



CHILDCARE FUNDING UPDATE

On 18th February Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie announced her decision to extend funding for over two thousand weekly childcare places across the North.

The Minister's announcement of a rescue package of over £1.5million will ensure the provision of over 2,000 childcare places in some of Northern Ireland's most deprived areas. Speaking during her visit to Magherafelt Women's Centre, the Minister said: "Twelve months ago I intervened to save childcare services that were at risk of closure. Today, I have decided to extend that support for a further twelve months to again protect those services. I am committed to tackling disadvantage and building strong, vibrant communities to ensure a better life for our future generations. As a result of my announcement, over two thousand childcare places will be protected in disadvantaged communities across Northern Ireland". Minister Ritchie further commented "We urgently need a strategy for childcare and I will be working with my Executive colleagues to resolve this matter as quickly as possible."

Welcoming the announcement Margaret Ward of the Women's Centres Regional Partnership said: "I congratulate the Minister and her officials for the strong support they continue to demonstrate towards vulnerable women and children. This funding will be put to good use in protecting childcare provision for a

further twelve months. We would ask the Executive to agree a coherent approach to childcare and we urge all Ministers to resolve this as a matter of urgency."

On the same day as Minister Ritchie's announcement The Joseph Rowntree Foundation launched a report on Child Poverty. This report entitled 'Ending child poverty in a changing economy' examines, amongst other issues, if the Government are on target for halving child poverty in the UK by 2010 and eliminating it by 2020. The report highlights that after six years of decline, the level of child poverty has started to rise again in 2007 & 2008.

The UK Government has partially risen to the challenge of putting in more resources, announcing a total of around £2 billion in extra benefits and tax credits targeted at child poverty, taking effect between 2008 and 2010. The reports suggests that a more realistic amount to make a real difference would be £4.2 billion a year. However, what the report claims is really needed is; 'strong and robust policies across all government departments, aimed at providing truly affordable childcare that meets children's and parents' needs'.

We agree that this is the key to a longer term solution for childcare provision and childcare funding and we will continue to lobby on this crucial issue to encourage the NI Executive to agree and develop a strategic approach to childcare funding.

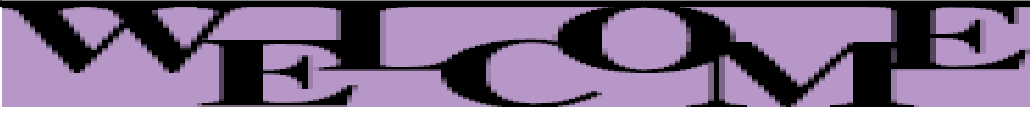
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Congratulations!

The Staff team & Board of WSN would like to congratulate Kirsty as she leaves WSN to take up her new position with the North Belfast Partnership Board. We would like to thank Kirsty for her work and dedication and to wish her every success in her future.



WSN welcomes a number of new members this quarter including: All Ireland Mother's Union, Ardmonagh Women's Group, HIV Centre, Kilcooley Women's Centre, Granaghant District Women's Group and The Rape Crisis Centre

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Women's Centre's Regional Partnership

WSN update

WCRP update

This quarter's WCRP Network meeting took place on 24th February in Atlas Women's Centre, Lisburn. The meeting included a discussion on Feminism. The discussion was facilitated by independent consultant, Marie Quiery and aimed to explore what feminism means to us today, individually and as a partnership; what has changed down the years in our understanding and practice of a feminist approach to our work; what relevance it may have to us personally, to women today, to our users and the women's organisations we work with; and to discuss our strengths and limitations as feminists. It was agreed that the discussion was useful and that there is a need for further debate on this issue.

The next network meeting will be held in Foyle Women's Information Network in June 09, more details will follow nearer the time.

Join the EWL 5♀/5♂ Campaign

European Women's Lobby - European elections are rapidly approaching—The people of Europe will elect the next European Parliament in June 2009. Currently 70% of the Members of the European Parliament are men. You can participate in the 50/50 Campaign by asking the political parties in your country to take gender equality into account when they draft candidate lists for the elections.

Sign this Campaign for better representation of women in decision making in Europe! Simply visit the website <http://www.5050democracy.eu/> and fill in your name. Your signature will enable a strong voice in getting more women to the highest levels of European politics.



March is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.

The Eve Appeal was set up to save women's lives by funding groundbreaking research into gynaecological cancers. Its current focus is to develop effective methods of prediction, detection, treatment and care of ovarian cancer.

The world-leading research that is funded by The Eve Appeal aims to identify techniques that could halve deaths from ovarian cancer. Publicly launched in 2005 with a target of raising £5 million in five years. To find out more about the appeal and ways to support it visit the website – www.eveappeal.org.uk

Lloyd's Sustainability Report update

Women's Support Network (WSN) recently received a grant from Lloyd's in order to conduct research into sustainability within the community based women's sector. We are currently carrying out this research with a view to producing a report in the late Spring. The key areas that we are exploring in the report include Trusts and Foundations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Fundraising and Social Economies and Enterprises. The report will feature case studies from women's centres and organisations as well as helpful hints from key organisations such as the Social Economy Network. See **page 4** for further info on the Social Economy Network. We anticipate that the report will be launched in the next quarter.

Happy 25th Anniversary to Women's News



This year Women's News celebrates it's 25th Birthday. To honour the occasion WSN will hold a special member's event on 24th March; this event will be a way to mark the unique contribution that Women's News have made to the women's sector over the last 25 years.

We will hear from founder member's of Women's News and of course we will be on hand to help them blow out the candles on the cake! Congratulations Women's News!



Falls Women's Centre launch 'Herstory—The Falls Women's Centre 1982-2008'

On Friday 6th March WSN attended the Falls Women's Centre launch of 'Herstory' at Falls Library. This book tells the story of Falls Women's Centre; it is essentially the history of Falls Women's Centre in the voices of the women—hence the title 'Herstory'. This book is a collaborative effort which involved the women's history group and the Management Committee with the support of the People's History Initiative of the Ulster Peoples College. It provides a fascinating account of the work of Falls Women's Centre since it was established in 1982, right up to the present day. This is set against the backdrop of the political and social changes that have affected local women's lives in that time. For more information contact Margaret or Patricia at Falls WC on 9032 7672.



WSN Member spotlight on

WSN Policy Update

Rape Crisis Centre

The Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Centre was the first voluntary organization in Northern Ireland to provide services for adult women who had been subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence and assault and to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.



The Rape Crisis Centre staff & volunteer team

The Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre has been providing free of charge confidential counselling, advice and advocacy services to survivors of sexual violence and abuse and those who support them since 1982. Last year in Northern Ireland there were 382 reported rapes. In South Belfast alone there have been 18 since April 2008. Northern Ireland has only one rape crisis centre which is run by Eileen Calder, Eileen Kelly and a few volunteers. On average the centre takes more than 100 calls from victims of both rape and sexual abuse. Despite being busier than ever the Rape Crisis Centre has not been able to secure government funding in the last three years. Today the Centre survives on a small grant from the city council and on charitable donations.

The Rape Crisis Trust was set up last year to raise vital funds for the Rape Crisis Centre in Belfast. Each month staff and volunteers at the Rape Crisis Centre battle against an ongoing funding crisis to keep their helpline open. The Rape Crisis Trust held a fundraising concert to mark International Women's Day on Sunday 8th March, 2009. This inaugural event, which was also supported by WSN, brought the best of female talent together to give a night of entertainment for everyone who attended. Stars at the event included X-Factor finalist Rowetta, 'I'd Do Anything' singers Rachel Tucker and Niamh Perry, as well as performances from top swing singer James Huish and a special live set from international DJ and music producer Micky Modelle at Queen's University Students Union. With over 100 attendees the event raised valuable funds for the centre through the sale of tickets and an auction.

WSN look forward to meeting with the Rape Crisis Centre to discuss the future of rape and sexual abuse support services for women in Northern Ireland.

For further information contact—

Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Centre,
29 Donegall Street, Belfast, BT1 2FG
Tel 028 9032 9001
Web www.rapecrisisni.com

Policy update

Consultations

Since the new year, WSN has submitted responses to the Lifelong Learning UK consultation on their Operational Plan and to the three ASA consultations on resourcing and implementing Quality Training and IT standards in the voluntary advice sector in Northern Ireland.

Meetings

WSN continues to be involved in a number of policy forums. In this quarter staff have attended meetings with the Early Years Strategic Alliance, the Gender Advisory Panel (OFMDFM), the Policy, Lobbying and Advice Forum and Women's Policy Forum (NICVA), the Northern Ireland Policing Board Reference group, the Women's Ad Hoc Policy Group, the Specialist Advice Panel.

Other events attended include: Childcare research seminar presented by ARK, the Women's Aid Federation conference on Mothering through Domestic Violence, a roundtable discussion on Violence Against Women, seminar on Engaging with Europe on Gender Equality hosted by NIWEP, the Women's National Commission conference on CEDAW, Stormont to hear the assembly debate on funding for the women's sector, and the launch of Gender Focus, a new e-bulletin to brief MLA's and Ministers compiled by Lynn Carvill (Women's Sector Lobbyist, WRDA) on issues affecting women and the women's sector in Northern Ireland.

Work also continues with the WCRP sub-groups on education, childcare and policy. The policy subgroup will be launching a report on Women's Community Involvement and Leadership on 31 March 2009 in the Equality Commission. This report is based on the results of a survey conducted with WCRP member groups.

WSN has also facilitated meetings with the Belfast Trust to explore the development of closer links between the mental health, children and health promotion services, and community based women's centres in Belfast, and NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) regarding the role of the community based women's sector in supporting women offenders.

Policy Briefing

For further information regarding consultation responses or our policy work, contact Etain by telephone on 028 90236923 or by email at policy@wsn.org.uk

Events & News




The HIV Support centre is a charity which offers support services to all people affected by HIV in Northern Ireland and in the border counties. The centre aims to empower people affected

by HIV in a safe and confidential environment. They also advocate on behalf of the HIV community and work towards a greater understanding of HIV and stigma surrounding HIV. The centre has support services in Belfast city centre, Ballymena, the North West and Bangor. The range of services includes:

One-to-on Support, Complementary Therapies, Yoga , Healthy Living Seminars, Group Support, Information Services, Home Support Service, Respite and a Telephone Helpline Service—Tel **0800 137 437** Mon - Fri 9:00 - 5:00 and 7:00 - 10:00 & Sat 2:00 - 5:00

Recently the HIV Support Centre have noticed an increase in the numbers of women suffering from HIV and are keen to liaise with organizations working with women, to address this issue. WSN have had an initial meeting with the HIV Support Centre and we will keep you apprised of this work.

For further information on the HIV Support Centre:
The Centre at the Warehouse, 7 St James Street South, Belfast, BT2 8DN

 028 9024 9268

 info@thehivsupportcentre.org.uk



Chance of a Life Time

SUPPORTING PARENTS

Women's Information Group in conjunction with Ardmonagh Family & Community Group organised a parenting programme to support you and help take the stress out of parenting. There will be 8 sessions, each **Wednesday morning from 10.00am to 12.00pm**, from **25th March 2009 to 27 May 2009**. It will give you the opportunity to share experiences and build relationships with other parents.

Course Content : Topics covered could be: How to Play with your Child, Managing Children's Challenging Behaviour, Communication and Relationships and many more.

Date: 25 March 09 - 27 May 09

Time: 10.00-12.00

Venue: W.I.G., 7 University Rd, Belfast BT7
Crèche and lunch provided **Free**.

Crèche. Refreshments, Transport Expenses (Public Transport Only) and Facilitators are all provided **FREE**

For further information contact **Women's Information Group on 028 9024 4119**

Rosa is a charity whose mission is to raise and distribute money to women's projects. These projects encompass 4 main areas:



Economic Justice - for example, a social enterprise that helps young women get on the career ladder.

Health & Wellbeing - for example, a group of women organising in their local community for better family health services.

Leadership - for example, a project that encourages young BME women to engage with local MPs about issues important to them.

Safety - for example, a national charity providing shelter/support for survivors of domestic violence.

Rosa offer's women's organisations an opportunity to [support](#) or [apply for funding](#) for a range of projects that help achieve equality and justice for women and girls in the UK. Their next grants round will be announced in Summer 2009. It will focus on an issue within one of the following **key areas**: Economic Justice, Leadership, or Safety.

For more information about Rosa contact them at info@rosauk.org or telephone 020 7324 3044.



The Social Economy Network is a membership-based organisation that draws its membership from Social Economy organisations throughout Northern Ireland. The Network seeks to build, support and strengthen the Social Economy sector through:

- Creating a strong lobby for the sector
- Providing a channel into policy formulation
- Inputting into the development & implementation of programmes of action
- Providing access to relevant and up to date information & knowledge resources
- Identifying Social Economy Sector and/or government action which will stimulate the local social economy and maximise its potential
- Representing the Network on the S.E. Forum.
- Fostering, supporting and encouraging the exchange of experience, information and knowledge within the sector
- Encouraging and supporting co-operation
- Stimulating greater awareness of the role of the Social Economy and its contribution to socio-economic growth and development.
- Providing links with relevant networks outside N. I.
- Providing opportunities to form beneficial partnerships with organisations regional, national & international

For more information about the Network and our current work please contact Stephanie McManus on 02890770502 or email info@socialeconomynetwork.org