homicide are so high across the island but are even higher in Northern Ireland. The panel included Madeline Mc Aleer, Noelle Collins, Senior Manager, Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid and Danielle Roberts, co-chair, Reclaim the Agenda and was moderated by Irish Examiner columnist Sarah Harte.

The event was attended by survivors of coercive control and domestic abuse and family members of victims of domestic homicide.

Noelle Collins, Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid, said: *"This information could save someone's life. Any person can be a victim of coercively controlling behaviour; coercive control cuts across all social strata. The ambition of this '5 Books that Could Save Your Life' project is to raise awareness and understanding of coercive control and frame a new all-island response to domestic abuse and coercive control."*

Statistics reveal: A report of domestic abuse is made to An Garda Síochána every 10 mins – that's 65,000 incidents of domestic abuse in 2024 – an increase of 45% in the last four years. In the Republic of Ireland, 2022 was the deadliest year in a decade -12 women and 5 children were murdered. PSNI reported 29,751 domestic abuse incidents in its report from April 2024 to March 2025. There were six murders in NI with a domestic abuse motive in that period, double the previous year.

Danielle Roberts, Reclaim The Agenda, said, *“There is a tsunami of domestic abuse both North and South, which has a huge impact on the victims, on their families, and also on society. This project involves a dialogue to facilitate a broader social understanding of coercive control and what a healthy intimate relationship might look like.”*

Dr Jennifer Okeke, Chairperson of the National Women’s Council Ireland (NWCI), said: *“The 5 Books That Could Save Your Life Project is a valuable project that seeks to initiate social and cultural change for all.”*

The five books selected for this project included Remembered Forever, by Luke and Ryan Hart, whose mother and sister were murdered by their father in a domestic homicide; Brutally Honest, by Spice Girl and coercive control survivor Mel B; Invisible Chains, by psychologist Dr Lisa Aronson Fontes, In Control by Professor Jane Monckton Smith, a criminologist and former UK police officer, and What is to be Done About Violence Against Women by Professors Kate Fitz-Gibbon and Sandra Walklate, experts in the field of domestic abuse.

The project concludes with a webinar on 20 November 2025, when the expert authors discuss their books. Tickets for the webinar are free and can be booked online through Eventbrite.

For anyone affected by domestic abuse, contact:

- Women’s Aid 24-hour national freephone helpline – 1800 341 900
- Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline Northern Ireland 24-hour freephone helpline - +44 808 8021414
- National LGBT+ helpline - 1800 929 539
- Men’s Development Network Advice Line for male victims of domestic abuse – 1800 816 588

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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