



iveR Project

**Domestic, Sexual & Gender-based Violence
Training. Education. Research.**

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

January 2026



Educating for Change: Celebrating a Decade of DSGBV Education

The RiVeR Project hosted its third Annual Community of Practice Conference on January 23rd, Educating for Change: Celebrating a Decade of DSGBV Education at DkIT. The event brought together almost 250 stakeholders from organisations across Ireland, including elected representatives, with a shared aim of strengthening education and support provision and developing an all-island community of practice for professionals working in Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV).



Delegates included leading voices, advocates and graduates, who reflected on ten years of progress in addressing DSGBV through accredited education and collaboration in DkIT.

The conference opened with a video address from Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, Jim O'Callaghan T.D., who commended the excellent work that the RiVeR Project does in responding to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, in addition to the impact of the project in such a short period of time.

Speaking to the audience, **Minister O'Callaghan** said: *"The work of The RiVeR Project sits neatly alongside the government's zero tolerance response to Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. What you are doing matters to the people who you are helping. It matters to survivors seeking safety and justice. It matters to communities striving to prevent harm before it occurs. Your work is challenging, complex and demanding, but it's also transformative and life-changing. I want to thank The RiVeR Project team at Dundalk Institute of Technology for your leadership and commitment, and I wish you every success with today's conference."*



Dr. Edel Healy, Head of School of Health & Science at DkIT welcomed attendees, followed by an update on the RiVeR Project and the launch of eight new RiVeR Project DSGBV education and training videos by Dr. Kathleen Nallen, RiVeR Project Lead. These resources will be made available to a broad range of organisations and aim to strengthen awareness, recognition and professional responses to DSGBV. Kathleen also introduced the new Micro-Credential 'Certificate in the Fundamentals of Coercive Control' programme which will commence in March 2026 in DkIT.

Highlights of the conference included a powerful keynote address by Nicola Douglas, European Regional Manager at the Safe & Together Institute. Nicola's talk, 'Changing the Lens: The Safe & Together Model's Journey from Innovation to Impact', emphasised systemic change in child welfare and domestic abuse responses. **Speaking after the event, Nicola said:**

"It was an honour to speak at DkIT's RiVeR Project conference and celebrate a decade of groundbreaking DSGBV education. It demonstrates the power of bringing practitioners, researchers, and advocates together to strengthen our collective response to domestic abuse and create meaningful, lasting change in how systems support children and families affected by abuse"



A fireside chat with DkIT graduates showcased the real-world impact of DSGBV education on their careers and communities. Graduates of DkIT programmes shared the impact of their education on their careers and the importance of a strong knowledge and awareness of DSGBV in their roles. Afternoon sessions featured oral presentations across four parallel rooms, highlighting research, practice innovations, and collaborative projects.

The event concluded with renewed momentum for advancing DSGBV education and practice across Ireland and beyond.



Launch of RiVeR Project DSGBV education & training videos

The RiVeR Project took the opportunity at its recent conference to launch eight new DSGBV education and training videos and accompanying facilitator guide. These were developed, through funding from the Higher Education Authority, as part of the RiVeR Projects reusable learning resources and will be made available for educational and training purposes, serving as invaluable tools to promote a zero tolerance approach to Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence across a broad range of disciplines and organisations.

Organisations or individuals wishing to access these resources for their area of work are invited to complete the application form available at the following link:

[Application form for DkIT RiVeR Project DSGBV Educational & Training Videos – Fill out form](#)

Following review of applications, successful applicants will be granted access to the video materials in due course.

Please note that the complete video series, together with an accompanying Facilitator Guide, will be provided in a single folder via SharePoint. These materials may be downloaded for internal use. While the application form may be shared with colleagues, recipients are requested not to distribute the video materials directly to others.



DkIT RiVeR Project hosts third 'In Their Shoes' workshop

In October 2025, the DkIT RiVeR Project team were delighted to officially launch '**In Their Shoes,**' an interactive toolkit designed for experiential learning about Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV).

Through this toolkit, participants step into the shoes of a person in an abusive relationship, making decisions based on real victim-survivor experiences. They are guided through character-specific scenarios and explore the complex choices faced in abusive situations. A vital debrief session follows, encouraging reflection, addressing misconceptions and inspiring personal and local action for change.

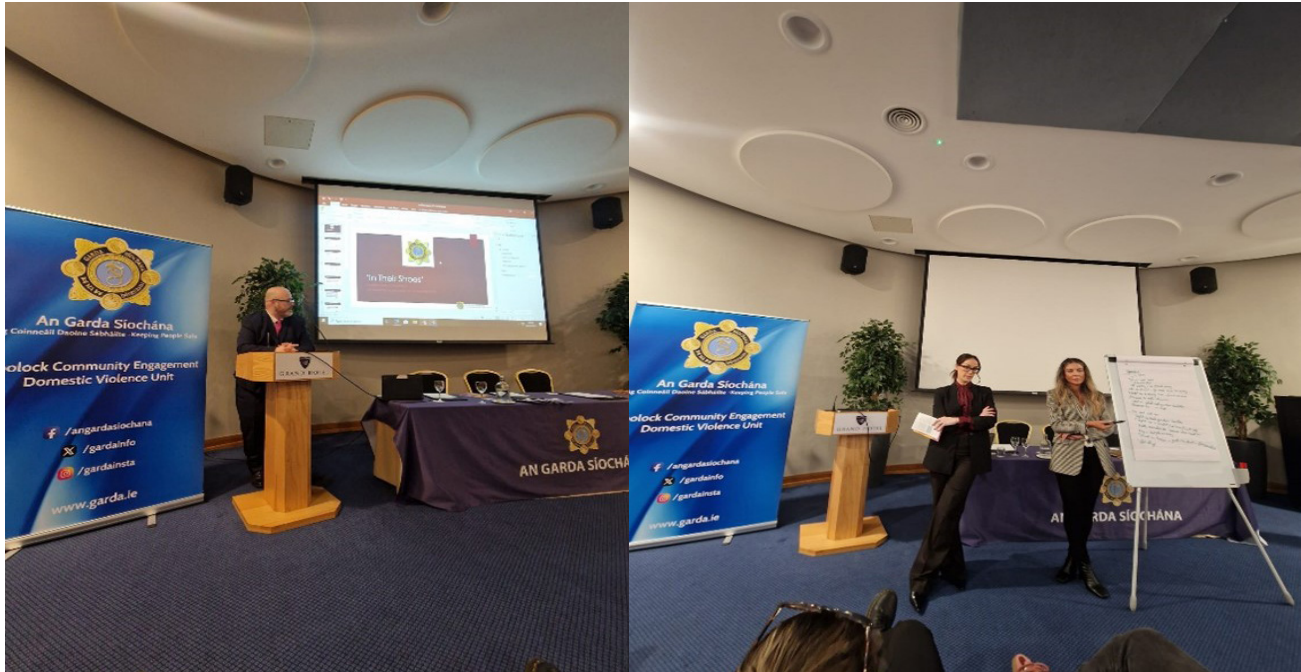
The DkIT RiVeR Project team are also hosting a series of workshops, including 'train the trainer' sessions, whereby organisations who attend it and fulfil the application criteria will be issued with an 'In Their Shoes' toolkit. The toolkit and workshops are funded by the RiVeR Project, supported under the Higher Education Authority Performance Funding Scheme. A **third In Their Shoes workshop** and '**train the trainer**' session was held in DkIT on **January 22nd** attended by a broad range of participants from across the country. Keep an eye out for the date of a fourth workshop planned for the end of **March**.





The RiVeR Project team are always delighted to receive feedback from those who have received **In Their Shoes** toolkits and are rolling out workshops in their own organisations.

An Garda Síochána: Garda Sergeant Aoife O'Brien, Domestic Violence Unit, Coolock and Garda Sarah Mernagh, Domestic Abuse Coordinator, Raheny co facilitated their first workshop for colleagues and received a very positive response. Grace McCormack coordinator from Aoibhneas also spoke to the participants. The event was opened by Chief Superintendent Majella Armstrong and Superintendent Ronan Barry.



Experiencing 'In Their Shoes': Reflections from Barnardos Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse (CDVA) / TLC KIDZ learning forum

At our recent TLC Kidz learning forum in Barnardos, we were delighted to facilitate our first rollout of the **In Their Shoes** experiential exercise. The afternoon was spent exploring the value of this powerful tool in small groups, reflecting on the complexities faced by the families we support every day.

It illustrated the emotional and practical journey that many victims of domestic violence must navigate—one marked by frustration, exhaustion, system failures, and an unrelenting determination to keep going for the sake of their children and themselves. The simple roll of a dice or flick of a coin brought to life the unpredictability and instability that survivors experience, underscoring the fragile circumstances in which many families live.

Crucially, the exercise highlighted the importance of the first professional a victim encounters. An attuned, compassionate response can shape a family's entire journey through systems and supports. We are all part of this shared responsibility. By including the perspective of the perpetrator, the exercise also ensures he remains visible in our thinking and practice. This is vital. Keeping the perpetrator in view supports more accurate risk assessment and prevents the unintentional shifting of responsibility onto victims or children.

This resource is an invaluable addition to our nine local TLC Kidz project areas across Ireland. It directly supports one of the core functions of the programme: building capacity and strengthening coordinated, community-based responses. We look forward to working closely with our community partners to ensure its effective rollout, embedding shared learning and collaboration at the heart of each local area.

Overall, **In Their Shoes** reinforced a powerful message: every professional plays a critical role in creating safety, understanding, and meaningful support for children and families. This exercise serves as a timely reminder of the impact we can have when we work together with clarity, empathy, and purpose.

Feedback from Participants:

"It was great to experience how things can be for a service user and the decisions and obstacles they can encounter".

"The 'In Their Shoes' activity is fantastic and something that we can bring back to our local projects".

Welcome to a New Cohort on DSGBV Programme

On 30th January, DkIT was delighted to welcome **24 students** from across Ireland to begin the 'Certificate in the Fundamentals of Understanding and Responding to Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence' programme. This diverse group brings a wealth of backgrounds and experiences to the classroom. The RiVeR Project is proud to support access to this important programme by offering scholarships covering full fees for five students in each intake.



Applications Now Open for Coercive Control Micro-Credential at DkIT

Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) is delighted to announce a new Level 8 Micro-Credential: Certificate in the Fundamentals of Coercive Control.

This 9-week blended programme will equip participants with a shared understanding of:

- The offence of Coercive Control and the legislative framework
- B Applications Now Open for Coercive Control Micro-Credential at DkIT
- Risks and impacts on victims/survivors
- Wider systemic implications

Who should apply?

Professionals working with victims of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV)/Coercive Control, including:

- Frontline DSGBV service providers
- Members of An Garda Síochána
- Nurses, Midwives, Social Workers, Psychotherapists, and related roles

Programme Details:

Start Date: 10th March 2026

Duration: 9 weeks

Delivery method: Blended

Fee: €495

Apply Now: [Certificate in the Fundamentals of Coercive Control | DkIT](#)

Podcast Series

RiVeR Project Podcast series: Insights into Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

The RiVeR Project has just released **episode 24** of its innovative Podcast series Insights into Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. This important and reflective series continues to bring together a diverse range of voices including:

- Frontline professionals addressing DSGBV
- Survivors and lived-experience advocates
- Legal and policy experts
- Academics and researchers
- Key policymakers

We invite you to listen, reflect, share and engage with how Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence is understood, addressed and actively challenged across Ireland. You can watch/listen to this Podcast series on the following links:

RiVeR Project Website: <https://www.riverproject.ie/education-training/podcast-series/>

Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/show/3EqTztElNrINH0AMJ2KNVV>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@DundalkIT/playlists>

DkIT Welcomes the LOVE installation to campus

The RiVeR Project are delighted to team up with [RESPECT | DkIT](#) to begin the new year with a message of **LOVE** as we welcome Amber Women's Refuge's One Million Stars travelling LOVE installation to campus.

The One Million Stars Ireland project is an award-winning, inclusive community arts initiative that connects communities across the country in solidarity against Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV). Each eight-pointed star represents light, hope and unity, while also reflecting the project's eight principles of healthy love within relationships.

This Irish project forms part of the global One Billion Stars movement, founded in Australia in 2012 by artist Maryann Talia Pau following the rape and murder of Irish woman Jill Meagher, originally from County Louth, who was living in Melbourne at the time. The initiative was brought to Ireland in 2019 by art therapist Siobhán McQuillan in partnership with Amber Women's Refuge, the domestic abuse service supporting women and children in Kilkenny and Carlow.

Recently, during DkIT's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, we were delighted to host Siobhan McQuillan, Project lead, One Million Stars Ireland, Amber Women's Refuge as students and staff came together to weave stars in solidarity with survivors of domestic abuse and all forms of violence. The One Million Stars initiative united students, staff and community partners on campus, with each star serving as a symbol of unity, compassion and a shared commitment to ending violence. The Stars created by DkIT Students and staff during this event have now become part of the Installation as it spends time on campus before moving to its next destination.

To learn more click: [One Million Stars Ireland project Home - One Million Stars Ireland](#)



[Click Here to Watch: DkIT RiVeR Project hosts One Million Stars Project- Event Video](#)

RiVeR Project to co-host a webinar for GP Practice Nurses



PDC National Monthly Webinars Series 2026

DOMESTIC, SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE – AN OVERVIEW FOR GP NURSES

Presenters:

- **Lisa Marmion**, Research Assistant, DkIT RiVeR Project
- **Paula O'Neill**, GP Nurse

Topics to be covered:

- Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV)
- Coercive control
- Trauma-informed care
- Awareness and recognition
- Continuing education opportunities



Friday
13/02/2026
1:00 PM

[Register Here](#)
Or use QR code



ANY QUERIES CONTACT:
MAIREAD MURPHY PDCGPN
MAIREAD.MURPHY11@HSE.IE

Other Events and Notices From Our Community of Practice

Heart-to-Heart programme at Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge Centre

We're delighted to let you know that the [Heart-to-Heart programme at Drogheda Women's and Children's Refuge Centre](#) is now live and open for referrals.

Heart to Heart is a parent-child attachment programme, designed to strengthen relationships by supporting emotional connection, communication, and understanding between parents/carers and their children. The programme is delivered by accredited Heart to Heart facilitators.

Who: Children aged 5–9 and 10–15 years, attending with a parent/carer

What:

- Week 1: Meet with parents/carers and complete programme forms
- Weeks 2–7: Fun, interactive sessions focused on strengthening the parent-child relationship

Activities include:

Play-based activities, storytelling, movement, creative games, and age-appropriate exploration of child and teen development.

Referral: If you know families who could benefit, please use the referral form:

[Heart-to-Heart Referral Form](#)

The attached poster has more info and can be shared with colleagues or families.



The poster for the Heart-to-Heart Programme features a photograph of a smiling woman hugging a young girl. The title 'Heart-to-Heart Programme' is prominently displayed in a large, white, serif font. Below the title, a purple banner contains the text 'A fun, early-help attachment programme for parents/carers and their children or teens.' and the tagline 'Discover the power of play and connection.' in a white, italicized font. The main body of the poster is divided into several sections with purple headers. The 'Programme Overview' section describes the 7-week parent-child group intervention. The 'Who Can Take Part' section lists eligibility criteria. The 'What Happens in Heart-to-Heart Sessions' section lists activities. A quote box contains testimonials from participants. The 'CONTACT US' section provides contact information for Michelle Woods. The footer includes logos for the Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre C.L.G., the Heart to Heart logo, and the Clear Sky Children's Charity logo.

Heart-to-Heart Programme

A fun, early-help attachment programme for parents/carers and their children or teens.

Discover the power of play and connection.

Heart-to-Heart Programme

Programme Overview

Heart-to-Heart is a fully funded 7-week parent-child group intervention delivered in the Local community. Parents or carers attend sessions alongside their children or teens, creating protected time to strengthen connection and relationships. Heart to Heart provides enjoyable, interactive activities and resources to help strengthen relationships as well as an opportunity to explore all aspects of middle childhood and teen development. There is also opportunities to develop a supportive network with other families and carers that may continue after the programme ends.

Who Can Take Part

- ♥ Parents or carers and their children
- ♥ Children aged 5-9 years and 10-15 year
- ♥ Small, supportive group setting

What Happens in Heart-to-Heart Sessions

- Build secure parent-child connection, and communication
- Develop emotional understanding and regulation
- Practitioners share evidence-based tools and techniques with all group members to help them manage stress and develop resilience.
- Support children to lead play while parents watch, wonder and respond
- Activities include movement, imaginative play, creative tasks and sensory experiences, all grounded in attachment-informed practice.

Evidence-informed and grounded in attachment theory

CONTACT US

Michelle Woods Head of Childhood Support Network- 085 001 1583
mwoods@droghedarefuge.org

Drogheda Women's & Children's Refuge Centre C.L.G.

clear sky CHILDREN'S CHARITY

New HSELand module on Human Trafficking Indicators

The Health Service Executive, National Social Inclusion Office, Access and Integration, are happy to share that the Human Trafficking Indicators Training module is now live on HSE-LanD for all HSE staff and staff from funded services.

This module aims to:

- Improve awareness of Human Trafficking forms and indicators
- Highlight different points of entry into healthcare for potential victims of trafficking
- Provide guidance on how to engage with potential victims of trafficking
- Review learnings through case studies

0.5 CPD hours awarded to this module in accordance with NMBI guidance

You can find this module on HSELand using the “*search a module*” tool with the key word “*#HumanTrafficking*”.

This training builds on the learnings of the Human Trafficking Awareness Training module. Due to the prerequisite-based progression structure of the training programme, staff are required to complete the Human Trafficking Awareness Module prior to accessing this new course.

This training has been developed by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office in collaboration with the HSE Anti-Human Trafficking Team.

Women's Aid Dundalk, Drop-in sessions

Women's Aid Dundalk will run monthly drop-in sessions at the Dundalk Citizens Information office for the rest of 2026, with the first of these events scheduled for February 27th. Each one occurs on Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

They enable women to learn more about our services and meet with a support worker to receive free, confidential information without needing to make an appointment. The organisation is excited to continue this ongoing, important outreach effort to keep broadening awareness of our offerings and work within in the community.

**WOMEN'S AID
DUNDALK**
24-Hour Helpline: 042-9333244



Citizens Information Drop-In Clinics 2026



February 27th	March 27th
April 24th	May 29th
June 26th	July 31st
August 28th	September 25th
October 30th	November 27th
December 18th	

All clinics occur on Fridays from 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Dundalk Citizens Information Centre (A91 NN83)



0429333244
info@womensaidduk.net

Planning with care toolkit

Please click link to view a recently launched resource to support you in creating a trauma informed approach when planning events:

[Planning with Care 2025 FINAL.pdf](#)

UCC's 8th Annual Bystander week

UCC's 8th Annual Bystander week takes place in February 2026 with a number of events planned during that month which are available to UCC Staff and Students, but also open to our colleagues across the Irish HE Sector our Community Partners and general public. This year is also a landmark year for Bystander, as it is 10 years since the programme was initially developed and piloted in UCC by Professor Crowley.

Conference

The team would like to welcome you, and any interested colleagues to UCC to attend our Bystander Conference on 3rd February in the Dora Allman room, Student Hub on campus at UCC.

The following is the schedule for the day

10.30am - 10.40am **Conference Opening by Professor John O'Halloran, UCC's President**

10.40am - 11.10am **UCC Bystander Intervention Director, Professor Louise Crowley**

Louise will provide a brief insight into the reach and impact of Bystander Intervention training over the last 10 years. Additionally we are excited to launch our new video "Could Have, Would Have, Should Have", an Irish production which demonstrates the importance of individual awareness, and the range of ways that problematic behaviour can be directly challenged, nipped in the bud, or avoided through a range of safe and effective interventions.

11.10am - 11.55am **Keynote: Ruth Breslin, Director SERP**
"Understanding the role of pornography in the perpetration of gender-based violence"

11.55 am - 12.25 **Dr Gillian Murphy and John Twomey, UCC School of Psychology**
"World-first tool reduces harmful engagement with AI-generated explicit images"

UCC Futures AI & Data Analytics have launched the Deepfakes/Real Harms Toolkit, an evidence-based educational intervention to reduce engagement with non-consensual AI media. The intervention takes just 10 minutes and is proven to reduce belief in harmful myths about deepfakes and crucially, reduces intentions to watch, share, or create non-consensual deepfake media. Find out more here: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/2026/world-first-tool-reduces-harmful-engagement-with-ai-generated-explicit-images.html> An adapted version will be piloted in secondary schools in the coming months. Those interested can contact deepfakes@ucc.ie for further information.

Closing 12.25 - 12.30

[Click here to Register for the Conference](#)

UCC Campus Map

The Conference will be held in the Dora Allman room in The Hub – building no 48 on the campus map.

[Click here for the Campus Map](#)

UCC Parking

[Click here for Parking](#)

Guest Speaker Profiles:

Ruth Breslin – Director of The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute (The SERP Institute, Ireland)

Ruth has over twenty-five years of research experience in both NGO and academic settings in Dublin, London and New York. She has an MSc in Social Research Methods (Social Policy) from the London School of Economics and Political Science. The focus of Ruth's work has been efforts to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls, and she has developed particular expertise in research and policy development on issues of commercial sexual exploitation. Ruth is regularly called upon to input into the development of evidence-based policy, legislation and practice in this regard, in both Ireland and internationally. Ruth joined the SERP research programme in University College Dublin in 2018. She is the lead or co-author of all of SERP's studies. Ruth's work strives to bridge the gap between academia and frontline practice in generating new knowledge, insights and solutions on issues of commercial sexual exploitation in Ireland and beyond. Ruth is now leading the development of the newly independent SERP Institute and the delivery of its strategic plan.

Dr. Gillian Murphy

Dr Gillian Murphy is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Applied Psychology, UCC. She is a cognitive psychologist with particular interest in misinformation and memory distortion. She also studies the intersection of cognition and technology and is a Funded Investigator at Lero, the Research Ireland Centre for Software.

John Twomey, PhD Student

John Twomey is a PhD student in the School of Applied Psychology, UCC. His thesis investigated sociotechnical concerns around deepfake technology, including use in wartime misinformation and in the censorship of political dissidents. The bulk of John's doctoral work examined the use of deepfakes in the creation of non-consensual synthetic intimate imagery, culminating in the design of an effective intervention to curb deepfake abuse perpetration.

Email: info@riverproject.ie

<https://www.riverproject.ie/>