

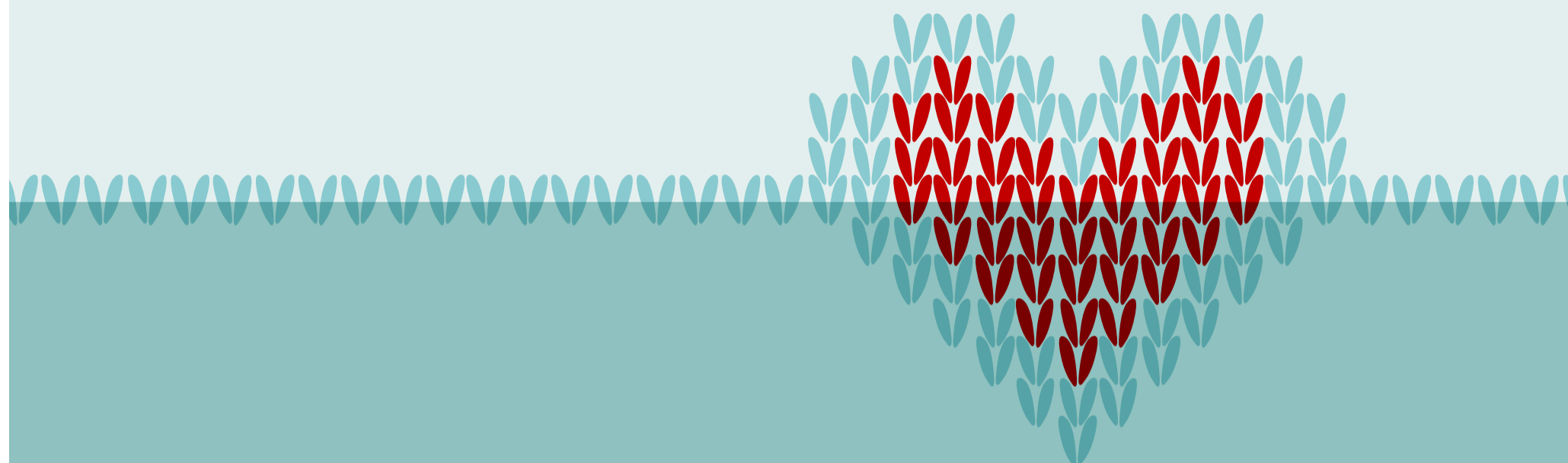
Sonas Housing Annual Review 2011

A Positive Space



Sonas Housing Annual Review 2011

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* All names have been changed to protect identities.

In their own words

Miriam's story

Until just over two years ago I lived with my ex-partner with our four children outside Dublin. I suffered serious physical, emotional and mental abuse from my ex-partner. We lived in a very rural part of the country where we were isolated; alone. I had no friends or family to turn to. Two of my four children have serious physical disabilities and all of them were linked into early intervention services in our county.

I tried to leave the relationship to go to our local refuge but was unable to leave effectively. I continued to be intimidated and controlled even while remaining in the refuge. Around this time things began to get much worse, and when he seriously physically abused me in front of my children I knew I had to get away to a physically distant location for us to be safe. But I had nowhere to go.

I went to my children's pre-school, my only social contact. They helped me ring Women's Aid, who put me in contact with the Sonas refuge, Viva House. I packed my car early that morning while my partner slept and I drove to Dublin, five hours away, where I went into the Sonas Viva House refuge with my children.

From the time I arrived in Sonas, I was accepted. The staff were so helpful to myself and my children. They saw the children were not comfortable in the communal office setting and let us go straight to our apartment, which was disability friendly. During my stay in the refuge my key workers did everything to help me, empowering me with the understanding that I had a choice about each situation that arose. There were also excellent children's support workers. They were very accepting of the children and made a point not only to include the children in the groups and activities but to give me additional support as needed so I could have a much-needed rest. They also made contact with the local services and started the process of trying to gain services and appropriate education for my children in the Dublin area.

I learned at the refuge to make choices and that really helped me to be free. I secured a five-year safety order against my ex partner. Although he did violate the order, I had the support of Sonas to seek Garda support and to help me through the difficult journey. After three months I chose to move to a Sonas supported housing estate.

I continued to receive the highest level of support from Sonas supported housing. My key worker and my children's support worker have met with me for endless hours. They assist me through difficult times when things become both emotionally and physically overwhelming. Through my support at Sonas I gained access to the Women's Therapy Centre, where I receive weekly therapy. I also participated in the Freedom programme at Sonas. The Freedom programme gave me a better understanding as to how to recognise abusive behaviour. It was also my first social interaction with my neighbours and other women who have been in a similar situation to me. I had become quite shy and withdrawn due to the abuse I suffered and the isolation that I experienced prior to coming to Sonas.

Sonas encourages us all to meet together and support one another. We have had a few coffee mornings and bingo events and it has been great to have the help with making social connections again. I came from a place of being completely isolated and without friends and I now find myself surrounded by close connections thanks to Sonas. I took part in the women's mini-marathon this year, one of the personal goals I set for myself and I did it to benefit Sonas as I wanted to give back to the services that have given so much of their time and heart to me.

Sonas has supported me through very difficult years in which my children faced countless problems at school and in gaining access to services in Dublin. Sonas attended meetings, worked as an advocate and supported me through each step of the way. I am extremely grateful. My children are happily settled in the estate and very content in themselves. They are finally accepted and acknowledged by the services in Dublin and that is with thanks to Sonas for continuing to fight on my side.

I have begun to pursue my interest in photography and I get great encouragement from Sonas. Two years ago I never would have thought that I would be able to do any job because my confidence was so low. My support worker is a constant source of encouragement, as are all the staff of Sonas, to pursue my dreams and not to hold myself back from my potential.

I feel I finally understand my choice in each aspect of my life, which has given me true freedom, and I feel things will only continue to improve through all of the support I have received at Sonas.

Thank you.



Chairperson's Foreword

Anne McKeon

In 2011 Sonas made considerable progress in developing the range and quality of the services provided to women and children out of home because of domestic violence. Our refuge Viva House had its first full year in operation in 2011, supporting 130 women and 250 children. Our supported housing service continued to help 126 women overcome their experience of abuse and move on to independent living. In May 2011 we launched our outreach service which supported 64 women over the year. This is a service designed for women who may not be able to access our accommodation service but need support and information.

As well as these core services, our hard-working staff rolled out a Freedom Programme pilot in September 2011 about which we received excellent feedback, with one woman calling it a 'life-changing course'. And there were many other significant developments in each of our complexes, including new playgrounds, new resource libraries and a focus on confidence-building classes for women in our service.

We continue to evaluate our services regularly, ensuring that we are meeting women's needs and we are achieving significant outcomes for the women and children in our service. I am delighted to say that our evaluations continue to show very positive results with 96% of women saying they are more independent and confident about the future because of Sonas support.

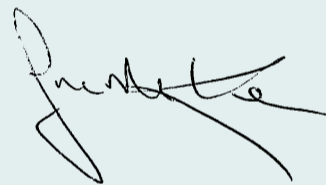
While we are confident in the good work that we are doing, one unfortunate trend continues – the major over-demand on our services. In 2011 this over-demand increased once again, doubling from the high demand in 2010. We had nearly 850 enquiries to all of our services; of which we could only accommodate 250 women. This is a serious situation for us, for our funders and for our country. To have to turn people away at this most critical time for them is heart-breaking and potentially life-threatening.

Domestic violence is not going away. While it is a deeply unpleasant reality, Sonas works hard to advocate for change in this area to ensure this reality is not forgotten. We continue to challenge; to ensure it's a subject that is addressed and highlighted; that it is not casually swept into the dark uncharted depths of our society. We cannot shy away from it and we are all responsible for ensuring it is not a hidden issue. To mark this, in this report there are some stories from women and children who speak in their own words about their experience and what they have come through. It's vital the human experience is core to any policy or political debate on domestic violence.

I would like to thank our funders, the HSE, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, the Department of Environment, Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council and Dun Laoghaire County Council for ensuring we can continue to do the valuable work we do. I would also like to thank our friends and partners in domestic violence, homeless and housing organisations in helping us in our work. Thank you too to all our fundraisers, volunteers and corporate partners who help us in so many ways through their kind donations of time, money and resources. Thank you to Aisling O'Neill and Senator Ivana Bacik who helped us out with campaigns during the year.

Finally I would like to thank the staff in Sonas and the voluntary Board members for their work. I would like to commend their expertise, their flexibility and their tireless commitment to ensuring our organisation continues to meet the needs of our service users in helping them rebuild their lives. Thanks to a great team, Sonas has the ability to adapt to the changing environment while preserving our key principles and values.

A special mention goes to Rachel Mullen who retired as chairperson of the organisation in August 2012. Rachel put a huge amount of commitment and work into her time on the board of directors and will be sorely missed.



Anne McKeon
Chairperson, Sonas Housing Association



About Sonas Housing

Our mission

...is to provide high quality housing support and refuge services to women and children affected by domestic violence, empowering them to regain control over all aspects of their lives.

Our vision for Sonas

...is to be a key service provider in domestic violence accommodation support services and a leading voice influencing policy and public debate on housing and homelessness issues related to domestic violence.

Our key practice principles are to:

- Maximise the safety of women and children.
- Empower women to move from crisis to safety and independence through the provision of quality services.
- Advocate for the rights of women and children at an individual, institutional and policy level.
- Provide a woman- and child-centred approach that recognises the diverse needs and experiences of service users.
- Apply an evidence-based and outcome-focused approach to our work.

Sonas strategic aims 2012-2014

- To provide good-quality, safe accommodation for women and children out of home because of domestic violence.
- To provide a range of accessible, high quality services and supports to empower and equip women and their children who have experienced domestic violence with the skills to live independent lives.
- To be a leading voice and a positive influence informing policy and public debate on housing and homelessness issues related to domestic violence.
- To continue to develop the necessary organisational framework required to facilitate effective services delivery and development.

The top 10 achievements for Sonas Housing in 2011 were:

- 1 In total we supported over 320 women and more than 400 children in all of our services through supported housing, Viva House crisis refuge and Viva Reach-out, our outreach service in Dublin 15.
- 2 We won two Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) awards – one for Viva House and one for our collaboration initiative in Belmayne with Hail Housing and Cluid Housing. A Sonas board member Gearoidin Charlton also received a special commendation for her work with the organisation.
- 3 We launched Viva Reach-out, our outreach service in May 2011 with *Fair City* actress Aisling O'Neill.
- 4 We were the Symantec Charity of the Year 2011.
- 5 We piloted the Freedom Programme in Ireland in two locations – Killester and Blanchardstown – between September and December 2011. [The Freedom programme is a 12-week rolling programme which provides information about male violence against women to help them break the cycle of abusive relationships.]
- 6 We co-ordinated the research, publication and launch of *A Safe Space*, a research report showing there is a major need for a refuge facility and domestic violence service in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown.
- 7 We raised a great deal of public awareness on the issue of domestic violence through our media campaigns.
- 8 We acquired the Fitzwilliam Road development in Wicklow town in December 2011.
- 9 We finalised *Pathway to a Safe Home*, the Sonas Strategic Plan for 2012-2014.
- 10 We developed and opened children's playgrounds in our complexes in Ringsend and Killester.



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Sonas Housing Strategic Plan 2012 - 2014

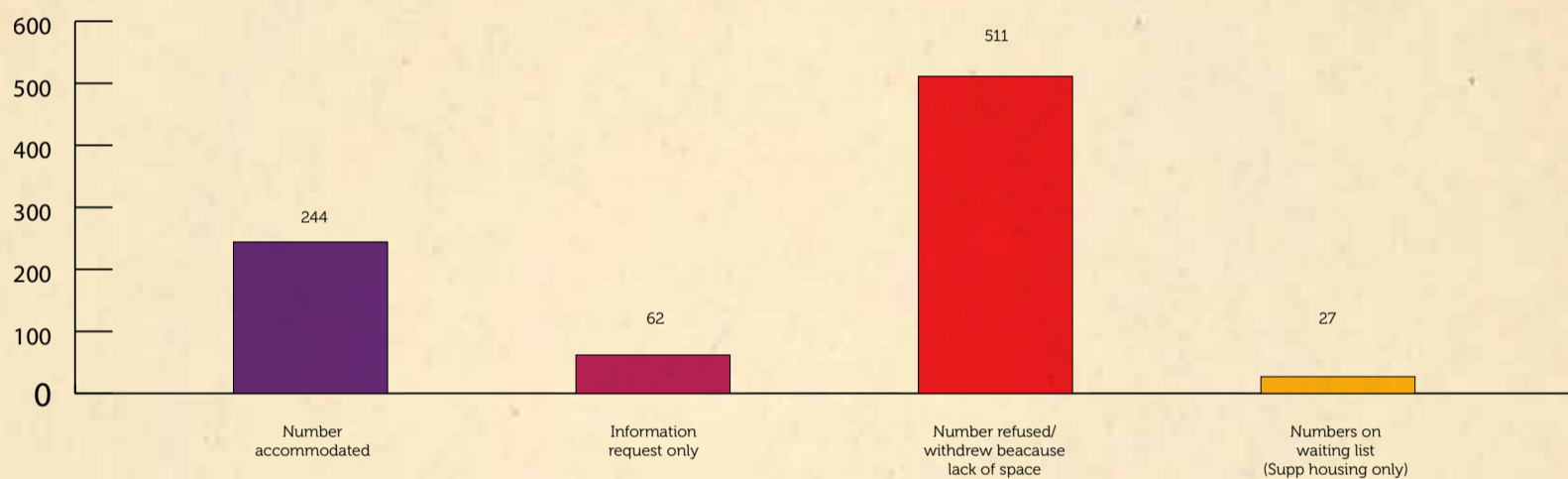
Pathway to a Safe Home

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Part 1



Outcome of enquiries into Sonas services

“I have never been able to ask for help or communicate well with people. I had no self-confidence but from day one Sonas gave me hope and made me at ease to talk. I think it’s the first time I had faith in anyone to help me.”

Part 1

Sonas services for women and children in 2011

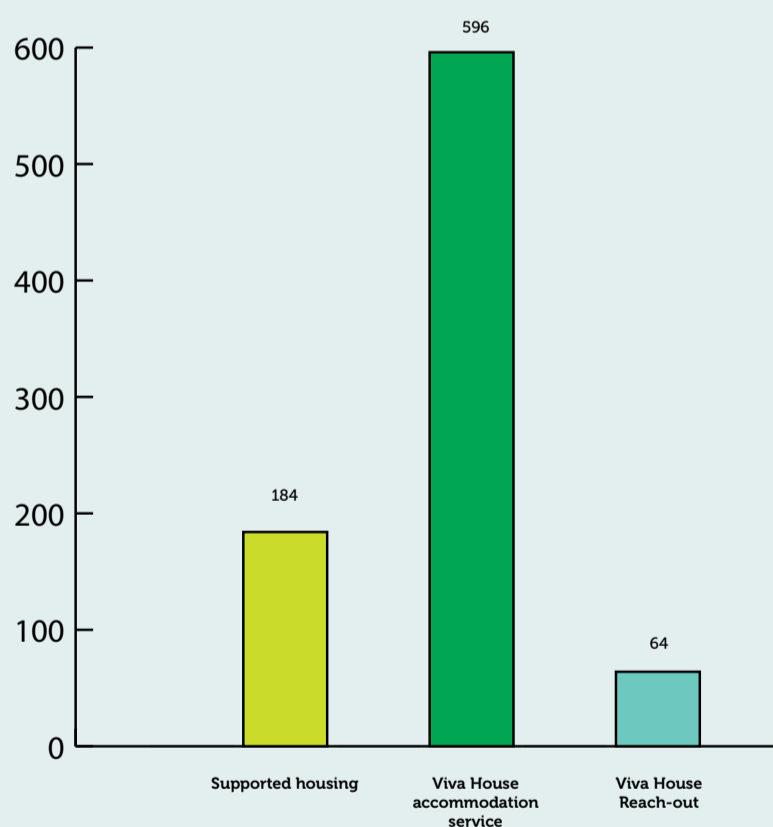
Number of service users during the year

- We supported 126 women and 135 children in our supported housing services.
- We supported 130 women and 250 children on 146 occasions in Viva House (11 women visited Viva House on more than one occasion).
- We supported 64 women through our Viva House Reach-out service, which launched in 2011.

Demand

Unfortunately there was an ongoing over-demand for our services in 2011, which continues the trend of the last four years. In 2011 we received almost 850 enquiries about our services from women in domestic violence situations. Of the 844 enquiries, we could only support approximately 250. This means that on almost 550 occasions we were unable to accommodate women because our services were already at maximum capacity. This shows a pressing need for more refuge spaces and longer-term supported housing for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Graph 1: Break down of enquiries by service 2011



Services for women

Main needs

The main needs identified by Sonas service users across both our supported housing and refuge services are: housing, safety, emotional support and legal and court assistance. An increasing number of clients required support with engaging with authorities in relation to immigration status. Table 1 shows the main needs highlighted in our supported housing evaluations.

Table 1: Main needs identified during evaluation 2011

Percentage of respondents who needed support with:	Percentage of total
Talking to someone who understands	94%
Support getting safe & adequate housing	92%
Support to make changes in my life	90%
Support with my safety	88%
Information on local activities	81%
Support settling into a new community	81%
Learning more about domestic violence	79%
Information on social welfare benefits & entitlements	75%
Information on counselling options	73%
Support in getting access to healthcare	63%
Support getting a job or training	60%
Information about my legal rights & entitlements	58%
Support in role as a parent	54%
Support with budgeting	50%
Information about the legal system process	48%
Support with rights and options residency	48%
Support with legal orders	46%
Support with my children's school	44%
Someone to go to court with me	42%
Support with court case against abuser	40%
Support in getting access to mental health services	40%
Support linking in to local youth services	35%
Support getting residency status	33%
Support getting access to childcare	27%
Support preparing to testify in court	25%
Support in getting access to substance abuse services	23%
Support dealing with sexual abuse services	23%
Support with safe visitation for my children	23%
Support in relation to a disability	21%
Support getting child maintenance	21%
Support with probation issues	15%
Support with child protection hearings / requirements	15%
Support with custody issues	15%
Support linking in with religious community	8%

Part 1

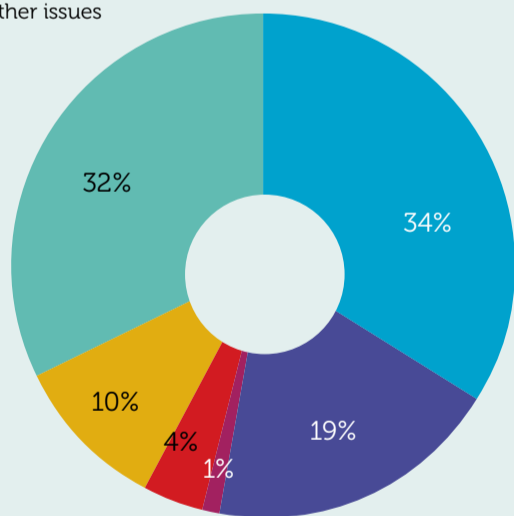
Sonas services for women and children in 2011

Link with mental health and addictions

Women living with domestic abuse can experience many detrimental impacts including mental health and addiction issues. Graph 2 shows that two thirds of our supported housing applicants experienced mental health impacts as a result of living with abuse and 29% had issues in relation to addictions. Women in our service who present with these related needs are supported in collaboration with relevant services working from a harm-reduction perspective.

Graph 2: Multiple needs at supported housing application stage

- Mental health issue (depression, anxiety etc)
- Mental health issue and addiction
- Mental health and living skills issues
- Mental health, addiction and living skills issue
- Addiction
- No other issues



Types of interaction

Table 2 shows how our women's support workers engaged with our service users. A huge amount of the work entails meeting the woman in a place she is comfortable. In total there were 3,448 one-to-one meetings and 1,179 more casual meetings (ie coffee shop, walk with woman etc). There is also a huge amount of advocating on her behalf and accompaniments, predominantly to court, but also to social welfare, CWO and schools.

Table 2: Types of interaction with women

Support activity	Number
Arranged meeting	3,448
Casual meeting	1,179
Court accompaniment	89
Community welfare officer accompaniment	31
Email on behalf of a woman	240
Health meeting accompaniment	45
Housing accompaniment	19
Legal (not court) accompaniment	29
Letter sent on behalf of woman	243
Letter to woman	140
Phoncall from/to woman	1,684
Phoncall on behalf of woman	1,894
School accompaniment	23
Social welfare accompaniment	4
Visit on behalf of woman	24

Outcomes

In our annual evaluation in 2011 we found that 96% of the women surveyed are more independent and 96% of the respondents are more hopeful about the future because of Sonas support. Page 16 shows the very positive outcomes arising from Sonas support.

Move-ons from Sonas projects

The majority of women who leave Sonas Housing services move on to independent living. Each woman's scenario is different and Sonas staff work with women to ensure the right move-on option for her. Due to the crisis nature of the work, women who leave Viva House refuge services do sometimes move back to the family home, however in the majority of cases this is with a safety plan or a legal order. Move-on graphs for all Sonas services can be found on page 22.

Freedom Programme

The Freedom Programme was designed by Pat Craven, a former parole officer in the UK who worked with both perpetrators and victims of violence. It is a 12-week information programme on how to break the cycle of abusive relationships.

In the Summer of 2011 two Sonas staff members were trained and accredited in the Freedom Programme to enable the delivery of the support group in Ireland. In September 2011 we delivered the programme in two Sonas locations: one targeting Viva House Reach-out clients; and the other in one of our supported housing complexes, with invitations extended and transport available for women staying in five of our supported housing areas.

100% of participants said the Freedom Programme had a positive impact on their lives, with 100% saying that the programme has resulted in positive change in their lives and 100% saying that they were more assertive and confident because of the programme.

Events on complexes

Throughout 2011 there was a focus on extra-curricular activities in each of our areas. This included on-complex events such as:

- Multi-cultural events in which service users from various different nationalities cooked a dish from their country of origin in the communal area for the residents and staff.
- X-Factor and DVD nights.
- Health and well-being classes in communal areas.
- Christmas parties.
- Summer BBQs.
- Pancake making with the residents on pancake Tuesday.
- In Viva House staff cooked Christmas dinner for the residents.

There was also an emphasis in developing the community spirit on the complexes and encouraging women to access local services. For example Residents in Ringsend enjoy regular breakfast and coffee mornings and community social events at the local Anchorage Project.

Clondalkin celebrated its 10-year anniversary and had an event for service users, staff, local services and local Gardai. A tree was planted in the complex to mark the occasion.



Part 1

Sonas services for women and children in 2011



Viva celebrated its first birthday in June 2011. Staff cooked lunch and invited residents and contacts from local services who had worked closely with the refuge staff during the year. Chinese lanterns were set off in the garden of the refuge to mark the occasion.

Viva House co-ordinated a gardening project in the development, creating a planting space and flowering area which really brightens up the development. With this project, all the women and children could both take part and benefit from the results of their efforts. Flowers and plants continue to be set at different times of year.

The garden in Killester was also cleared out and improved with a children's playground area and planting beds for vegetables.

To mark the 16 Days' Campaign to end violence against women, staff and residents joined with other agencies for a balloon release and a minute's silence.

Services for children

In 2011 the children's support workers developed resource packs on key issues impacting on children and families including: the effects of domestic violence; substance use and parental substance use; and diversity.

Throughout the year children support workers (CSWs) continued to work in partnership with other agencies in the communities to ensure children and mothers are able to access a wide range of supports including local schools, home school liaison officers, community crèches, and social workers. Mothers were also referred to parenting programmes in the community and supported with this.

Table 3 shows the type of direct interaction with children. The majority of the work is done in groups, however there is also some one-to-one and advocacy work on behalf of the children.

Table 3: Support interaction with children

Support activity	Number
One to ones	395
Children's group	1,597 attendees (multiple groups during year)
Phonecall on behalf of child	46
Telephone call	22

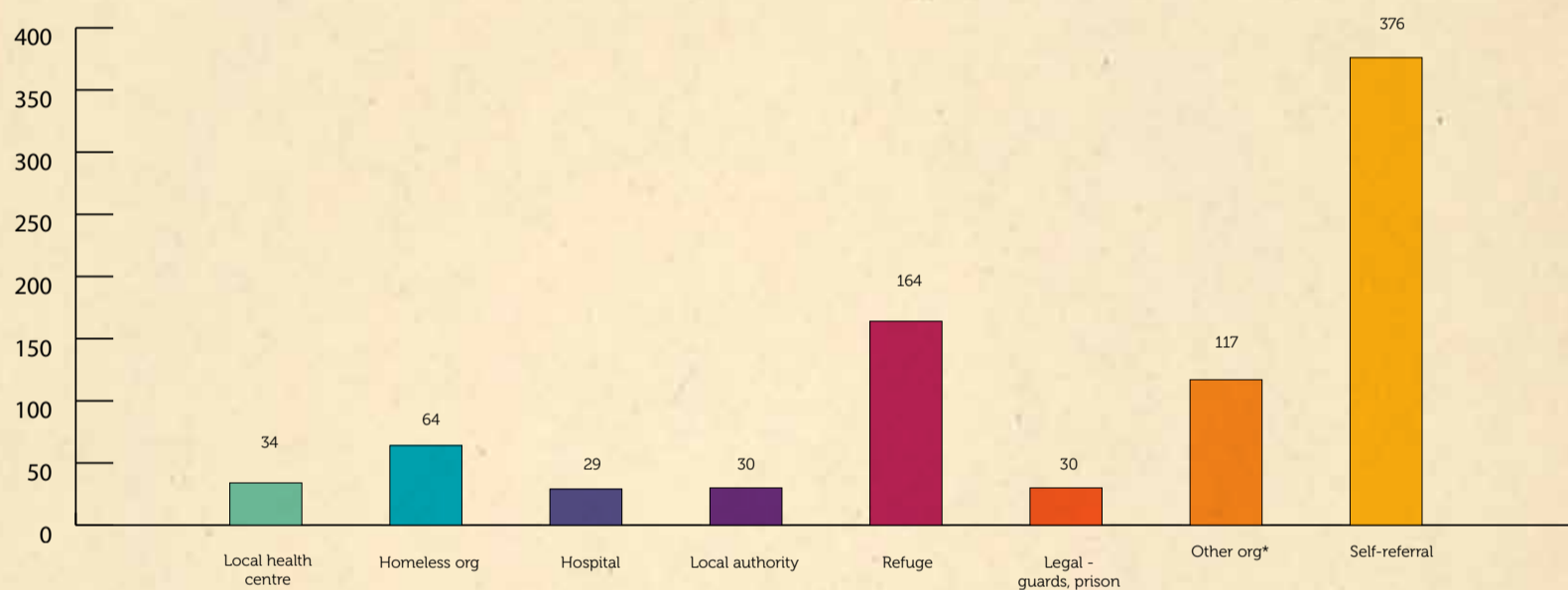
A number of families engaged in the Strengthening Family Programme through the Dun Laoghaire Drug Taskforce. Some children's support workers were also trained in this programme.

The children in our service produced the images for the Sonas Christmas cards which were sold through our website and retailers in the Dublin area for Christmas 2011.

The Sonas summer project ran for 4 weeks in July 2011 and 52 children participated. Activities included swimming days, arts and crafts workshops, woodworking, clay modelling, jewellery making, tennis and basketball tournaments, sea safari, a trip to Fort Lucan and a sports day. 15 mothers also attended throughout the project and helped staff.



Part 2



Referral sources to Sonas Housing

*Includes immigration charities, addiction projects, local domestic violence groups and community organisations

“I feel totally respected in Sonas. I was encouraged and my confidence returned. I am much better able to deal with things now.”

Part 2

Housing services in 2011

The main achievement for Sonas Housing's housing management services was winning Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) awards for our projects. Viva House won the Best Homeless Project category and Belmayne won the Best Collaboration Initiative (with Hail Housing and Cluid Housing). This was a fantastic honour.



Viva House won the Best Homeless Project category at the ICSH awards in November 2011. Pictured accepting the award for Sonas are (L-R): Sharon Cosgrove, Jayne Adams and Maureen Taylor.



Another major development in December 2011 was the acquisition of the Fitzwilliam Road development in Wicklow town. Remedial building works began in September 2012.

There was a low level of rent arrears achieved in 2011. Tenant participation increased with regular meetings now held in local areas to discuss housing management issues. There has also been an increase in communication with local community groups in Sonas areas.

To help build more sustainable nurturing communities, playgrounds were developed and opened in Killester and Ringsend. Gardening areas have also been developed and planted in Viva House and Killester.

Maintenance developments in 2011

- Five permanent units in Killester received upgraded kitchens.
- Annual boiler services were completed in all of our 95 housing units and in our offices.
- Bathroom adaptations completed in three units (Parkview and Killester).
- Entry and fire alarm system adapted in one unit in Belmayne.
- We set up two new units with floor covering, fit ovens, washers, hobs and fire blankets.
- The communal and office area in Ringsend was upgraded.
- Fencing was replaced surrounding the garden areas in Clondalkin.
- A new Community Employment worker began work in Killester.
- All non-permanent Sonas properties now have a Building Energy Rating (BER) certificate.

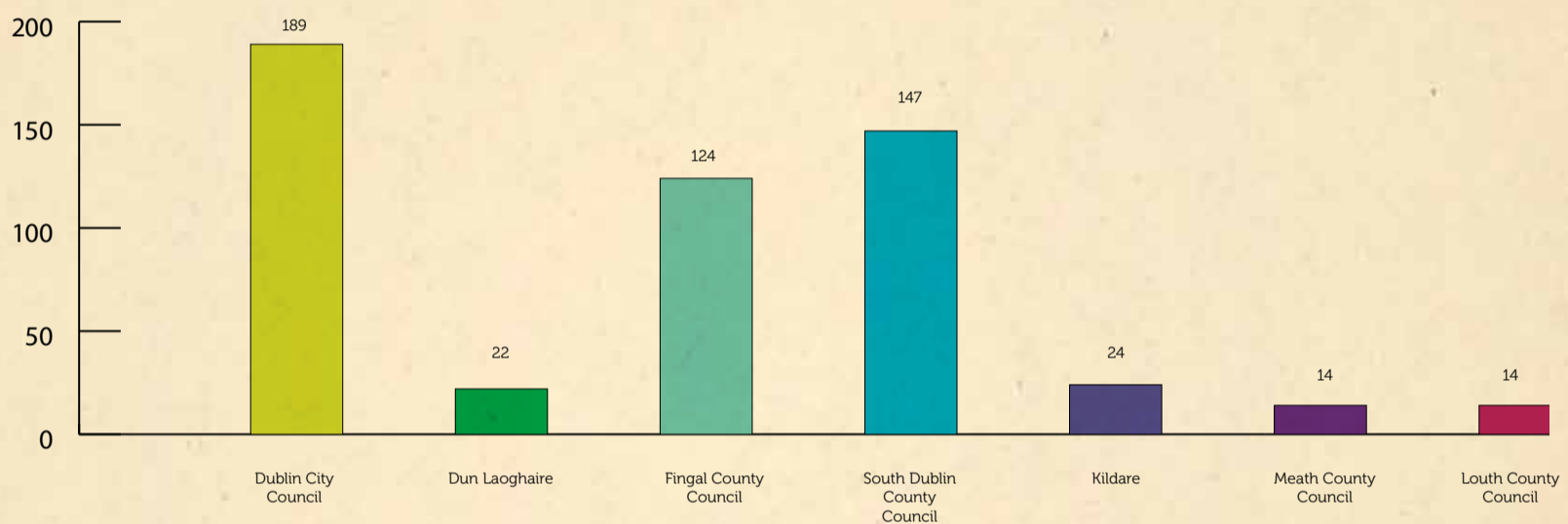
Housing management and administration

- A shared soft copy filing system using remote CHICS server was developed for housing staff.
- We completed a major review of title documents.
- A housing management and support worker guidance document was developed detailing communication procedures.
- The housing standards property inspection document was adopted.
- The annual rent review was completed and changes implemented.
- All performance management returns were completed on time.
- Arrears recovery policy and procedure was developed and completed.
- Anti-social behaviour policy and procedure was reviewed.

Health and safety

- Fire prevention and risk assessment procedures were put in place for new tenants.
- Risk assessments for Viva House were developed.
- Housing staff completed risk assessment training as per our Health and Safety Statement.
- Health and Safety Statement was approved for Viva House.
- Risk assessments were drafted and work is ongoing into 2012 for site-specific locations.

Part 3



Area of origin before coming to Sonas*

* The origin of 310 enquiries was unknown given the quick crisis nature of some enquiries

“I had nowhere to go with my children. Without Sonas I would have had no choice but to return home.”

Part 3

Advocating for change

Highlighting the issue of domestic violence to create greater awareness of both the subject and Sonas itself is a central part of all Sonas' policy and communications.

Policy issues

A great deal of work was done in relation to policy issues affecting women and children out of the home because of domestic violence in 2011. Sonas works on a collaborative basis on policy issues with both voluntary and statutory organisations.

Pre-election submission

Sonas submitted a pre-election submission in February 2011¹ focused on:

- Greater refuge provision needed nationwide to meet Council of Europe (CoE) standard of one refuge space per 10,000 of the population. Ireland is currently lagging way behind this standard with only one refuge space per 34,000 of the population.
- Adopting Feantsa recommendations regarding gender-specific provision in homeless services. This would ensure there is a supply of female-only emergency homeless accommodation services.
- Highlighting the use of reception centres to accommodate victims of sex trafficking as unsuitable and unsafe.

Need for more refuge spaces

The issue of increased refuge provision was highlighted in 2011 in the pre-election submission and also later in the year through the launch of the DLR refuge study report, *A Safe Space*². The study shows a dire need for refuge services in the county as well as more refuge services across Ireland. Sonas highlighted the need for more refuge spaces in Ireland in line with CoE convention. This received both political and media attention, with a Prime Time special on the subject in October 2011.

Need for gender-specific homeless services

Sonas was one of many organisations involved in highlighting the need for gender-specific homeless services. A group of different organisations working with women prepared some research and jointly signed a letter calling on the then Homeless Agency (now Dublin Region Homeless Executive) to reconsider the closure of women-only services and to ensure there was provision for women-only services, as per international best practice guidelines³. Some services for women now remains on the homeless services map.

Co-ordination of a domestic violence community group

Sonas helped co-ordinate the D15 Domestic Violence Working Group, a community response to violence against women. The group is made up of 16 representatives from voluntary, community and statutory agencies to address and raise awareness of the issue of domestic violence and the services in the area.

¹<http://www.sonashousing.ie/wp-content/uploads/Sonas-Housing-Election-Manifesto-final1.pdf>

² <http://www.sonashousing.ie/latestnews/1953/>

³ http://www.feantsa.org/files/freshstart/Communications/Homeless%20in%20Europe%20EN/PDF_2010/Homeless%20in%20Europe_Spring10_EN.pdf

Policy submissions

Sonas sent in submissions to:

- The Dublin homeless action plan for Dublin until 2013, Delivering the Pathway to Home.
- The Review of Services Addressing Homelessness in the Mid-East Region.

Coalition and partnership working

Sonas is a member of the Turn off the Red Light coalition group that had a successful year in 2011 with increased attention and a government commitment in October 2011 to review the legislation in relation to the criminalisation of the purchase of sex.

In 2011 Sonas joined a coalition group that advocates on issues affecting migrant women affected by domestic violence. During the year Sonas was also involved in the development of the Irish Council for Social Housing Nominations Protocol for housing associations.

Sonas continues to be a central member of the following key groups: Homeless Network, Eastern Region Advisory Committee, The Irish Council for Social Housing, Clondalkin Forum, Southside Addressing Violence Effectively, Fortunestown Consortium and a long-term supported housing group.



Communicating the issue

Media work in 2011

Sonas received a large amount of media exposure focused on our work and the issue of domestic violence throughout 2011. This mostly resulted from three planned media campaigns. Sonas was interviewed during the campaigns by broadsheet and tabloid papers, TV, national and local radio and online forums. The campaigns were:

- Viva Reach-out launch May 2011 (Thanks to Aisling O'Neill for her support)
- Over-demand for Sonas services August 2011
- Launch of *A Safe Space* in November 2011 to mark the 16 Days Campaign (Thanks to Senator Ivana Bacik for her support)

As well as our planned campaigns Sonas was called on to provide reactive commentary when required. Highlights of the year for our media coverage included a *Prime Time* special on domestic violence in October 2011 and a front page story and editorial in the *Irish Examiner* in August 2011.

Communication developments in 2011

- Our website received a huge increase in number of visits and unique visitors compared with 2010. There was a 14% increase in new visitors and an increase in visit duration of 11%.
- Some professional photographs of our projects were taken by Ros Kavanagh, an architectural photographer who kindly gave us a heavily discounted rate.
- The Sonas e-zine continued to be sent out to our external contacts. In 2011 we sent out 10 issues to our subscribers and stakeholders.
- A staff newsletter, *The Circle*, was developed.
- Sonas presented information both on its service and about domestic violence in general to schools, universities, statutory, voluntary and community groups as required.
- Sonas representatives were interviewed for a DVD co-ordinated by Pavee Point that targeted the issue of domestic violence in the Travelling Community.
- New Sonas Christmas cards were made by the children in our service and sold throughout independent and affiliated retailers as well as through the Sonas online shop.



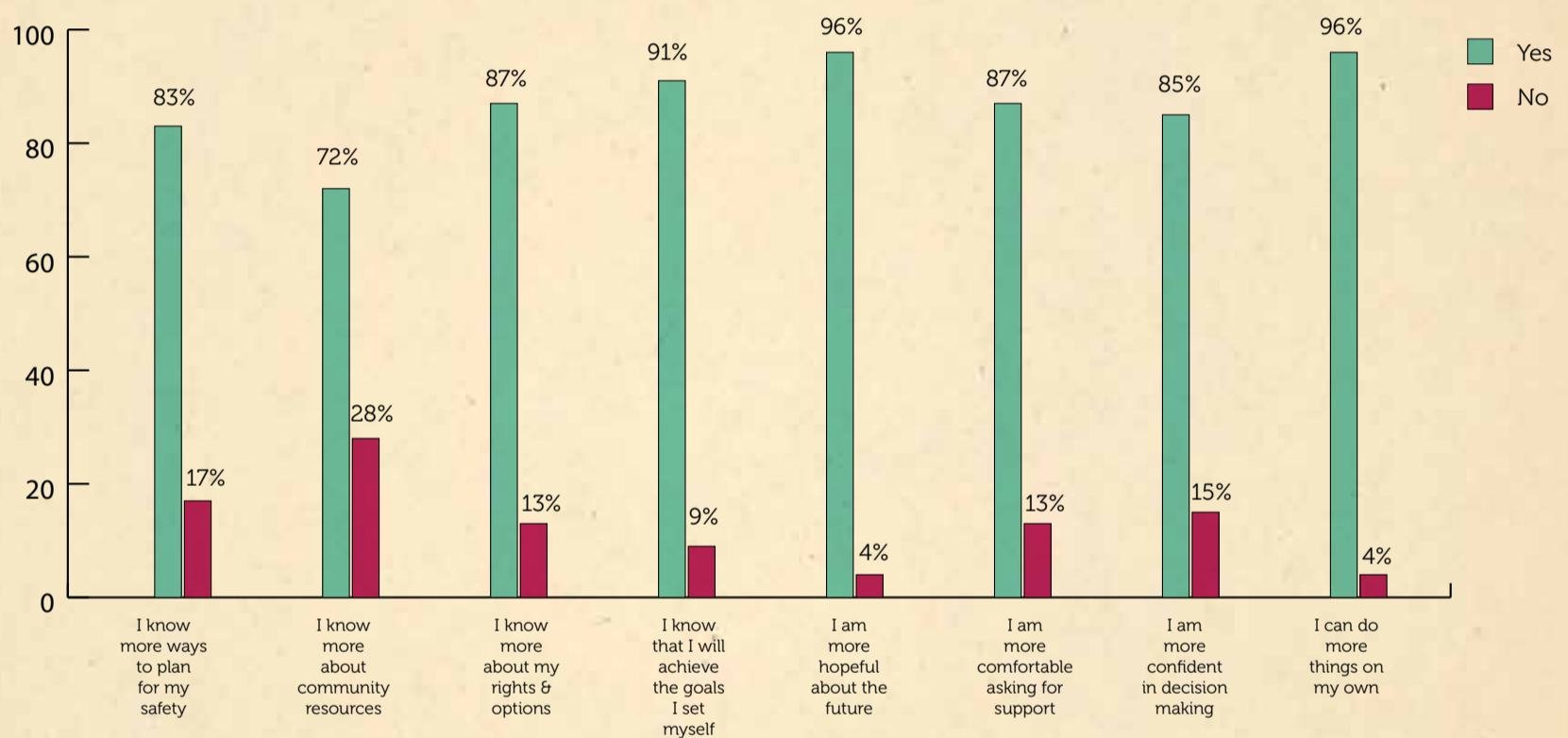
Fair City actress Aisling O'Neill helped launch our Viva Reach-out service in May 2011



Pictured at the launch of *A Safe Space* was (L-R): Senator Ivana Bacik, Sile McGuckian-Fitpatrick, Monica O'Connor and Paula McGovern



Part 4



Outcomes because of Sonas support

“Sonas helped me see for the first time it wasn’t me and how I could change my life for me and my daughter for the better. I’m not alone.”

Part 4

Organisational development

There was a great deal of internal development in Sonas in 2011. Sonas developed and rolled out its first management development programme in late 2011. All seven Sonas managers/project leaders took part.

In August 2011 our head office moved to 14 Bachelor's Walk, Dublin 1 which is a very convenient location and a good central point for all of our different services. A strategic planning process was ongoing in 2011, with plenty of input from staff, board, service users and external stakeholders. The plan was finalised in October 2011.

Sonas staff continued to receive training and development throughout the year including the DCU care and case management training. Sonas developed its graduate internship programme and recruited its first intern in September 2011.

To ensure the ongoing physical health of its workforce, Sonas adopted the cycle-to-work scheme in June 2011.

Volunteering initiatives

We were generously supported through volunteering initiatives including:

- Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists volunteered their time to give relaxing back massages to Clondalkin residents.
- The Property Panel co-ordinated a development of the outdoor play area and gardening space in the Killester complex.
- Kind volunteers ran various extra-curricular activities in Viva House for the residents. These activities included baking classes in the communal area, coffee mornings and yoga classes.
- Two volunteers came to Viva House on a monthly basis during 2011 to treat the residents to a new hair style or wash and blow dry.

Fundraising

We had some great fundraising developments during the year. These included:

- Sonas Housing was Symantec's Charity of the Year 2011.
- Thanks to Minister Joan Burton, Club Di Dublino selected Sonas Housing as one of the charity beneficiaries of its annual dinner.
- Individual donations and fundraising events.
- D15 charity donated a lump sum.
- Sonas Christmas cards sales.
- Donations from Bright Horizons to fund our children's services.
- The Property Panel organised events for Sonas throughout the year.
- Sale of Christmas Angels in Tierney's Giftshops.
- Local events held by local businesses and community groups in Dublin 15.



We also received gifts of goods throughout the year including:

- Avoca donate food to Viva House on a weekly basis.
- Lush Cosmetics donate beauty products to Sonas on a regular basis.
- Christmas gifts and hampers were received from various companies including PayPal, Davy Stockbrokers, the Dublin 15 church, Liffey Valley Vineyard and Bright Horizons.

Project grants

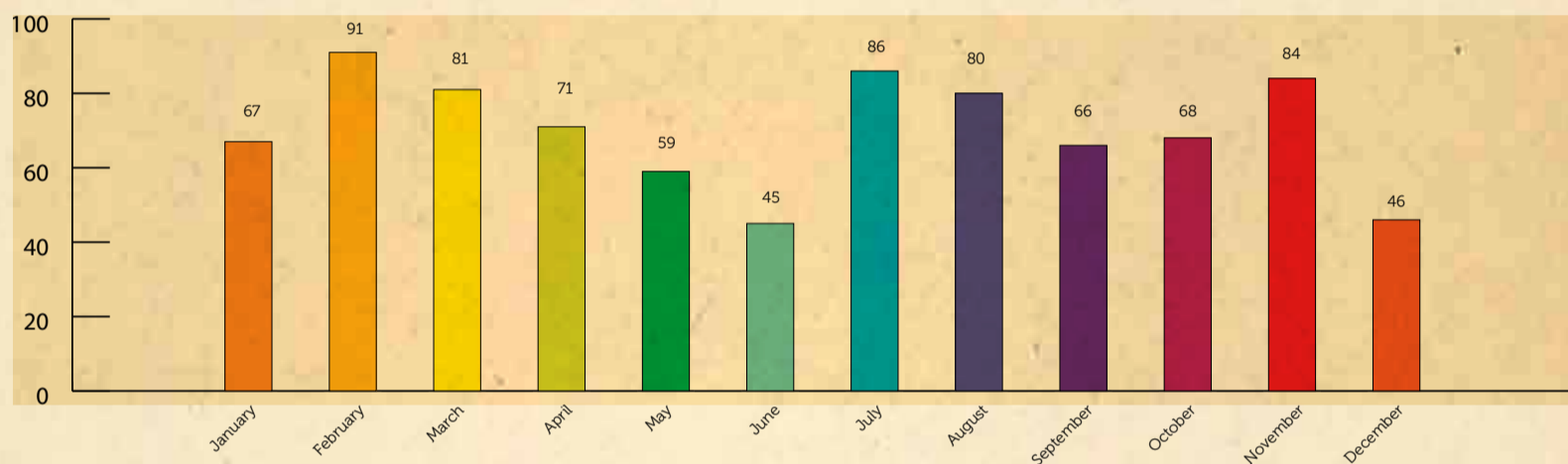
We received some specific project grants throughout the year including:

- €2,500 from Cosc for a verbal abuse campaign which ran successfully in February 2012.
- €1,000 for the development of a childhood emotional issues and resource library for our children's service through the Dublin Bus community grant.
- The CDVEC allocated 20 hours of tuition to us in the Killester and Ballymun areas for healthy cooking classes, where women learned to cook healthy meals on a budget.

Board and governance

Gearoidin Charlton, Patricia Cleary, Sharron Kelliher and Siobhan Burke left the board in 2011. Thank you to all for their tireless work particularly to Gearoidin and Patricia who sat on the board for many years and were pivotal in the success of the organisation.

Part 5



Enquiries into all Sonas services in 2011 by month

“All I want to say is God bless you all for all the good work that you do. All my needs have been met by keyworkers, they couldn't do enough for me.”

Part 5

Ongoing concerns

Lack of sufficient refuge and domestic violence service places

There is a massive lack of services for women and children experiencing domestic abuse. Ireland lags way behind the Council of Europe standard for refuge provision. This has massive impacts on women and children who are in very dangerous situations in their home. We need political will to rectify this situation by ensuring three Ps are put in place – Prevention through educational programmes; Protection of victims through adequate service provision and protocols in place; and Punishment of perpetrators through the legal system.

Cuts to funding

Like many other organisations Sonas Housing has experienced funding cuts of 18% in the past three years. This is a worrying trend at a time when our services are over-stretched and unable to cope with existing demand.

Domestic violence to be listed as reason for eviction in tenancies

In many cases of abuse women have to leave their home for safety reasons when experiencing violence. This can mean leaving a joint tenancy agreement with their former partner, which can make it difficult to be rehoused by a local authority. Sonas believes that the perpetrator rather than the victim should be the one who leaves the family home. A conviction of domestic violence needs to be listed as a cause of eviction in tenancy agreements as is the case in other jurisdictions (notably the UK). This would ensure that a perpetrator has to leave the home and the victim of the abuse can stay (possibly after an interim stay in a refuge facility).

The impact of rent supplement on housing options

Changes in rent supplement caps in 2011 has had a massive impact on women and children who need to access private rented accommodation because of lack of refuge spaces, supported housing or local authority housing. Many women have found it increasingly difficult to access affordable and appropriate private rented properties because of the changes in rent supplement caps.

Recognition of the impact of domestic violence on children

Children who grow up with domestic violence suffer serious impacts, even young babies who are exposed to abuse show signs of impacts. Many children in state care are there because of abuse in the home. In the recent HSE Child Death report the research showed that in 30 of the 196 cases, or 15% of cases, domestic violence is a feature of home life. It's worth also bearing in mind that domestic violence is a chronically under-recorded issue, given its personal nature, so this is very likely to be an under-representation of the total number affected by domestic violence.

In court/access situations, the voices of children are typically not regarded, and the needs of the child are often secondary to legal protocol and the clash between mothers' and fathers' rights.

All of the other concerns listed above also directly impact on many children who are in situations of abuse in the home and consequently continues to impact on the next generation.

For further information

If you would like to help Sonas Housing in its work please check out our website:

www.sonashousing.ie

Tel 01 8720068

Email info@sonashousing.ie

If you would like to donate you can do so through a secure PayPal donation feature:

<http://www.sonashousing.ie/fundraising-and-events/donate/>

You can contact our emergency crisis refuge Viva House on 01 8662015. Viva House is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

In their own words

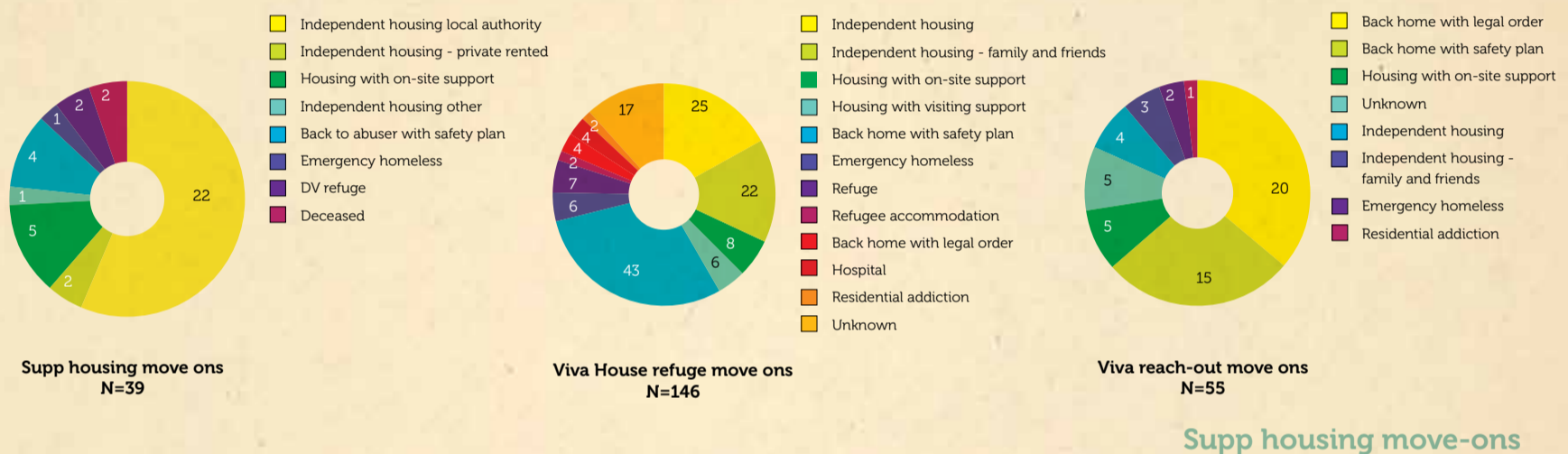
Sarah's story



"I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for all the help and advice I have received from Viva Reach-out. During the last year I have had to go to court to regulate access for my children with their father. This wasn't an easy thing to do by myself and I was afraid and nervous. I spoke about my concerns to the outreach worker and she said she would accompany me to court. I felt reassured and supported in Dolphin House Family Court having the outreach worker by my side. Whenever I felt the need for advice or just worried about my situation I rang and spoke to her.

"Last September I attended the Freedom Programme. I was quite nervous. I learnt a lot about the marriage and the man I left, about his behaviour and his need for control. I am so much more aware of 'tactics' and the lengths he will try to go to in order to break me. With thanks to the Freedom Programme and the help and support from Viva Reach-out I have become a stronger person. I feel reassured, supported, welcome and aware that I am not alone. The support I have received has made a huge difference in my life and that of my children's, and for that I am very grateful and happy."

Accounts



“As I have got my independence back, I know how to do things on my own and I’ve a better relationship with my son.”

Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2011

Income and expenditure

Incoming Resources	Restricted Funds 2011 €	Designated Funds 2011 €	Unrestricted Funds 2011 €	Total Funds 2011 €	Total Funds 2010 €
Corporation & Grant Funding	1,908,023	-	-	1,908,023	1,666,702
Rental Income	235,153	60,077	-	295,230	260,527
Donations & Fundraising	-	18,738	-	18,738	20,861
Amortisation of grant income	-	-	328,956	328,956	331,929
Total Incoming Resources	2,143,176	78,815	328,956	2,550,947	2,280,019
Resources Expended					
Crisis Intervention & Provision of Support Services	(1,985,321)	(16,821)	-	(2,002,142)	(1,722,054)
Depreciation	-	-	(374,262)	(374,262)	(370,914)
Legal, Professional & Administration	-	-	(158,310)	(158,310)	(115,582)
Total Resources Expended	(1,985,321)	(16,821)	(532,572)	(2,534,714)	(2,208,550)
Net Movement in Funds	157,855	61,994	(203,616)	16,233	71,469
Provision for sinking fund	-	(60,077)	-	(60,077)	(51,963)
Surplus/(Deficit) on ordinary activities before interest	157,855	1,917	(203,616)	(43,844)	19,506
Interest receivable and similar income	-	-	11,918	11,918	9,525
(Deficit)/surplus for the year	157,855	1,917	(191,698)	(31,926)	29,031
(Deficit)/surplus retained for the year	157,855	1,917	(191,698)	(31,926)	29,031

There are no recognised gains or losses other than the results for the above two financial years.
The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 4 July 2012 and signed on its behalf by:

Rachel Mullen
Director

Sile McGuckian Fitzpatrick
Director

Balance sheet

		2011 €	2010 €
Fixed Assets			
Tangible assets		15,897,270	16,234,947
Current Assets			
Debtors	49,354		111,938
Cash at bank and in hand	1,103,212		944,389
	1,152,566		1,056,327
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(617,086)		(503,693)
Net Current Assets		535,480	552,634
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities		16,432,750	16,787,581
Restricted Government Grants		(16,124,829)	(16,447,735)
Net Assets		307,921	339,846
Capital and Reserves			
Accumulated Funds		307,921	339,846
Funds		307,921	339,846

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 4 July 2012 and signed on its behalf by:

Rachel Mullen
Director

Sile McGuckian Fitzpatrick
Director

In their own words

Eamon's story, 9



"On Saturday night I went to the bathroom to brush my teeth and my dad and mum were in the room and my dad choked my Mam and stabbed her. I called the guards. I went to my cousin's house for a month, then I went to the hospital to see my Mum.

We wanted to go somewhere else so Mam said what about Dublin. So we went to Dublin. The first day we woke up in Viva it was kinda weird. When we went there I forgot everything. I forgot all the bad things. The playroom was big, I liked the part where it was all soft.

"Sonas is like a place where there's loads of cameras and they look after you. It's a good place where loads of kids have fun. You forget everything and you move onto a new life. I love it here cuz I've loads of friends."



Sonas Housing Association

14 Bachelor's Walk, Dublin 1 Tel 01 8720068

Viva House crisis refuge Tel 01 8662015

www.sonashousing.ie

www.facebook.com/sonashousing

www.twitter.com/sonashousing