

# Women's Support Network News

WSN

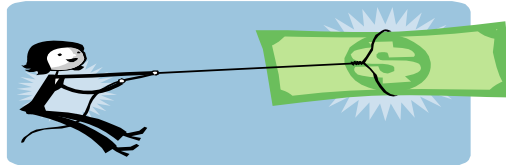
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## Awaiting the outcome

In the June edition of our Newsletter we updated you with the DSD led review group meetings between the government departments and the Women's sector. These meetings concluded at the end of June. Prior to the last meeting the departments had requested six position papers on key areas within the women's sector, including childcare, community development, infrastructure, education, rural women and policy. Further information on these papers is featured on page 2.

The last meeting of the review group was held at Footprints Women's Centre. All of the departments were represented at this meeting. Each department gave feedback on the position papers that were presented to their department. The feedback was fairly positive except for OFMDFM



who said that they would not be providing any funding. The presentation by Footprints was moved to the end of the meeting and the departments did not stay, this should be noted as it was very frustrating for Footprints staff and users who had put a lot of effort into the presentation and preparation for the meeting.

A full report on the future funding and sustainability of the women's sector is now being finalised. We are hopeful that the report and subsequent recommendations will be available in September. Tom Kiernan (DSD/VCU) informed the advisory group that he will keep them informed of the progress of the report for Minister Hansen.

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### Other headlines this Autumn

- Position papers on the work of the women's sector
- New term courses and programmes available to women
- The Anti-poverty Strategy Campaign



## WSN Website



WSN have fully updated our website. Thanks to Hongyan Yang for all her hard work on this. Hongyan is a post-graduate student with the University of Ulster and was on placement in WSN for six weeks. In that time she over-hauled the website and updated it with the latest copies of our newsletter and policy documents over the last 18 months. You can also find some background information about WSN, its history, aims and mission statement. All staff contact details are also there. You can check it out at—

[www.womenssupportnetwork.org](http://www.womenssupportnetwork.org)

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## The review process - continued from Page 1

The Administration team (made up of the same review group representatives and Eleanor Jordan (Windsor Women's Centre), May De Silva (Women into Politics) and Anne McVicker (Women's Tec) - the main aim of the administration group is to deal with the practical process of getting monies out to groups and getting them out on time) also met with Tom Kiernan on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August to assess the financial situation and to lobby for the emergency monies to be extended until 31 March, which would bring groups in Belfast in line with the rural groups funded by DARD through an emergency fund. Tom informed us that he had put a strong case for emergency money to continue for a further 6 months, this has not been confirmed by the department as yet - we will keep you appraised of this and any further developments.

If you would like further information on this process, please contact Women's Support Network.

### POSITION PAPERS ON THE WOMEN'S SECTOR FOR THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WOMEN'S SECTOR REVIEW GROUP

This has been an exceptionally busy summer for the women's sector. Six excellent position papers on the topics of Childcare & Children's provision, Women and Community Development, Women's Sector Infrastructure, The Rural Women's Sector, Women's Sector Education Provision and the Women's Sector Policy role, were produced for the government departments involved in discussions on resourcing the women's sector:

- **Childcare** called for a joined up approach by Departments to support the diversity of childcare provided by the women's sector
- **Community development** outlined the wide range of work undertaken by women's organisations within their local communities and also described the work of other organisations, those that have developed models for the delivery of integrated services at local level and those that have done much to promote women's presence in public life.
- The **future infrastructure** of the women's sector proposed a structure of sub-regional organisations in Belfast, North-West and Rural, working in partnership with a regional organisation. As the Task Force report has said, an ideal infrastructure cannot emerge from an imposed structure and all this will take careful and open negotiations between the sector and between the sector and government.
- **Rural** presented the rural perspective on the other position papers, describing the current situation of the rural women's sector and outlining the major policy issues facing rural women. It urged DARD to address the need of disadvantaged rural women and to promote equality for women in rural society.
- **Life-long learning** and the women's sector compared the flexibility and holistic approach of women's education with the more formal, accreditation model of the FE sector. The success of the women's sector in meeting the needs of women in disadvantaged communities has to be recognised and given financial support by DEL.
- Sustaining the **policy role** of the women's sector argued that government had to accept its international obligations to ensure that women were fully represented in decision-making, which included consultation in policy decisions. It considered the policy objectives of government departments, demonstrating how these could be more effectively achieved if community-based women were resourced to work in partnership with different agencies. The ultimate aim was to ensure that women were fully represented at all levels of policy and decision making.

You can download/view the position papers in full on our website - [www.womenssupportnetwork.org](http://www.womenssupportnetwork.org)



## Outreach & Development News

### Supporting member groups

During the past few months much of outreach and support to member groups has been in gathering and collating information to aid in the development of the position papers on the women's sector for the inter-departmental women's sector review group.

Information on the current VCU and Neighbourhood Renewal position with member groups has also been gathered on a bi-weekly basis. This information is fed in directly to DSD/VCU through the administration meetings between the women's sector and DSD/VCU. These meetings enable the women's sector to address any relevant issues and to follow up queries from individual groups, directly with VCU. We would urge that groups keep in contact with WSN to ensure the flow of information and that any pertinent issues are dealt with as soon as possible.

### Childcare Lobby Working Group

The Childcare Lobby Working Group was formed through the Greater Belfast Community Network (GBCN). It is a consortium of representatives from the childcare, women's and community/voluntary sector in the Greater Belfast area, actively lobbying for strong representation and resourcing for the broad childcare sector.

WSN are involved because all of the women's centres and many of the women's organisations we work with are providing childcare in some of the recognised and documented areas of greatest need, addressing a range of issues such as educational disadvantage and lack of mainstream service provision. This valuable work is being undermined as the childcare sector is currently supported by a piece-meal funding programme that is often under resourced and in crisis.

See below for more details about this and the appointment of a Minister for Children for Northern Ireland.

### 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 on visits, events or the newsletter contact Siobh  n on 9023 6923 or alternatively you can email to [outreach@womenssupportnetwork.org](mailto:outreach@womenssupportnetwork.org)*

## Childcare Lobby Group

The Childcare Lobby Group (CLG) was formed through the Greater Belfast Community Network (GBCN), though the secretariat of the group has now been shifted from GBCN to CiNI (Children in Northern Ireland) due to a funding crisis with GBCN. The key aim of this lobby group is to promote strong representation and resourcing for the broad childcare sector. In the last issue of the WSN Newsletter we told you of the conference the CLG organised in June, to raise awareness of our lobby. The Conference was well attended with over 80 delegates and representatives from Childcare agencies, government departments and local politicians. A petition was launched at the conference. WSN have already circulated this to all member groups with our last newsletter mailout.

The focus of the campaign, following the circulation and launch of the Childcare Petition, was to get a meeting with Secretary of State Peter Hain to raise

these issues and see them represented in the political arena. Baroness May Blood has been supporting the group and working with us to secure this meeting to ensure that the childcare issue is profiled on the political agenda. Following the announcement of a new NI Minister for Children (Lord Jeff Rooker was appointed to this role in August 05) the Secretary of State has assured Baroness Blood that the CLG will have one of the first meetings with the new Minister for Children.

On his appointment Lord Rooker claimed that he was 'astounded' at the lack of funding and planning for childcare services in Northern Ireland. The CLG hope to secure a meeting with Lord Rooker as soon as the holiday season is over, in order to address these key issues of funding and future planning.

We will keep you updated with our progress.

# New term programmes & courses

## Education programmes in Women's centres

September sees the start of the new academic term, and not only for the kids! The women's centres and organisations across Belfast offer a great number of programmes and courses for women. The learning is flexible, accessible and on-site creche or childcare/eldercare costs and travel costs are subsidised.



### Atlas, Lisburn

**Contact Helen 9260 5806**

Atlas offer courses in computers & IT, personal development, art & leisure, assertiveness, as well as a specific community/personal development programme for women – S.W.I.T.C. (Strengthening Women in the Community). A special enrolment week will be held in August 2005, however enrolment on programmes is ongoing.

### Greenway Women's Centre

**Contact Jo/Nuala 9079 9912**

GWC offers various IT courses, maths & english GCSEs, essential skills, first aid, sign language, basic hygiene and health & safety as well as vocational courses and a volunteer programme.

### Ardoyne

**Contact Mary 9074 3536**

Ardoyne Women's Group are offering Parenting & Learning Together, various IT programmes including CLAIT and ECDL, Women in Leadership, driving theory and a physical fitness programme for women. Enrolment is ongoing throughout the Autumn.

### Ballybeen Women's Centre

**Contact Amanda 9048 1632**

Ballybeen Women's Centre's new education and training programme includes: pre-access history & sociology, GCSEs english, maths & psychology,

deaf awareness, intro to community development, intro to women's health, intro to computers, CLAIT, ECDL, drug awareness for parents, Women Moving On, communication skills, story sacks with communication skills, first aid and mixed crafts.

### Ballymurphy Women's Centre

**Contact Mary/Eilish 9022 3220**

Ballymurphy operate a Stress Clinic from 9am – 9pm, 52 weeks of the year, this offers holistic and complementary therapies, such as Reiki and Aromatherapy to promote physical and mental well-being.

### Falls Women's Centre

**Contact Jacqui/Madeline 9032 7672**

Falls Women's Centre offer IT training such as ECDL, other programmes include Women in Leadership and personal development courses. They will be hosting an enrolment day on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September.

### Shankill Women's Centre

**Contact Sandra/Roberta 9024 0642**

Shankill Women's Centre offers courses in essential skills, flower arranging, Irish language & history and various GCSE courses. Enrolment days will be held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> and Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> of September.

### Women's Tec

**Contact Helen/Patricia/Francine 9074 9810**

Women's Tec are offering 10-week courses in basic electrics, creative home electrics, introduction to joinery, first steps in furniture making, mosaic, special paint effects, computer craft, web design & set up and pc repair and maintenance. They also offer ECDL which is around 32 weeks duration and Trading Places Citywide – a 52 week course where you can train to NVQ Level 2 in the trade of your choice - plumbing, joinery, brickwork etc. Women's Tec enrolment week starting 12th September and they will also be at the Odyssey Jobscene Fair on the 22nd and 23rd September and hosting a seminar on the barriers facing women entering into non-traditional trades.



# New term programmes & courses

## Footprints Women's Centre

**Contact Christine 9092 3444**

Footprints Women's Centre are offering a wide range of courses from September 2005. Courses include social and recreational programmes such as confident cooking, a reading group right through to accredited courses at levels 1, 2 and 3, including personal development and essential skills, Women Progressing at level two and level three is access to uni – women's studies. This helps create a flexible and progression route for women to take. Footprints are hosting information days on 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th of September 2005 from 9.30 - 3.30pm.

## Windsor Women's Centre

**Joan/Martina/Christine 9023 5451**

Windsor Women's Centre are offering a range of holistic therapies, where students can gain nationally recognised qualifications in Aromatherapy, Reflexology, Indian Head Massage, Body Massage, Hot Stones and more! Full training and support plus free uniform are provided, plus the chance to make new friends, and forge a new career. Also available are a range of GCSE level courses, assertiveness training, group therapy, counselling, anger & stress management, I.C.T., Pilates and more!

## Women into Politics

**Contact Isobel 9024 3363**

Women into Politics is delivering both accredited and non accredited training. These courses include: Lets Talk Politics ( O.C.N. Level 1), Making The Leap (O.C.N. Levels 2&3) Women and Conflict and Training for Trainers. These programmes can be tailored to meet the needs and interests of the group and aim to enable women to develop the confidence to talk about political issues of most concern to them. Topics include: Tackling Discrimination and Implementing Equality, Making Meetings work for you, Public speaking, Conflict Management and Women, participation and power.

If you wish to have one of the staff come out to speak to your group about the programmes or for any other info please contact Isobel on the above number or by email [ways@womenintopolitics.org](mailto:ways@womenintopolitics.org)

## Women's News

**Contact Catherine 9032 2823**

Women's News is delivering the 'Community Publishing and Media Skills' course at its Belfast training room beginning the third week in September. This is a 12 week course and is accredited by the OCN at levels 1, 2 and 3. The course is free and childcare and travel are subsidised. For further information please contact Catherine McCartney, 028 9032 2823 or email: [trainingwomensnews@btconnect.com](mailto:trainingwomensnews@btconnect.com)

## Lenadoon Women's Group

**Contact Greta/Joanne 9061 1205**

A new programme on emotional well-being will be starting on the 12th & 13th of September. This programme combines physical & mental health and wellness with personal development. Parenting classes are also available for parents of children and young people in the following age groups; 0–6 years, 5–15 years and Teenagers. For further information contact the centre.

## East Belfast Community Education Centre

**Contact Kelly 9067 2105**

EBCEC are offering a number of programmes for the autumn, these range from IT programmes (including introduction to computers through to web design) to various education and training programmes like local history, alternative therapies, essential skills as well as NVQ and pre-GCSE programmes. For further information on all programmes available contact Kelly at EBCEC.

## Carew II

**Contact Andrew 9045 1730**

Carew hope to offer a full range of programmes including NVQ II & III in Childcare, IT programmes such as CLAIT and ECDL, as well as personal development courses such as creative writing and Spanish. Also on 10th Sept they are hosting a 'Celebration of Difference Day' from 2pm–5pm, this includes foodstalls, henna tatoeing, activities and performance. Its aim is to highlight the issue of diversity in a celebratory way. This event is open to everyone and is free of charge. For more information on this and on any of the courses contact Carew II directly.

## WSN Policy work June - August

### **Proposals for the Regulation of Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles, DOE, June 2005**

Reform of taxis and private hire vehicles is an important issue for women. Four per cent of people depend on taxis as their main mode of transport and greater accessibility of taxis, particularly late at night, is a serious issue for women's safety. These proposals will not increase the numbers of cars on the road or make it easier to hire a taxi late at night, although there are some welcome reforms. The two-tier system of taxis is to remain, whereby only the black London-type taxis can be hailed on the street.

The name of 'private hire taxis' is to be changed to 'private hire vehicles' to make the situation more clear. There is a proposal to reintroduce a driving test for new drivers. We feel that a test would help to curb the excessive speeds of many taxis and PHV drivers. We also support the requirement that new drivers receive additional training in customer care and disability equity and awareness training. Worryingly, at the present time stretched limousines are not licensed. We have urged that this issue is given urgent attention to ensure the safety of the young people who are the main users of these vehicles.

### **Equality Consultation Questionnaire: Five Education and Library Board Draft Financial Plans for the Period April 2005-March 2006,**

The WSN views with great concern the proposals of the five Education and Library Boards to cut costs over the next financial year.

We believe there are serious equality implications in the proposals put forward and we highlighted a number of issues that we felt would have a disproportionate impact upon some of the least advantaged children in our society: cuts in the music service; cessation of homework centre provision in Belfast; closure of family literacy centres; the ending of the toy and book library service; cuts in provision to children with special

needs; increase in the price of school meals; reduction in provision of English as an additional language; withdrawal of funding for swimming.

We stated that further evidence of the impact that this will have on children is necessary before decisions can be made and we called for detailed consultation with all affected parties.

### **NI Policing Board: District Policing Partnership Draft Equality Scheme, July 2005**

WSN made a number of comments on the scheme, beginning with a hope that the legal obligation to ensure members of the District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) are 'representative of the community in the district' will include a gender balance on boards.

We also urged that members of the public should be given more opportunity to engage more informally with DPPs. We further welcomed a commitment to full and inclusive consultation and urged that this be achieved through resourcing consultees in order to engage more fully and inclusively. In terms of training of DPP members we asked who would undertake such training and would Section 75 groups be involved in providing input for this training.

### **OFMDFM: Promoting Equality of Opportunity: Implementing EU Equality Obligations in Northern Ireland: Updating the Sex Discrimination Order, July 2005**

Although this was partly a legal exercise directed by GB, we felt that there was a lost opportunity to strengthen further the definition of indirect discrimination and also to strengthen employers' duties to counter sexual harassment by a third party.

The 'small employers' exemption from discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave will not be removed until April 2007. Positive action remains permissible, although we argued in favour of legislation that was not merely permissive but included a mandatory representation of 40% for women.



## WSN Policy work June–August

### Notice of Future Consultations

- OFMDFM: New TSN – Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy – August 2005
- Review of Public Administration- Sept 2005
- Heritage Lottery Fund S 75 Screening Report – September 2005
- Probation Board for NI: Community Development Funding, Equality Impact Assessment – September 2005

### OFMDFM: New TSN – Towards an Anti-Poverty Strategy – August 2005

Women's Support Network will not be making a separate response to the NEW TSN: towards an anti-poverty strategy consultation. Instead, we have endorsed NICVA's call for the sector to back NICVA's letter to Minister Rooker calling for discussion on how to achieve a strong, effective anti-poverty strategy.

This is part of the '*Enough is Enough*' campaign—this the latest voluntary and community sector campaign for an effective anti-poverty strategy. Frustrated at the latest document to emerge from OFMDFM, voluntary and community sector organisations are working together to call for the development of an effective and robust strategy to tackle poverty in NI.

There are numerous ways in which your organisation can get involved such as, signing an open letter to Jeff Rooker, the Minister of State with responsibility for the poverty strategy, attending a demonstration at Castle Buildings (details below) or contacting your elected representatives. Find out more at [www.communityni.org](http://www.communityni.org) or email: [enoughisenough@nicva.org](mailto:enoughisenough@nicva.org) WSN believes that the strategy as it stands is too employment focused, has no resources attached to it and says nothing about what it would do to improve childcare, all of which has a direct impact on families and on women's ability to participate in the labour market. Our unequal educational system will remain. There are no positive action measures, nothing about work-life balance, about funding advice centres in working class communities. There is no sense that anything will

be done to tackle social isolation & promote inclusion.

NICVA will be staging a protest at Castle Buildings on **22 September at 11am** and are calling on the support of the voluntary and community sector.

### Review of Public Administration—Sept 2005

The Review of Public Administration is concerned with the future of our public services and with the future powers and boundaries of our local councils. All of this is very important for women. We are promised that the money saved through the cutting of bureaucracy, particularly in reducing the numbers of health and education bodies, will be put into front-line services. That's the good news. On the other hand, it will also lead to the loss of jobs in areas employing large numbers of women. A reduction in the numbers of public bodies and in local government could also impact upon the already low level of women's representation in public life. We need to insist that positive action measures are implemented to boost women's role in decision-making and the shake-up around the RPA provides an opportunity for this – if we are vocal enough. There are also opportunities for the women's sector in the RPA, as it is envisaged that the voluntary and community sector will work in partnership in terms of planning, co-ordination and delivery of services. At the moment, this is not spelled out in detail, so it is important that a strong response is made to the consultation.

What are the views of the WSN membership – particularly in terms of the participation of women in local community groups and neighbourhood organisations?

Are you happy to see the numbers of councils being reduced, possibly to 7 or 11?

The deadline for responses is 30<sup>th</sup> September. If you have anything you would like included, then contact Margaret at WSN.

**If you want copies of any WSN responses -call the office and Margaret can email/post you a copy. Alternatively you can view/download our policy/consultation responses on our website - [www.womenssupportnetwork.org](http://www.womenssupportnetwork.org)**



## Events

**The Ad Hoc Women's Policy Group invites you to a Presentation and Discussion by the Gender Equality Unit of Youth Action on -**

**Topic - 'The Aspirations of Young Women in Northern Ireland'**

**Date - Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> Sept**

**Time - 10:30am**

**Venue - Equality House, Belfast**

Youth Action in partnership with UJJ over a 3 year period are carrying out this research as a follow on from a 1990 piece of research by June Trimble entitle 'Equality of Opportunity', funded by the Big Lottery Fund. This 3 year project will use the data gathered to devise a number of pilot projects to address the emergent gaps in services provided for young women. Stage one of the research is underway and issues currently facing young women include:

- Earnings gap despite educational qualifications
- Underrepresented in senior management
- Public appointments

These are underpinned by life chances such as disability, sexual orientation, class etc. Also examined will be the current media interest in young women's behaviour such as alcohol, sexual promiscuity from the experiences of young women themselves. The research will look at the transition to adulthood especially in a society emerging from conflict. At another level the research will attempt to uncover where women's voices are located and who represents these views.

The overall aim is to effect change and at policy level the research will also provide recommendations for youth policy regarding participation of young women in NI.

Tea and coffee will be available.

For further information contact Judith Cross at the Equality Commission, Tel: 028 9050 0568; Email: [jcross@equalityni.org](mailto:jcross@equalityni.org)

## Challenges and opportunities for Investing for Health Conference 2005

The second Investing for Health (IfH) conference, Challenges and opportunities for Investing for Health, will be held on Thursday 17 November 2005 at the Radisson Roe Hotel, Limavady.

IfH, the public health strategy for Northern Ireland, contains a framework to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities through an approach that is based on partnership working across all sectors. The conference will highlight the extensive work to date and explore the challenges and opportunities for IfH, build commitment and inform future work to ensure the strategy's potential is fully realised.

The one-day conference provides an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge gained in delivering the goals and objectives of IfH and to reflect on insights and learning.

The conference themes are:

- engaging people, communities and organisations;
- building networks and partnerships;
- measuring outcome, impact and effect;
- mainstreaming agendas, priorities and action.

The conference fee for delegates from the voluntary/community sector is £30, or £25 for bookings that are received by Friday 2 September 2005. The closing date for booking a place at the conference is Thursday 27 October 2005.

For further information contact Karen Glass at the Health Promotion Agency, Tel: 028 9031 1611; Email: [k.glass@hpani.org.uk](mailto:k.glass@hpani.org.uk)

### **Links in Europe**

As you may know WSN is currently funded under Measure 4.1 - Networking in Europe and beyond.

As part of the European dimension of our work we are hoping to carry out a short research project on forming and maintaining links between our member groups and similar groups and organisations working across Europe. This hasn't been finalised yet, but we would be interested in your views on this. You can contact Patricia or Siobhán at WSN - 9023 6923.