



It is estimated that the total cost of domestic violence in financial terms is a staggering £680 million per year in Northern Ireland.

Domestic violence costs

The Cost of Domestic Violence (2004)¹ confirms what Women's Aid has argued for many years – that the price being paid for violent and abusive behaviour at home is not only too high for women but for society as a whole. The research, commissioned by the Women's Equality Unit, estimates that the total cost of domestic violence in England and Wales is a staggering £23 billion per year, with human and emotional suffering costing at least £17 billion. Further, it is estimated that time off due to domestic violence costs employers and workers £3 billion.

The cost of domestic violence to the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales is around £1 billion a year, which is nearly a quarter of its budget for violent crime. Social Services spend an estimated £250 million a year and the cost to the NHS to treat physical injuries and related effects in hospitals and doctors surgeries comes in at around £1.2 billion.

The financial cost in Northern Ireland

There has been no similar research conducted in Northern Ireland. However, *Tackling Violence at Home*, gives an estimate of the annual costs in Northern Ireland by extrapolating the research figures for England and Wales on a pro-rata basis. Thus "it is estimated that the direct costs of services (ie for police, criminal justice system, health and social services care, housing, civil legal cases and legal aid) plus the loss of economic output in Northern Ireland due to domestic violence, could amount to about £180 million each year. A similar estimate for the "intangible costs" associated with pain and suffering of victims could amount to some £500 million each year."²

For over 30 years Women's Aid in Northern Ireland has learnt of the physical, emotional and psychological cost of violence from individual women and these figures provides graphic details of the cost to our whole society. Such costs are a direct consequence of inadequate measures to prevent domestic violence occurring in the first place.

While an attempt has been made to cost "intangible costs", it is impossible to put a price on fear and manipulation; and the real possibility of pain and even death that may be inflicted on women and children living daily with domestic violence.

This research demonstrates that it costs more to ignore the reality of domestic violence than it would to put resources into preventing it from happening. Women's Aid believes that resources directed towards prevention, particularly in schools, will help achieve the goal of eradicating domestic violence.

1. *The Cost of Domestic Violence*, Professor Sylvia Walby, 2004

2. *Tackling Violence at Home, A strategy for addressing domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland*, page 14, Northern Ireland Office, 2005

Error: please note that the Women's Aid Federation calendar, carrying excerpts of this information, states that the cost of domestic violence is £640 million. This is an error and should read £680 million.

women's aid

Federation Northern Ireland