

## Excerpt from 2014 Chairperson's Report

2014 was a very important year in the history of Teach Tearmainn in that it was the year we saw the results of many years of hard work, of planning, of lobbying to finally open our Refuge for women seeking protection from domestic violence in County Kildare. 2014 was also a difficult year for the Board as we knew that we were not doing a great service to the women who needed our protection and support. The dilemma for the Board was that in coming to the difficult decision to open the Refuge with the available funding, we were only doing half a job. The celebration of the Refuge launch was diminished in the knowledge that we could only open two of the four self-contained apartments available to the families who needed this vital service. This disappointment was brought home to us on the 1st day of the accommodation service when we received five requests for refuge, three of which we had to refuse. As we moved through 2014 we became aware of the absolute necessity of providing a full accommodation service to women and their children as throughout the period of May to December 2014, we received refuge requests from 157 women with 271 children who could not be accommodated. This was very difficult for the Management and staff to deal with as two refuge apartments lay idle.

In 2014 we were able to provide refuge support to 19 women and 44 children. Opening the Refuge brought many challenges and has been a period of growth and reflection for the Management and staff of Teach Tearmainn. The aim, as always is to ensure that the services provided are responsive to the needs of the women and children who stay with us. In addition to providing refuge support, Teach Tearmainn provided support to 182 women in the community through our Support and Information Service, an increase on the 156 women supported in 2013.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members who give freely of their time, energy and expertise. Thanks also to Kildare LEADER Partnership's Tus Programme and the Nurney Kildangan CE Scheme. Safe Ireland; the National Network who challenges and supports us to always promote best practice. Our auditors who keep us on track with our finances, our funders, Tusla, without whom the Refuge and our Information and Support Service could not have functioned in 2014. We look forward to working with you in 2015 to enable us to provide the full range of services our clients. Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank the women who trust us with their stories and trust that we will always work in their best interest. Our message to you is, please, tell us if you think we can improve on the supports we provide to you and your children.

**Anne Daly**  
Chairperson

### A Reflection on our First 100 Days

At Teach Tearmainn we marked our first 100 days of operation on August 6th. In late April this year, we finally opened our brand, spanking new domestic violence refuge. We knew from our support service that there was a huge demand for this long-awaited, first refuge in Kildare. Without any such service in the county, we had spent years directing women and children to emergency accommodation in Dublin, Kilkenny and beyond.

All would be different now with the opening of the refuge. At last we could provide much needed, and often lifesaving accommodation for women and children escaping physical and emotional abuse right here in Kildare, right here in their own county.

I will admit we opened with a mix of optimism and a twinge of apprehension. We knew that because of ongoing funding shortages and negotiations that we could only open two of the four family units in the new centre, but, as people who are hard-wired to help, we still felt that two units would be better than none.

And indeed it proved to be for many families. In our first 100 days we provided emergency refuge and specialist support to nine women and their 19 children. But, in those same 100 days, we also had to turn away 60 women and 90 children – these were women who came to us, at all hours, in good faith and in hope, looking for safety from trauma and abuse. On our very first day alone, we had five requests for emergency accommodation but three women and their children had to be turned away.

Turning a woman away in the knowledge that two apartments remain empty is heart-breaking. Every time you have to do it, you feel like you are taking away her chance for safety. You are left wondering if you are sending her back to the abuse. You wonder will she reach out for help again now that we have been found wanting. You look into the eyes of the kids and feel like a liar, a traitor, useless in the face of family despair. Every time. It never gets easier. Believe me.



? with Minister: ?

Almost daily, our three staff members had to make a risk assessment of women's situations. Who is in greatest danger? Who has other options? Who has children and who hasn't? In other words, who is the most deserving? Imagine making those assessments about women who probably came to us as a last resort in the first place? It's the cruelest roll of the dice.

Luck and a lottery for space is just not a good enough response to domestic violence. It's inexcusable on every level but that's the only choice we have had most days of our 100.

The fact that this emotional lottery is the reality, not just for Kildare, but for many refuges across the country, is really a reflection of how little we understand, respect and acknowledge the horrendous and often life-long impact of domestic violence on women, on children, and on society.

Perhaps it's the reactions of children to everyday events that exposes the tyranny of some households. We had a friendly visit from the Gardaí on their motor bikes one afternoon during our first 100 days. Normally children are fascinated by the motor-bikes, want to be lifted up onto them, put on the helmets. But, one of the little boys we had in our refuge at the time went into absolute meltdown the minute he saw the uniforms. For him, the Gardaí only meant one thing – that home was a battleground, that home was so unsafe that these people in dark suits had to be called out to quell the violence that he had witnessed again and again.

Domestic violence breaks women's spirit, wrecks their confidence, takes away their ability to make decisions, and robs them of their own agency. We had one woman one night who asked us, "What time do you think the children should go to bed?" We looked at her with surprise and empathy. "Whatever time you think they should." She had lost her confidence to make even simple or instinctive decisions about her family's welfare.

It breaks, divides and marginalizes members within a family. In our first 100 days we had a little girl who was sullen and quieter than all the other kids. As it turns out, she wanted to be able to say that she missed her Daddy – the same Daddy that she knew had hurt her Mammy so much. She was a baby. She was already conflicted. She was already broken in allegiance, in love, in emotion, in loyalty. What a terrible place for a child to be.

The first 100 days have also plenty of bright times. Women have really valued the homely environment and warm atmosphere we have created here. We have received unbelievable support from our local community with donations of products, food, toys, and clothing. We have chatted and laughed through tons of tea-bags.

But what we need now is a state commitment to funding the refuge fully so that we can finally open our two fabulous new units.

We need an additional €80,000 a year. In the scheme of things, it's a tiny amount really to provide security and safety to women at risk of violence and abuse. With this we could finally hire the two additional staff needed to provide the necessary professional 24 hour care and support needed to open up our two idle units. Then, we could house four women with up to 16 children at any time. This extra funding would also provide specialized services for children who are the too-often forgotten victims of domestic violence, and who need very special care to help them deal with what they have witnessed and experienced.

We really want to move into our next 100 days knowing that we can say yes more times than we have to say no. Only full funding will make this a reality.

**Jacinta Carey**  
Manager

# TEACH TEARMAN

Working to end domestic violence



Thank  
You

For giving us a home when we were homeless and  
For all you have done for me and my children, I  
For all the help over the past 2 years and helping

ANN 2014



and giving us hope when all hope was gone.  
I will always be grateful for how you helped change my situation.  
Helping me and my girls get the life we deserve.

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Teach Tearmainn offers integrated holistic programmes to help women and children who experience violence in their intimate relationships and is the only specialised dedicated domestic violence service in County Kildare. We provide crisis accommodation to women and their children and non-accommodation services are provided through our Information & Support service consisting of Information & Support, Safety planning, Advocacy, Accompaniment service, Crisis Intervention & Counselling, Parenting in the context of Domestic Violence support and a Nurturing Service provided by

professional volunteer therapists offering a range of alternate therapies to help women heal from the trauma of abuse.

Your gift is combined with the support of other donors and funding from TUSLA, Child & Family Agency. Thank you for supporting Teach Tearmainn. We value your investment in our mission and we ensure that every penny of support helps improve the lives of the women and children we serve. Here's how we spend our money.

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

INCOME	€254,500
EXPENDITURE	€224,884
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SURPLUS FOR YEAR	€29,616
DONATIONS	€9,299
INTEREST RECEIVED	€583
SURPLUS FOR YEAR	€39,498
TAXATION	-
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SURPLUS FOR YEAR	€39,498
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## BALANCE SHEET

FIXED ASSETS	
Tangible Assets	€991,150
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CURRENT ASSETS	
Debtors	€11,131
Bank Balances	€169,235
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CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Creditors	€8,360
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NET CURRENT ASSETS	€172,006
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TOTAL NET ASSETS	€1,163,156
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**Note to the summarised financial statements:** The summarised statement of financial position is derived from the complete financial statement of Teach Tearmainn as of 31st December 2014. The full audited financial statements are available upon request.

## List of Directors

MICHAEL POWER  
 ANNE DALY  
 NOELEEN EUSTACE  
 SHARON DONNERY  
 SANDRA MC DONAGH  
 NIAMH TORMEY  
 FRANCES BROPHY  
 PATRICIA KAVANAGH

