

Membership News

Mae McQuillan - Chair, Women's Support Network has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List with an M.B.E. for services to the community in Northern Ireland (Belfast) and the women's sector



Mae has been a Board member and Chair of WSN for over six years and has worked tirelessly to support the staff to deliver services within the women's sector. Mae is also Secretary of the Board of Greenway Women's Centre where she also works as a volunteer.

A hearty Congratulations to Mae from all the staff and Board members of the Women's Support Network.

New Centre Manager for Greenway Women's Centre

WSN would like to warmly welcome Isobel Loughran who is the new interim Centre Manager at Greenway Women's Centre.

Isobel has over 18 years experience within the women's sector and is currently Chair of Footprints Women's Centre Board of Directors. WSN are looking forward to working with Isobel in the future.

New Staff Member for WSN

WSN would like to welcome **Mary O'Rawe** to the staff team of the WCSP. Mary has a long history of working with women and was previously on the staff of Ardoyne Women's Group and Falls Women's Centre.

For further information about the project contact WCSP coordinator Caroline McCord or Project Support Worker Mary by emailing communitydevelopment@wsn.org.uk or Tel: 028 9023 6923.

WSN Members Survey Update

The WSN Member's Survey report is now completed with very positive feedback from members.

These recommendations and other suggestions will help to shape the work of WSN including the development of the next Strategic Plan, WSN Member's Profile, WSN events and member's services. WSN appreciate the support of the membership and would like to thank all of the members who completed the survey.

Women's Support Network is funded by the Department for Social Development, through VCU (Voluntary & Community Unit)



A Warm Welcome to our New Members

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- Matt Talbot Women's Group
- Ulster People's College

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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Where are the women?

More women are needed in politics. This was one of the calls of the Women's Manifesto which was launched on the 19th April.

The Women's Support Network joined with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), Foyle Women's Information Network, Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Northern Ireland Committee to urge parties to set targets to boost female representation, not just at Stormont but in local council chambers.

Other key areas which were addressed in the Women's Manifesto included Childcare, the Economy, Violence against Women and Education. The WSN Policy Officer made a presentation on the importance of community-based education for women at the launch.

Now that the debates, posters and party political posturing of April & May are fast becoming a distant memory it is the time to reflect on some of the outcomes of the elections and particularly what they mean for women here.

Women represent a slight majority in Northern Ireland; 51% of the population are female. 18.5% of the new MLAs are female, therefore 81.5% of our legislature is male. To say this is non representative is to hugely under-state the fact. The 20 returned women MLA's represents a small improvement; up 2% from the last Assembly elections in 2007; even though the candidates put forward by the parties was marginally down on 2007's figures.



There are a number of new female faces at Stormont – Brenda Hale won a seat for the DUP in Lagan Valley. Another female newcomer to the assembly is Sandra Overend. The daughter of outgoing UUP MLA Billy Armstrong, she won his seat in Mid Ulster. Jo-Anne Dobson is also making her debut in Stormont. She won a seat for the UUP in Upper Bann. Judith Cochrane secured the Alliance Party a second seat in East Belfast and newcomer Paula Bradley will represent the DUP.

While we welcome the new female MLAs we must note the loss of Dawn Purvis who ran as an independent candidate in East Belfast. We will miss Dawn as an ally of the women's sector in Stormont but we hope that we will work together in the future.



Some of the speakers at launch of the Women's Manifesto

Member Spotlight on...



Newry and Mourne Women is a voluntary organisation of women from the Newry & Mourne area who have an interest in community development and women's issues. It was formed in 1999 to examine the needs of women in the Newry & Mourne area and to assist women's groups in the community to address these needs in a manner that is supportive, empowering and promotes advocacy.

Current projects:

Ripples of the Past, Present and Future Project

This Project brings women together on an Intergenerational cross-Border cross-Community basis to engage in storytelling, capturing experiences of the conflicts of the past. This programme has been running for a year and we have produced a book entitled 'Ripples'. Recently, as part of this project, a group of twelve women completed the project with an educational fact-finding trip to the Ulster American Folk Park. As a follow up to the Ripples project Newry & Mourne Women held a Gala DVD Launch on 31st May 2011, 140 women attended the event and a very enjoyable evening was had by all.

Positive Relations

Newry & Mourne Women have been delivering Positive Relations cross-border, cross-community training since 2009 and this will continue until November 2012. Twenty Cross-Border Cross-Community women are currently involved in the project and they recently had the opportunity to travel to Belfast and enjoy a tour of the historical sights including a trip on the river Lagan in the Splash Bus. This amphibious tour gives visitors the opportunity for a view of Belfast's historical sights from land and water. The tour gave women the opportunity to mix, discuss course content and socialise. The day ended with a 3 course lunch. A perfect, memorable and enjoyable way to establish and build positive relations between a diverse range of women.

Glenree Women's Programme

Newry & Mourne Women have twenty women participating in The Women's Programme at Glenree Peace & Reconciliation Centre. The programme is about sharing stories to gain insight and healing, new techniques for leadership and self-awareness. Over the course of one year through four residential gatherings, the group comes together to build a better future for themselves, their families and the larger communities in which they live. They form new cross-border friendships filled with respect and confidence. This programme has four learning modules that are offered over four weekend residential throughout the year. Topics include Assertiveness at Personal, Professional and Community Level, Conflict Transformation and Difference and Diversity.

Policy & Consultation

Newry & Mourne Women also facilitate discussion on relevant policies that may affect the women we work with. Recent examples of this include the setting up of a roundtable discussion on Cohesion Sharing & Integration and a Consultation event on District Policing Partnerships and Safety Matters. These events ensure that women's views from this area are heard, recorded and stated loudly and clearly to Government.

Networking & Support

Newry & Mourne Women run a number of networking events throughout the year; these events are for groups and for individual women. These offer women the opportunity to meet, access support, socialise and share experiences.

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Women's News Magazine



At the end of June 2011 Women's News will close its doors for the final time. Despite the best efforts of the staff and board of Women's News it has not been possible to secure funding for the organisation past the end of June. Women's News has made a very valuable contribution to the work of the women's sector since their inception in 1984. From that time Women's News has worked for the advancement of women in society in terms of communication, education and employment, as well as participating in the Peace and Reconciliation process through promoting understanding between women from different backgrounds and opinions. Women's News has also afforded a vital space for women to share their views, enable expression and provided a unique forum for communication between women, for women.

WSN would like to thank all of the staff and volunteers of Women's News for all of your hard work and endeavours over the past 27 years and we wish you all the very best for the future.

WCRP News



The WCRP held two social economy events for the wider women's sector during March in Derry/Londonderry and Belfast. Both events were well attended and emphasised the entrepreneurial role of local women. Speakers gave their views and experience of setting up and running a social economy business and described some of the benefits to local communities.

The NW event speakers included Cresco Trust, Avert Foyle Women's Aid, NOW and WOMEN'S TEC. Helen Crickard from WOMEN'S TEC, highlighted the value of non-traditional skills training for women, the importance of being multi-skilled and being able to seize opportunities in order to compete.

The Belfast event venue showcased Shankill Women's Centre's new social economy 'Small Wonders II'. Betty Carlisle, MBE, spoke at the event and a video was shown of the journey Shankill has taken to turn a derelict building into a community business.

Footprints Women's Centre spoke about their catering business set up in 1997 and their daycare business established in 2003. The profit made from its businesses are put back into the women's centre and used to ensure that crucial services, often difficult to finance, can still be provided. Footprints Catering Ltd provided lunch at the Belfast event.

WCRP Education Prospectus

The WCRP Education sub-group have been working closely with an IT consultant to develop the Education Prospectus into an online version. This work is in its final stages of development and will soon be piloted with Centres to enable them to enter their course information online. The online Prospectus will be launched later this summer.



Promoting the social economy sector in Northern Ireland

This Newsletter's guest columnist Ann Graham, Director of the Social Economy Network, provides us with an overview of the key considerations if your group are thinking of setting up a social enterprise.

Why set up a social enterprise?

Cuts in public expenditure and decreasing funding opportunities have led to many voluntary and community groups considering the model of social enterprise as a means to future sustainability. It's a more rewarding and ethical way of doing business. There are many examples of successful social enterprises set up by voluntary and community groups that have adopted an entrepreneurial approach. It is not an easy option and it's not a panacea for funding/financial needs. There are however many advantages to adopting a social enterprise business model - you can focus on developing the business rather than trying to find a fit with funding initiatives; you are freed from the bureaucracy and monitoring requirements of funding bodies; and the income/profits you generate are your own and you can make decisions about how they are used to meet your social goals.

Setting up a social enterprise is not without its challenges. It requires clear vision, dedication and often a new set of skills and way of thinking.

Social enterprises that succeed do so because they have:-

- Researched the market - found a niche /gap and know that there is a demand for their service/product
- Accessed the support to put in place the right systems/people/finance
- Priced goods and services realistically - Too low and the company will go bust. Too high and people will go elsewhere
- Focused on quality - Just because you are a social enterprise won't guarantee sales if the quality is poor.
- Used all available opportunities to market themselves to secure business and win contracts.

If you think that it is the right model for you, you don't have to go it alone. Use the support that is available to you-

- The knowledge and expertise of others who have done it.
- Business support training and mentoring
- Loan finance for the sector
- Networking opportunities to improve and increase business opportunities

For further information about the range of support from SEN and other organisations visit the SEN website at www.socialeconomynetwork.org

Join the SEN and become part of the social economy movement!

Awards for All

In partnership with social media company Pixelbrix, WSN have developed and delivered three interactive, participative communications workshops to WSN member groups. These were delivered in February and May 2011 with Shankill Women's Centre hosting the two sessions in February and the May session being hosted by Greenway Women's Centre. A diverse range of our membership attended with 40 participants over the three workshops.

The first of these workshops helped the groups to explore how they communicate; what works well and what they could develop to help them do it better. The workshop examined the ways organisations need to communicate: internally, with their stakeholders, within local communities and with the wider world. The second workshops examined Communications tools &

skills - looking at the various ways groups can communicate and what are the benefits/pitfalls of these types of communications. The third session focused on language. Groups wanted to describe themselves and the work that they do in a way that is engaging, vibrant and human. Sometimes the message of who we are and the important work that we do can lose some of its colour and appeal in the language that we use to describe it. The aim of this session was to help groups develop a way of 'telling' their story that would suit a range of circumstances from reporting to funders to engaging with new users and groups.

We are currently working with Pixelbrix to develop a series of session plans and supplementary materials which will be a useful aid for future work with groups.

Women's Community Support Project

The Women's Community Support Project (WCSP) is a **WSN** partnership initiative with NIACRO and the PBNI and works with women in the criminal justice system. The successful pilot project ran from April 2010 until March 2011, and WSN are pleased to announce that a new 3 year phase of this vital work began in April 2011 thanks to support from the LankellyChase Foundation, Allen Lane Foundation and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland.

WSN are also delighted to welcome **Mary O'Rawe** to the staff team of the WCSP. For further information about the project please contact Caroline McCord (Project Coordinator) or Mary on 028 9023 6923.

SROI Project

Supported by Belfast City Council the **Social Return On Investment Project (SROI)** is in the end stage with five member groups (Shankill, Falls & Windsor Women's Centres, Ardoyne Women's Group and Women's Information Northern Ireland) completing impact assessments of their projects for inclusion in the publication of full accredited SROI reports to be launched in the summer. The successful project was facilitated by the Now Project's social enterprise business, Gauge Consultancy, and has demonstrated that the women's organisations are well worth investing in, simply 'worth their weight in gold'.

Criminal Justice Research Project

The number of women in N.I who find themselves in the Criminal Justice System is rising, as a result more and more women are receiving Community Service Orders. WSN have received funding from Pilgrim Trust and VSB Small Grants to carry out an exciting new research project working with women on community services orders within women's centres. Windsor and Atlas Women's Centres will be working with WSN on the project and First Steps Women's Centre have agreed to inform the project about the experiences of women on community service in a rural context. Research has started with the report due to be launched in the Autumn.



Reflections of International Women's Day 8th March 2011

March 2011 was the centenary month for International Women's Day and it was marked by a series of events from street re-naming and public marches through to women's heritage history tours. These events are the fruition of a special IWD planning committee which WSN have been engaged with over the past year. Indeed we would like to thank [Anne McVicker](#), WomensTec and the other groups involved in the committee for helping us all to make this special centenary year for IWD such a memorable and enjoyable occasion. Read on for a recap of some of the highlights which we hope will give you a flavour of the IWD festivities -

On International Women's Day hundreds of women and representatives of Women's groups and organisations converged in Belfast City Centre in a march to the City Hall. They were joined by the Belfast Women Drummers which lent a colourful, carnival spirit to the march. At the City Hall the gathering heard inspirational speeches from Lynda Walker and Monica McWilliams and they were joined on stage by the women's choir Voca Loca who sang 'Nanna was a Suffragette' and other feminist songs.



WSN International Women's Day Events

What's on the Agender?

OFMDFM provided funding support to WSN to develop and facilitate a Gender Equality Strategy (GES) information and awareness raising event on 1st March 2011, entitled: 'What's on the Agender?' WSN worked with Women's Information Northern Ireland (WINI; formerly WIG) to deliver this session as part of the IWD celebrations taking place throughout March 2011. The event was held in Newhill Youth & Community Centre and was attended by 101 women from all backgrounds and age groups drawn from disadvantaged communities across the wider Belfast area. The event included interactive workshops, panel and group discussions and open debate. A participatory approach was used throughout with interactive discussions, experience sharing and group work. A facilitated debate to field a Q&A session gave women the opportunity to discuss and clarify issues around the GES. GES factsheets were distributed and this was followed up by a Roundup and evaluation.

WSN IWD Commemorative Booklet

WSN produced an IWD Commemorate Edition of the WSN Newsletter. The newsletter has been published with special contributions from Marie Mulholland a founder and the first director of WSN and by Myrtle Hill, Senior Lecturer in Gender Studies QUB. The theme of the Newsletter was ***'celebrating the past and planning for the future'***; the articles celebrated the changes made for women, by women over the last 100 years while also acknowledging that we still have challenges ahead. The booklet was officially launched on 11th March.



Banquet—a new mural by Rita Duffy



Commissioned by the Shankill Women's Centre to celebrate 100 years of International Women's Day, this modern work of art by one of Northern Ireland's leading artists Rita Duffy depicts a fellowship of women, many of them local to the Shankill Road or with family connections to the area. It portrays the various changing and fixed roles of women here over the last century and WSN's Outreach Officer Caroline McCord was one of 15 women posing for the mural; she can be seen brandishing an iron!

The image is mounted on the side of Harry Corry's Shop on the Shankill Road. It was formally unveiled on Friday March 11th by Marie Jones & Betty Carlisle MBE, Manager of Shankill Women's Centre.

What's in a name?

Belfast is known for its strong women but not many have received recognition over the years for their contribution to the life of the city. In seeking to redress the balance five street names throughout Belfast were changed to the names of five of the most iconic females to have carved their names in the city's history. The name change, which lasted for a week, was one of a series of initiatives to commemorate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day.

Royal Avenue became Mary Anne McCracken Avenue to commemorate her work on women's equality and the education of the poor. The Lisburn Road was named after Belfast songbird Ruby Murray. For one week the Falls Road became Nora Connolly Road in recognition of the work in radical politics of the second daughter of James and Lillie Connolly. Meanwhile, the Newtownards Road was renamed The Sadie Menzies Road to commemorate a woman who became prominent in the Trade Union movement and a founding member of the Communist Party of Ireland. Duncairn Gardens in North Belfast recognised the work of prominent civil rights activist and feminist Madge Davison, whose sons were present when the sign was erected. The street names are now displayed in the women's centres in the relevant areas.

Bus Tour and Walking Tour: Women's Heritage in Belfast

On 9th March there was a Bus and Walking Tour to inform and celebrate women's heritage and contribution to the city. Participants had the opportunity to find out more about the activism women in Northern Ireland have been involved with in the last 100 years – organising working women's unions in the linen mills through to campaigning on the street for female suffrage. WSN Offices was the meeting point for the beginning of on the tour and the participants enjoyed a warming cuppa before moving onto the next stop!

