

WHY 'WOMEN ONLY'?

In previous editions of the WSN Newsletter we told you about the Women's Resource Centre's (WRC) 'Why Women?' campaign. This is a UK wide campaign which aims to raise awareness about what would be lost in the community if the women's organisations disappeared. WSN have been officially signed up as a supporter of this campaign since 2005. The latest phase of this campaign has been the launch of a report (17th Oct 07) entitled **'Why women-only? The value and benefits of 'by women, for women' services'**. The report claims that – **'Women-only services are being eroded because of a belief among funding bodies that gender equality has been achieved.'**

This timely report sets out why women-only services are still relevant and much in demand, despite a common misconception that they are no longer needed because 'we have achieved women's equality'. The report reveals that a poll of over 100 women's organisations and 1,000 individual women overwhelmingly showed their support for access to women-only services:

- 97% stated that a woman should have the choice of accessing a women-only support service if they had been the victim of sexual assault
- 90% of women believed it was important to have the right to report sexual or domestic violence to a woman

why women-only?

The value and benefits of by women, for women services

- 78% thought it was important to have the choice of a woman professional for counselling and personal support needs

The research also explores the far-reaching benefits of women-only services, the need for minority women to run their own specific services, the misunderstandings and undervaluation of women-only service provision, and the risks to the survival of such services.

On the launch of the research Lady [Margaret] Prosser, deputy chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, says: **"Some people are arguing that equality means treating everybody the same ... but the whole point of an equality programme is to recognise that everybody is not starting off at the same point."**

The WRC are hoping to use this report and the resulting lobby to develop strategies for mobilising the women's voluntary sector to face the challenges of funding cuts and gender neutral government policy and the challenges and opportunities of the Gender Equality Duty. You can read more about this at www.wrc.org.uk and you can access the report at www.wrc.org.uk/downloads/Polycystuff/whywomenonly.pdf

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The WSN Staff and Management Board would like to wish **Good Luck** to our Policy & Research Co-ordinator Lynn Carvill as she embarks on her Maternity leave.

Newsheet Christmas Edition

For the Christmas edition we decided on a Newsheet format, we will be back with more news and info in our usual 4 page spread in the Spring!



WSN would like to wish all our members, supporters and readers -

A Happy & Peaceful Holiday Season

&

Best wishes for 2008!

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News

Events

WSN Education report update

The Women's Centres Community Based Education Report, which highlights the work of the 13 women's centres and FWIN, is now complete. WSN are pleased to announce that the OFMDFM Gender Unit has agreed to provide funds to enable us to print the report.

A copy of the report has already been sent to the Department for Employment and Learning. Once the report is formally launched, in the New Year, we will be sending copies to all appropriate government departments. The report will be a key resource in our lobbying campaign to government, to raise the profile of the central role these women's centres play in achieving government education policy objectives.

WCRP Update

On Tuesday 27th November 07 the WCRP Network meeting was held in Magherafelt. The meeting was hosted by the Learning Lodge Women's Centre and the group had an opportunity to learn about the background and growth of the Learning Lodge since it was formed in 1992. This was followed by the usual catch up on each centre's work and developments.

During the meeting the issue of funding for childcare services after March 2008 was discussed and it was explained that WCRP are currently gathering statistics for VCU. Andrea Patterson from VCU (DSD) and Eileen Sung from the Gender Equality Unit in OFMDFM also attended the meeting and their commitment to, and support for, the work of the centres was very evident.

The next WCRP network meeting will be held in Ballybeen Women's Centre on January 29th 10.30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Dates for your 2008 Diary

The **Parents Advice Centre** are offering courses for Parents including - Handling Teenagers Course, a 6-week course ideal for those in a parenting role of young people aged 12 to 18. This commences on Tuesday 15 January 2008. For further information contact Bernie Mellon on 8775 3630 or email bernie@pachelp.org

NICVA & the Institute of Fundraising are holding an information session on Peace III on Wed 16th January from 1.30 p.m. – 3.15 p.m. at NICVA. For further information or to reserve a place contact: georgie.finlay@nicva.org. or telephone 028 9087 7777.

Women's Tec AGM will be held on 19th February 2008.

Women in Construction and non-Traditional Sector 2008 Event will be held in W5, Odyssey Complex, Belfast on 27th February 2008.



On 15th November WSN hosted a members event on eMonitoring to provide our member groups with the opportunity to hear more about this innovative database system which can be adapted for the needs of individual groups.

This eMonitoring software has been developed by Cunamh ICT, a voluntary sector organisation based in Derry, who have developed this ICT project as a social economy business. The software is useful for: Monitoring and self evaluation, Financial monitoring required by a variety of funders, Managing a contacts database, Monitoring learners and users and Generating data reports.

Following this information event all of the groups said that it would be very useful for their organisations and at least one group has decided to purchase the software. If you would like more information on this please contact Siobh ann/Kirsty at WSN.

Ballymurphy Women's Centre open new premises



A new improved Women's Centre for the Ballymurphy area of West Belfast was officially opened in October of this year. The refurbishment was financed by  350,000 from the Department for Social Development (DSD) under the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy.

DSD Minister Margaret Ritchie at the official opening of the refurbished Ballymurphy Women's Centre

The new state of the art facilities on the Springfield Road now boasts up-to-date therapy rooms, training rooms and office space. Services include a Stress Clinic which provides complementary therapies for vulnerable local people and a project for young people that provides a sexual health awareness drop-in service, health promotion, New Deal placements, and schools work.

Ballymurphy Women's Centre Chairperson, Ann McGrath, said: "The refurbishment has made our surroundings much more pleasant and we are all looking forward to delivering new and better services in the future. The additional funding for salaries and running costs is a lifeline for us, safeguarding jobs and enabling the Centre to remain open and continue to provide an important service to the community.

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