



Women's Support Network News

WSN

Volume 8 Issue 8

April/May 2006

WHY WOMEN?

Over the past 18 months or so, since the WSN newsletter was relaunched, the key focus of our cover stories has been on updating readers on the funding situation and funding lobby within the women's sector in Northern Ireland. However, the current funding situation within the women's sector in Northern Ireland is part of a broader picture. A funding crisis in London which has already seen the closure of the London Rape Crisis Centre, has driven the London Women's Resource Centre to create the **'why women?'** campaign, which aims to raise awareness about what would be lost in the community if the women's organisations disappeared.

In an interview with WSN, Isabel Hudson, Policy Officer of the Women's Resource Centre said "The government is changing the way the voluntary sector is funded. The government wants to fund specific services identified by the governmental bodies rather than the women (and women's organisations) themselves".

The **'why women?'** campaign is asking the government and the public to support women's voluntary and community organisations. According to the **'why women?'** report, women's organisations are not for profit groups



that work specifically with women, such as women's refugees, training projects and campaigning groups.

"We needed to raise public awareness about women's organisations. People don't realize the great work going on - unless they need it." Isabel says.

In order to raise awareness, 180,000 postcards, such as the one pictured above, were distributed in coffee shops, bars and other public places around London. The postcards marked key accomplishments of women throughout history, such as voting rights for women, equal pay and rape in marriage being criminalized.

continued on page 2

Inside this issue:

Cover Story	1
Headlines this Spring	1
Cover story cont'd	2
Funding news	
Outreach and Development News	3
Event profiles	4/5
Policy Issues	6/7
Advice Strategy	
Alcohol & drugs consultation	
Education Order	
Forthcoming Consultations	
News	8

Headlines this Spring

- Funding news
- Why Women campaign
- Advice Strategy update

WSN would like to say a big **THANK-YOU** to Katie Gaughan, a US intern on placement within WSN for the past two months. Many of the articles in this Newsletter have been researched and co-written by Katie.

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continued from Page 1

There have been a few closures of women's centres over the past few years, Isabel says. More often there is a closure of services which leads to long waiting lists. Some organizations have a six month waiting list to give counselling to someone, she says.

Without the women's organizations, there would be a greater drain on public services and more social and health problems, according to the "why women?" report.

The campaign is mainly targeting the government to recognize the systematic discrimination women face, Isabel says. "We're addressing the myth that men and women are equal. In England and Wales, two women a week are killed by their partner or ex-partner. Almost half of all women in the U.K. have experienced some form of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, according to the "why women?" report. "We know these problems aren't going away," she contends.

Although the campaign is in its early stages, it has been off to a good start. "We have had amazing response from people in the sector," Isabel says. "We represent a united voice of the women's organizations to the government that something needs to be done to sustain the very valuable and necessary work of the women's sector".

To find out more about the campaign you can visit the Women's Resource Centre, London at www.wrc.org.uk/

Funding info

Lottery chance for smaller groups

Schools, charities and community groups in NI are being given the chance to secure increased lottery money grants. The maximum grant available under the National Lottery's Awards for All has risen from £5,000 to £10,000 per year. For further information contact - <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/>



People's Millions 2006

The Big Lottery Fund and ITV have announced a bigger People's Millions public voting competition for 2006. A total of 90 grants of £50,000 are up for grabs this year. These £50,000 awards will fund projects that aim to make a difference in their community from creating an urban nature reserve, a wildlife garden or play area to clearing up an over grown waterway or vandalised community building. To download an application form visit the website - www.peoplesmillions.org.uk The entry deadline for applications for funding is Thursday 18 May 2006.

The European Commission has set aside €500,000 in 2006 for a number of pilot projects designed to promote active European citizenship. The general objectives of this call for proposals are to:

- encourage the emergence of an active and participatory European citizenship;
- demonstrate how the democratic, participatory nature of European construction can be enhanced by engaging citizens;
- stimulate the active participation of citizens in activities linked to the further integration of Europe;

Applications should come from public bodies or non-profit making organisations based in the EU. The Commission will award grants of up to 50% of the project's costs, with funding between €50,000 and €150,000.

Further info can be obtained by emailing - **E-mail:** eac-soc-civile@cec.eu.int - closing date is **31 May 2006**.

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and will be highlighting the work of the Foundation in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The UK Branch have identified the following 4 areas as funding programme priorities in 2006: **Social Welfare, Education, Arts and Anglo-Portuguese Cultural Relations.**

Before applying please read all sections in 'How to apply for a grant' on the website - www.gulbenkian.org.uk

There is no standard application form, you can apply in writing (not by email) to -

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

UK Branch
98 Portland place
London
W1B 1ET



Outreach & Development News

B.A.G.

The Belfast Advisory Group are continuing to meet on a regular basis to enable groups to receive regular updates around the emergency funding situation and to discuss any issues affecting them. For further information on this contact Siobh  n at the network office.

Newsbites

WSN continue to send out regular email bulletins on current news and updates. WSN can post information for your group or you can add your email address to this contact list to get regular updates.

Newsletter / Information

The Newsletter is a way for WSN to keep our members apprised of the work we are doing on their behalf. It can also be used by member groups for sharing information with other groups or for promoting events within local centres. WSN encourages member groups to use this service.

For further info, contact Siobh  n on 9023 6923 or alternatively you can email to outreach@womenssupportnetwork.org

Funding info continued

CFNI Building Community Capacity & Promoting Active Citizenship Small Grants Programme (2.7)

The aim of the Small Grants Programme is to develop community capacity and promote active citizenship.

Eligibility

- Organisations employing paid staff are ineligible for Small Grants Programme and need not apply.
- Organisations currently in receipt of a large/main grant under any other Measure of the PEACE II Programme including the PEACE II Extension are ineligible and need not apply

Information on the 2.7 Small Grants Programme is available by e-mail: smallgrants@communityfoundationni.org. on the CFNI website www.communityfoundationni.org or by calling us on **028 90245927**. A number of seminars have been organized to provide further information, no advance registration is required.

15th May 2006 Farset International, Belfast 6 - 8:30pm
 17th May 2006 Clinton Centre, Enniskillen 10 - 12:30pm
 17th May 2006 Verbal Arts Centre, Derry 6pm - 8:30pm
 18th May 2006 Burnavon Centre, Cookstown 2 - 4:30pm
 4th May 2006 ECOS Centre, Ballymena 2pm - 4:30pm
 25th May 2006 Civic Centre, Lisburn 6pm - 8:30pm
 26th May 2006 Ballynafeigh CC, Belfast 10am - 12:30pm

TWN lobby on Measure 1.5 and Peace III

A meeting was held at TWN on 12 April 2006 to discuss ways forward for lobbying for funding for women's training projects and childcare projects in the current and future Peace Programmes. Measure 1.5 received 191 applications, totaling £18 million, for the Peace II Extension. The Measure has only £2.89 million, which meant only those scoring 84% and above could be funded – 34 projects – leaving a deficit of £4.7 million to fund all those that passed. The applications were of a particularly high standard, which means very high scoring projects could not be funded compared to other

Measures, most of which are funding projects at the pass mark of 65% and above. The women's measure was originally deleted from the Programme, but brought back after lobbying. However, it was the smallest measure with half the amount of money of the next smallest measure in the Programme. This represents a significant marginalisation of projects seeking to empower women.

Peace III

€200 million has been allocated to a Peace Programme for 2007-13. This is less money than previous Programmes and will be spread over 7 years. €140 million has been allocated to Northern Ireland, which makes only €20 million per year.

The Peace Programme will be drawn from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) only, so some activities that took place under the European Social Fund (ESF) will no longer be applicable. It will be under the Territorial Co-operation objective, so there will be an emphasis on cross-border work. There will be no measures for any new programming, to make them more flexible. This means there will be no dedicated women's measure. All new programming also has to conform to the Lisbon Objectives, which emphasise the knowledge economy and innovation economy.

There is a UK-wide consultation on the National Strategic Reference Framework for European Structural Funds, which includes a chapter on Northern Ireland. This consultation ends on 22 May and it is vital that the needs of women are part of this framework. For info on the consultation: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/europe/nsrf.html>

Training for Women Network (TWN) have initiated a lobby on the current 1.5 measure, if you would like further information on this contact -

Michael Potter (Policy and Research Officer)
Training for Women Network
Tel: 028 9031 9888
Email: michael@twnonline.com

Event Profiles

Women into Politics Conference 7 March 2006 at Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn

Women sporting bright pink t-shirts that read "If you don't do politics, there's not much you do do" organized a diverse group of women speakers who discussed politics, feminism and the need for women to get involved at the Women into Politics "New Perspectives" Conference March 7 during International Women's Week.

There is a need to have diverse applicants in politics, instead of the usual "pale, stale males" says Felicity Huston, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Public Appointments. "People aren't being held back when they actually get involved in politics...diverse people aren't getting involved," Huston says.

Felicity described the main reasons why people don't run for public boards. People are not aware that appointments are open to anyone, which means that more creative advertising methods are needed when there is an open seat. It's not appealing to people because some application forms take days to fill out. Part of the criteria for running is that the applicant has five years experience sitting on a board. In Northern Ireland, in the private sector there are hardly any women sitting on executive boards of companies, which is a form of discrimination, she says. People lack confidence to apply, and there are time commitments involved.

Tanya Hughes from the Ballybeen Women's Centre described how women are being affected by current legislation. "Despite equality legislation, the gender gap still exists. Women will be more marginalized as the economy turns toward knowledge-based skills," Tanya says. "The women's centre caters to women with barriers to education such as low self esteem'.

Julia Kimbell, a blind and deaf woman, shared her personal experiences of being turned away from the workforce. "I've never been in employment because there was discrimination," Julia says. "I wanted to be a bike mechanic, did the training, but could not find a job."

Benedicta Attoh represented the theme of International Women's Week by describing her experience as an African woman in Ireland. Benedicta came to Ireland from Nigeria because she knew an Irish priest and had a longstanding relationship with Irish missionaries.

It was hard for Benedicta to find a job because her

degree wasn't recognized in Ireland. She went on to run in the local elections, and although she did not win a seat, she achieved a strong result in votes. "Politics in Ireland is a family business, people vote for who their grandparents voted for," Benedicta says.

Women are not homogenous, but our problems are, she says. African and Irish women both have problems with child care and abuse. Benedicta described how young girls in Africa are sold into sexual slavery, and how a growing number of men infected with AIDS falsely believe that if they have sex with a virgin they will get rid of the disease.

Benedicta left her first husband and brought her children with her to Ireland. "It's unheard of in African culture for a woman to ever say no to her husband, I was bought, I'm his property," she says.

Workshops

Attendees at the conference broke into small groups for workshops including: How Not to Speak in Public, Resolution 1325, Let's Talk Politics and Campaigning and Lobbying.

The workshop titled "I am Not a Feminist, But..." was led by Eileen Fegan, lecturer at Queen's University in Belfast. When no one in the room actually denied being a feminist, the focus of the workshop was quickly changed to "what feminism means to me."

"I believe you can be a feminist and be feminine," Eileen says. "Some people think that when feminists fight for gender equality that they want to get rid of gender difference. But I want gender difference to cost less."

Eileen discussed the difficulty of engaging men in feminism before women have an agenda. Sharing spaces with men before we're ready can be very intimidating for women, she says. "The focus isn't how we can change men, but what are we doing that's enabling them to stay the same," she says.

Men were not completely ruled out as being allies in the struggle for women's equality, though. Eileen defined a feminist as a man or woman who refuses to participate in women's suffering. "Sometimes you participate simply by your silence," Eileen says.

Eileen says we cannot ignore women's current reality and responsibility, but we also have to reflect future change.

Katie Gaughan



Event profiles & notifications

CEDAW Seminar report - March 2006

Shanthi Dairiam was a special guest at the event held at the Equality Commission in the Equality House, Shaftesbury Square, Belfast and sponsored by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in partnership with the Ad Hoc Women's Policy Group.

Shanthi Dairiam is a women's human rights activist from Malaysia and a member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Dairiam is the founder of International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific (IWRAP-Asia Pacific), which began in 1993 as an independent non-government organisation and initiated collaborative programmes with women's groups in 12 countries of Asia to facilitate the implementation of CEDAW and other relevant UN treaties. Dairiam has served as an expert assisting key UN agencies such as the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. She is currently serving a four-year term (2005-2009) as an expert member of the CEDAW Committee.

Annie Campbell, Commissioner for Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, gave the introduction and welcome. She explained the need for CEDAW, which started in 1979. She said that there have been nearly 2,000 calls to domestic violence help-lines in N. Ireland in the last year.

Ursula O'Hare, from NI-ICTU and Ad Hoc, said the European Convention and the Human Rights Act have been welcomed, but the European Convention does not contain the same range of positive obligations as CEDAW in the public and private sphere. She said the government needs to take positive steps toward eliminating inequality in the workplace, in the home and in schools. She described how the women's sector has been facing an acute funding crisis. Ursula explained several reasons why CEDAW was needed in Northern Ireland. Women are 50% of the labour market, but there is a lack of affordable child care. There is a lack of women in political life. She addressed problems of domestic violence, trafficking, and how women, especially older women, are most at risk of poverty. She further contended that we need to promote CEDAW through education and outreach tools.

Shanthi Dairiam said we have a whole range of international treaties, but none of them specifically for women. CEDAW addresses specificities, particularities and social construction of women's lives. She said the existence of normative standards does not automatically confer rights. The convention does not do anything for you unless you use it. She explained that the UN conventions make legally binding obligations with states so that people can enjoy human rights. This obligation is monitored because the state has to present periodic

reports to the committee. She further explained that there is no enforceability, but it is monitored by international scrutiny. She said this does not work very well unless the rights holders, the women, get involved in the process as well.

Shanthi talked about how some countries choose not to submit reports to the committee, or at least not within the specified timeframe. At times this is due to a lack of capacity, but in other cases it's a lack of taking women's rights seriously, a lack of political will. She said that women need to get involved in monitoring, and women's groups have encouraged governments to report. She explained that women can be present at the review, and that the presence of women in the UN has created a more respectable relationship between governments and NGO's. She said some of the continuing impediments to the full implementation of the convention are a lack of understanding about the definition of discrimination. Discrimination can be unintended, and neutral policies are discriminating toward disadvantaged women. She explained that the identical treatment of women and men can lead to discrimination of women. Different treatment might sometimes be needed to promote the realisation of equality for men and women.

Shanthi said there is a problem with culture in respect to CEDAW. Cultural norms in some states says women can't be this or that, and this can sometimes override the convention. For instance, women in Japan were being discriminated in the workforce because of the **neutrality** of the Equality of Employment Act. Shanthi said that 'neutrality is discrimination' and urged the continuing challenging of this and the need to establish and support positive action to tackle discrimination against women.

Katie Gaughan

Forthcoming Events

'Getting a fair deal for women on pensions' Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Tuesday 16th May 10am. This seminar on women and pensions is organised by Age Concern NI and sponsored by Mary Bradley MLA. All are welcome, but please contact Pam Tilson at ACNI on 028 9024 5729, or email: ptilson@ageconcernni.org to add your name to the guest list.

'Stars in their Eyes', Sat 17th June, Errigle Inn, Belfast. A fundraising event for the Royal Maternity Neo Natal Unit for sick and premature babies. For further information please contact patricia@womenstec.com

'All Change or small change' - The Review of Public Administration and its impact on the voluntary and community sector. Tuesday 23rd May 2006, 9.30am - 3.00pm at NICVA. To book a place on 9087 7777 or email cathy.breslin@nicva.org

WSN Policy work March - May 2006

New Post-Primary Arrangements and Proposal for a draft Education (Northern Ireland) Order, Department of Education.

This is probably one of the most important changes in terms of education policy in Northern Ireland for many years. The Education Order outlined how the education system would change further to the abolition of the transfer test (11+). The key elements to these changes include the abolition of the transfer test and access to a much wider range of general and applied (academic and vocational) courses for all pupils from age 14. There will be a new Foundation Stage (aged 4 and 5) to ease the change from pre-school to primary school with formal learning to be introduced gradually. Compulsory elements of the new curriculum will be slimmer and up to age 14 it is envisaged that all pupils will have studied a broad and general curriculum.

In our response to the Education Order we acknowledged that educational attainment is intrinsically linked to socio-economic status, life-chances, choices and well-being. Evidence has shown that the transfer test has generally had a detrimental impact on the lives of children living in disadvantaged areas. We agreed with the Ministers statement that *'The Education system must give all of our young people equal opportunity to fulfil their potential no matter where they live, the school they attend or their social background.'*

Furthermore we agreed with the need for an enhanced and high quality careers advice and guidance service in all schools, acknowledging that this service is currently poor in many post primary schools and can have a particularly detrimental affect on girls. Due to the lack of high quality careers guidance girls often make choices that involve studying what are seen to be 'gender specific' subjects and this can affect them detrimentally when they move into the world of work. In the recent report by the Women and Work Commission, 'Shaping a Fairer Future' they urged the government to examine the way in which education is delivered to *'reduce stereotypical choices, improve take-up of vocational skills training, and improve employment outcomes for young women'*. WSN believe this to be a vital component in addressing job segregation which remains blatant in the labour market.

We also urged the department to publicise the significant value of 'vocational study' as the prevailing societal view is that 'academic' as opposed to 'vocational' study is of higher value. We therefore believe that a key task must be to ensure vocational qualifications are equivalised with their counterpart academic qualifications.

In conclusion we recommended that more action be taken in order to ensure children from disadvantaged areas/backgrounds are given the opportunity to realise their full potential through the education system. Therefore we proposed that the department would implement the following strategies in disadvantaged areas - smaller class sizes, incentives to attract and retain teachers and adequate resources in terms of Special Needs teachers (particularly in early years education).

'New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs'. DHSSPS March 2006

WSN responded to this consultation undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Services in March 2006. In our response we noted that the proposed strategy places great emphasis on illegal drug misuse. While recognising that this is indeed a very important issue we urged the department to also examine the issue of the use or dependence on 'prescription drugs'. This is often an invisible problem and is particularly prevalent amongst women living in disadvantaged communities. Evidence in the consultation document shows that, during their life-time, women are more likely to have taken anti-depressants. In terms of life-time prevalence, 28.5% of women have taken anti-depressants, compared with 16.2% of men.

Recognising that dependence on prescription drugs can result from a myriad of factors including stress, trauma, and poverty, we recommended that this issue should be fully examined and investigated with a view to mapping the full extent of the problem. We also advocated that proper resourcing structures be put in place to ensure counselling services are easily accessed in disadvantaged areas.

Domestic violence is often exacerbated by alcohol and drug abuse. We therefore welcomed that people living with domestic violence were identified as a vulnerable group in the strategy.

WSN Policy work March - May 2006

'A Strategy for Supporting Delivery of Voluntary Advice Services to the Community'. Department for Social Development. March 06

It is clear that the proposals outlined in this strategy will have a huge and negative impact in terms of the provision of specialist advice to women throughout Northern Ireland and this is of great concern to both the Women's Support Network and to the overall women's sector.

To inform this response WSN undertook a brief mapping exercise of specialist advice provision delivered by WSN member organisations. There are a variety of projects run by WSN members that address women's health and well-being. Professional counselling is often on offer as an aspect of these projects. Simultaneously, some WSN members offer specialist (and generalist) advice to women as a core part of their overall work. In the past, four women's centres in the Greater Belfast area provided this service. However due to the less favourable funding environment over the last number of years, two of these advice units have closed. Today, Fall's Women's Centre offers specialist advice to women and Windsor Women's Centre offers both specialist advice to women and generalist advice to the local community.

It is noted in the strategy document and the EQIA that this proposal will result in no specialist advice provision at a local level but rather that specialist advice would be available at a regional level. Our serious concerns regarding this proposal are outlined below.

1. In terms of specialist advice services provision to Section 75 categories of people, we would contend that the requirements and needs of women are different to those of other section 75 groups. Women who seek specialist advice only do so because their problems can be of an extremely sensitive nature. This is borne out by our discussions with both Fall's and Windsor Women's Centres. Advice is sought on issues such as domestic violence, rape, sexual violence and abuse, trauma and health and well-being issues that are particular to women. It is common practice for many other organisations eg. Advice centres, statutory agencies and other community and voluntary organisations, to refer women who are experiencing such problems to the advice units in either Fall's or Windsor. Due to the closure of other specialist advice services to women in the Greater Belfast area, women's organisations throughout the area also refer women requiring specialist advice to one of these centres.

2. The reality is that currently there is no regional organisation providing specialist advice to women in Northern Ireland. The advice services provided to lone parents, minority ethnic groups and elderly people by voluntary organisations at a regional level are not mirrored in the Women's sector. Moreover, because of the sensitive issues involved in the area of specialist advice provision to women, the Women's Support Network believe that it is crucial that these services are provided locally and in the areas where there is greatest need. Both Fall's and Windsor Women's centres are situated in areas that experience high levels of socio-economic deprivation.

3. Clearly, there is a need to ensure that high quality standards are embedded in the provision of advice services across Northern Ireland and WSN believe that this must be an integral aspect of the strategy.

Conclusion

We reiterated our serious concerns regarding the negative impact that the proposals within this strategy will have on women in Northern Ireland. We believe that due to the sensitive nature of advice needs of many women, it is crucial that specialist advice services to women exist and such services are more efficient and effective when provided locally. There is currently no regional specialist advice provision to women and this therefore does not correspond with the proposals in the document. The proposals outlined in this strategy regarding specialist advice provision to women must take account of other key government overarching strategies such as the impending Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Gender Equality Strategy.

Forthcoming Consultations

Protect Life, A Shared Vision, The Northern Ireland Suicide prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2006 – 2011' (DHSSPS) .

'Work and Families, Choice and Flexibility, Consultation on Regulations and Policy' (Department for Employment and Learning).

If you want copies of any WSN responses -call the office and Lynn can email/post you a copy. Alternatively you can view/download our policy/consultation responses on our website - www.womenssupportnetwork.org



NEWS

EXPLORE YOUR -



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WHAT WILL I BE DOING?

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- ⇒ Share your experiences in confidence with other lone parents

HOW DO I TAKE PART?

If you are a lone parent who wants to join *Possibilities* then call us on 028 9023 1417 or you can email us at possibilities@gingerbreadni.org



Broken Rainbow

Broken Rainbow is a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) helpline service for victim/survivors who experience domestic violence. Broken Rainbow is run by LGBT people. We are a UK wide organisation and are currently trying to develop our service in Northern Ireland. We are a confidential, listening, information and signposting helpline service for LGBT people who experience domestic violence.

Contact Details

UK LGBT Helpline: 08452 60 44 60
 RNID typetalk
 Office: 08452 60 55 60 Fax: 020 7394 5510
 Email mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk
 Web www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

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