

'Ban parental visits by violent former partners'

WOMEN'S Aid has called for court-permitted parental visits to be banned until there can be a guarantee of safety for those involved.

In 2017 alone there were over 428 reports of women being abused during parental access visits, with 97 cases of children being harmed.

The group's 2017 report into domestic violence revealed that there were 19,385 instances reported to them last year, with 15,833 of the cases related to violence against women, and an additional 3,552 cases of child abuse within abusive relationships.

The group wants a policy of 'no contact until contact is

By Jane Fallon Griffin

safe' for women who have suffered domestic violence.

Its report revealed that 28% of those who contacted Women's Aid were being abused by former partners.

Margaret Martin, director of Women's Aid, said that this needed to be changed as 'a matter of urgency'.

'While the perpetrator is barred from the house, he often still has unsupervised access to the children and uses that access to continue abusing them directly and/or through having the children witness the abuse of their mother,' she said.

A woman named Jessica, who had experienced ongoing harassment from her children's father, spoke on RTE's Morning Ireland about the issue, and said: 'There is no law currently to stop somebody from contacting you, so if you decide that you want to leave an abusive relationship, you can be bombarded with as many text messages as he wants.'

The report also indicated that the legal system was at times 'unsupportive' towards victims of domestic violence. While 65% of victims described the support they received from gardaí as helpful, 35% said it was not.

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Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Step inside the parlour... it's another world

THE other day, I was telling our boys about dear old Daisy. Daisy was my grand-aunt - my maternal grandfather's only sibling. As I told them her story, you could hear a pin drop in the car.

There was nothing remarkable in Daisy's life. Like most women of her generation, she lived and died simply. But the world she inhabited - a world so different to ours - is one that perished with her.

Known to her devoted neighbours as 'Mrs Mac', Daisy lived in a small house with her husband and another elderly lady named Una.

How Una came to live with Daisy is still a mystery to me. What I do know is that Daisy and Una were inseparable.

It was not that Daisy and Una always got on with each other. All day long, they bickered about anything and everything.

Indeed, they were so used to bickering that, even when they were being nice to each other, they feigned to bicker.

An example. Una walks into the kitchen, collapses in her armchair and says: 'What ails ye?'

Daisy: 'You are! Can't you see I'm trying to clean the floor?'

Una: 'Will we go and get the groceries?'

Daisy: 'If you'd give a hand we'd get out quicker!'

And then, irrespective of the weather, they would set off in their overcoats and scarves, their shopping trolleys trailing behind.

Daisy's day always began at dawn - even in the summer. She would don her blue smock, or 'house coat', and, after cleaning out the fire grate, she would attend to her birds.

Much to Una's consternation, Daisy kept two canaries whose cages were scrubbed before sunrise.

Breakfast was prepared and delivered to Una in bed. She says: 'Why are ye waking me so early?'

'Early? I've been up hours!' says Daisy as she opens the curtains and tidies the room.

'No-one forced ye!' comes the response.

Morning Mass would be followed by a trip to the local shops for Daisy. 'How are ye, Mrs Mac? Wait till I tell ye about Mrs Byrne!'

Before long, a great gathering of all the local ladies would be in full swing.

By noon, Daisy would be back in the smock preparing the main meal of the day, which was always served

at one o'clock. After that, she might spend some time tending her vegetable patch or chatting with Mrs Scanlan across the garden fence. Tea was served at five, and consisted of sandwiches, eggs and cake.

The kitchen table having been cleared, it was time for a game of cards or roulette.

This was a time of laughter and merriment, a time when all bickering was briefly suspended. Soon however, it was time for supper, consisting of more cake, tea and biscuits.

Una: 'We had this cake for tea!'

Daisy: 'Well, you're having it again for supper!'

Una: 'If this keeps up, I'll turn into a cake!'

Daisy: 'We'd all be better off!'

Daisy's house was functional, clean and comfortable. But, to my young eyes, there was one feature which was a minor marvel. At the front of the house, there was a small box room which they called 'the parlour'.

The word 'parlour' derives from the French *parler*, meaning 'to speak'. Traditionally, the parlour was a reception room to which important visitors were brought to chat and take tea. To a generation weaned on Skype and instant messaging, the very notion of a parlour must seem bizarre.

For Daisy, however, that little room - with all its bone china, ceramic figurines and crocheted doilies - was the heart of her home. It was permanently locked and rarely used, but it signified something crucial to her sense of identity. The parlour was how Daisy felt the things of this life always should be: ordered, calm, tidy and elegant.

ICAN still see every nook of that parlour. For me, it was a room suspended in time, a tiny space symbolising a world that was already slipping through my fingers. And even now, more than 30 years since I last shut the door on its golden graces, Daisy's parlour still speaks to me of something profoundly precious. No-one mourned the loss of Una more than her best friend Daisy. As they lowered Una into the soil, she cried out to Heaven, causing even the sun to decline in sorrow.

At home, there was only silence, except for two chirping canaries looking sadly at an empty armchair.

But, in the parlour, nothing changed, for that was a place that time could never touch.

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