

NIWEP launches gaps uk & celebrates its 20th Anniversary

Patricia Haren Director of WSN, Caroline McCord, Outreach Worker and Jennifer Haren Project Officer with WSN attended a conference celebrating the launch of Global Monitoring Checklist on Women, Peace and Security was launched on Thursday 3rd December. This research monitors the ongoing progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Afghanistan, DR Congo, Nepal, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, and makes recommendations on how to build a more inclusive peace.

Afterwards NIWEP celebrated its 20th anniversary at City Hall.

Happy birthday NIWEP.

WSN Christmas Holidays

Please note WSN offices will be closed from Friday 18th December 2009 and will reopen on Monday 4th January 2010.



A Warm Welcome to our New Members

Full Member: WISPA (Women in Sport & Physical Activity), Belfast

WISPA offer a range of community based physical activity programmes engaging women to improve health and well being. They are based in Greater Shankill.

Full Member: Link Women's Group, Belfast

Link Women's Group work to improve the life chances of women in the Andersonstown Road area by providing training and educational opportunities, health programmes, social and recreational opportunities and activities, advice and information.

Full Member: Fermanagh Women's Network, Enniskillen

Fermanagh Women's Network was formed in 1992 with the overall aim of supporting women's development in Co. Fermanagh. FWN supports the development of women's groups, promotes equality for women and carries out accredited/non-accredited education and training. Further information can be obtained from their website at www.fwnetwork.org.

Associate Member: Changing Faces, Belfast

Changing Faces is a service to children, young people and adults and their families with experience of disfigurement to any part of the face, hands or body from any cause. For further information go to: www.changingfaces.org.uk.

Associate Member: 'Community First' Coaching

Community First provides a wide range of specialist coaching aimed at empowering and improving the life and experiences of individuals, especially those who for whatever reason or circumstances are underachieving, have limited expectations, or feel stuck, isolated or confused about their life.

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



Join Us

As a membership organisation, the Women's Support Network is committed to supporting the development of women's organisations, enable collective action and positively impact on policy and decision making processes.

We can provide your organisation with the following services:

- Information to support your group
- Networking opportunities and events
- Outreach Support
- Advice and signposting
- Policy consultations and campaigning
- Promotion of the Women's Sector

For further information on how to become a member or subscriber please visit our website at www.wsn.org.uk.

ISSUE

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December 2009

Women's Support Network News

WSN—Supporting the development of Women's Organisations

Since the last newsletter, the WSN team have worked extremely hard. We are proud to have launched our report and toolkit on sustainability. This piece of research is the start of what will be a very important issue for the sector as a whole.

On the staffing front, the Network would like to wish Etain O'Kane all the best in her new post as Co-ordinator of LASI. We extend a warm welcome to her replacement, Fiona O'Connell, we are delighted that Fiona has joined us from Housing Rights Service.

We would like to give a special thanks to the women who contributed articles for this edition. Your contribution is very much appreciated.

WSN would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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WSN Launches Sustainability Report & Toolkit

The Women's Support Network launched the 'Sustainability Report and Toolkit' at Farset International in Belfast with over 40 representatives from the women's sector, funding bodies, statutory agencies and the wider community and voluntary sector in attendance. Supported by funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation NI, the report and toolkit, based on research carried out with members of the network was devised to look at the issue sustainability within the context of the women's sector.

The report outlines the characteristics of the women's sector in Northern Ireland and provides a short summary of the network's research and campaign work on the issue of sustainability. The research also presents a realistic 'snapshot' of what sustainability means for the sector, particularly in the wake of a deepening economic recession and impending cuts in public funding. The toolkit is a practical resource packed with signposting information and case studies designed to help women's groups and organisations in their quest towards building a sustainable future.

Speaking at the event, Brenda Kennedy from the Lloyds TSB Foundation NI commended the network on the report and toolkit, noting that it was particularly relevant in today's funding environment.

Patricia Haren commented that the work of the women's sector has traditionally been undervalued and under resourced and the financial sustainability of women's organisations is becoming increasingly critical. "In view of this situation, the network compiled the sustainability toolkit as a practical resource to look at the diversity of funding streams".

Recommendations based on the research will be followed up by the network over the coming year particularly in relation to funding, through funding clinics, factsheets and other events.



Update on Employers for Childcare

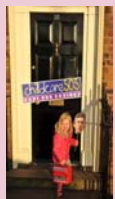
Parent power!!
Gordon Brown confirms 'U' turn on Childcare Vouchers

On 3rd December thousands of supporters of the ChildcareSOS (Save Our Savings) campaign breathed a sigh of relief when the 'U' turn on tax relief on the childcare voucher scheme was officially announced.

Nora Smith campaign manager commented:

"I am delighted with the news received last Thursday, the childcare voucher scheme will now not be scrapped, but the tax relief will be applied at the basic rate of 20% to all.

The childcare voucher scheme, helps many working parents to off-set the high costs of their childcare costs. Without the scheme it would have had huge implications for working parents, especially women, as more women would have to make difficult choices about whether or not it pays to work, without the financial assistance received through the tax relief offered through the scheme. The campaign started in Northern Ireland by Employers For Childcare, the day after the announcement was made. We asked Mark Durkan to submit a Common's motion to Westminster to highlight the issue. Over 50 senior Labour backbenchers signed the motion. Thousands of parents signed the petition, and unanimous political support was received in Northern Ireland. All of these factors together, lead to the rethink."



Member Spotlight on...

Newtownabbey Women's Group

Newtownabbey Women's Group (NWG) was established in 1985 by local women in the Rathcoole area of Newtownabbey. Since then the group has grown from strength to strength to become the principal women's group in the area providing women centered services and activities such as advice, education and training, crèche facilities and social and recreational activities. The women's group has a cocktail of funding in place to cover the day to day running of the centre, a salary and centre activities. The Women's Group employ a centre co-ordinator, Wilma Lennox, and they also have a wide volunteer base that is active in all aspects of the group's activities.

Alongside their regular activities the group are currently running a project called *Headway* (supported by Newtownabbey Borough Council) designed to make some 'headway' into getting women involved in activities that will have a positive effect on their lives by developing skills, promoting healthy lifestyles, confidence and inclusion.



The project includes:

- ✦ Winter Cultural Evening
- ✦ Women's Studies Course
- ✦ Money Management
- ✦ Community Development
- ✦ Informal Talks (Chat Show Style)
- ✦ Educational Visits

The group also actively participate in the wider community and are extensively represented on Boards and committees. Newtownabbey Women's Group are certainly very busy and are looking forward to the New Year when they celebrate 25 years in the community. To mark the occasion the group are planning a 'Silver Memories' Festival bringing together the threads of a remarkable fabric of contributions to facilitate and celebrate the lives of women in Newtownabbey.

To learn more about the group's services and activities please contact:

Wilma Lennox Tele: 028 9085 4041

International Women's Day 8th March 2010 Date for your Diary



Women's Support Network the first character has a normal birth and a healthy baby, the second has a miscarriage and the third is a student who gives up her baby for adoption.

"Three Women" traces three different experiences of pregnancy and childbirth: **Keep your diary free—further details to follow.**

Women in Leadership and Business



*'Women don't do different things in business; they just do the same things differently'*¹

By Emma Gibson, Financial Paraplanner

Introducing Emma Gibson's view on Women in Leadership and Business.

I came across this fantastic quote recently when I discovered an exciting range of investment funds that I never knew existed. In fact, I didn't really think they needed to exist. I feel very differently now – let me explain why:

Fact 1 – Stock Price Growth and Return on Equity is higher in companies employing above average numbers of female directors and managers

Fact 2 – 68% of companies in Europe have NO women on their executive committees compared with 11% in USA. In Asia the figure is 82% - even more shocking!

So, if Fact 1 is true, why is Fact 2 a statistic? Even Harriet Harman, the minister for women and equality recently said that if Lehman Brothers had been "Lehman Sisters", the company might have survived.

The reasons for so few women board members are far too complex to fit into this one article. And instead of going over old ground, I have a far more constructive suggestion.

When you pay money into an ISA or a Pension, why not take a closer look at what funds you are investing in? Are there any women on the boards of these funds or companies? If your selected funds dabble in Asia or Europe, the chances are there are very few indeed.

In January, Naissance Capital will launch the Women's Leadership Fund, which will invest in companies whose boards include women. Better still, it also plans to invest into companies without women on their boards and use its ownership to encourage better diversification in gender and employment opportunities.

Although this fund is out of reach for most, with a minimum investment of \$100,000, if it is successful, there are plans to launch a similar fund for small investors next year. And with the backing of a formidable group of female board members including Kim Campbell, former Prime Minister of Canada, Jenny Shipley, Former Prime Minister of New

Zealand, Cherie Blair, prominent lawyer and wife of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, Founder of the European Professional Women's Network and author of "Womenomics", I have no doubt that I might soon be able to invest in this fund through my more meagre savings and investments!

If you can't wait that long, you could take a look at another interesting company – Stargate Capital Investment Group whose Trapezia product is the UK's "first venture capital investment opportunity dedicated to providing capital and support to companies led by and for the benefit of women".

They are also launching a second Trapezia Fund targeting further credible investment proposals for women-focused enterprises.

¹Gita Patel FCA, Director of Trapezia

²McKinsey study of 89 top European Companies 2007

³Stargate Trapezia

Profile on...
Fiona O'Connell

WSN would like to welcome Fiona O'Connell, who has recently been appointed to the role of Policy and Research Co-ordinator. Fiona previously worked at WSN in the policy role for a short period of time. Fiona has an extensive background in policy and research having worked at the Northern Ireland Assembly as a Researcher and at Housing Rights Service as a Policy Officer.

Fiona as well as having worked as a Registered General Nurse for several years, has a law degree obtained from Queen's University of Belfast. Fiona is also currently studying for a Masters degree in Human Rights law, focusing particularly on women's rights, socio economic rights and equality law.

As part of Fiona's role at WSN as Policy and Research Co-ordinator, Fiona will be supporting member groups through her policy and research work. This will include responding to policy consultations, highlighting where policies can have a negative impact on women or highlighting that gender considerations have not been taken into account in the policy process. Furthermore, Fiona will be engaging in proactive policy work which will include highlighting to Government that there are gaps in policies that can act as barrier to women participating in various level of public, political, social and economic life.

Fiona looks forward to working closely with the members of WSN, highlighting your concerns through her policy work. Fiona can be contacted on policy@wsn.org.uk

Women and Public Appointments & NGOs



Dr Margaret Ward has been appointed to the Board of the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

Margaret is Director of the Women's Resource and Development Agency, a regional organization for women established in 1983 and located in Belfast with a mission to 'advance women's equality and participation in society by working to bring about social, political and economic change for women.'



Following a ministerial announcement on Thursday 19th November, the Women's National Commission have reappointed Bronagh Hinds as one of the four commissioners to the WNC Board. Bronagh is a consultant with interests in equality, democracy and governance and a Senior Associate with DemocraShe, an organisation she co-founded ten years ago in the wake of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement to advance women's leadership in politics, civic society and peace-building at home and abroad.

Member News



WSN welcome Changing faces as an Associate member of the Network. The following article is about their work.

Changing Faces' face equality campaign is about making sure that everyone, irrespective of their facial appearance, is treated equally and fairly. An independent survey of public attitudes commissioned in January 2008 showed that 9 out of 10 people have implicit negative attitudes towards people with disfigurements and this can result in discrimination at work, at school and in public situations.

By lending your face, you will be showing your support for face equality. They can use the face collage to show opinion-formers and policy-makers that this matters and something needs to be done now!

Once you have uploaded your face, do take some time to get to know more about the important work that Changing Faces is doing to support and represent people with disfigurements. Go to: www.changingfaces.org.uk for further info.

ATLAS WOMEN'S CENTRE NEWS



WSN would like to congratulate Atlas Women's Centre on their Co-operation Ireland award. ATLAS Women's Centre won Co-operation Ireland pride of place 2009 award for Enterprise in the Community.

The Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie, MLA announced the winners at the gala ceremony, at The Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle.

The Pride of Place Competition recognises and celebrates the vital contributions that community partnerships make to society. The focus is on people coming together to shape, change and enjoy all that is good about their local area. It differs from other similar projects in that they specifically recognise the involvement of the local community in all aspects of rural and urban regeneration including, promoting social cohesion, involvement in planning, the promotion of heritage and environmental awareness.

Well Done to all the staff and women at Atlas Women's Centre!!!

Why am I doing Politics?

By Lesley Macaulay, Consultant www.macaulayassociates.co.uk

Shouting at the radio when Stephen Nolan is on is not going to bring about positive political change in Northern Ireland!

Growling at unhealthy looking stodgy politicians behaving like little spoilt kids when their dummy is thrown out of the cot, is also not going to bring about positive political change in N Ireland.

So the Ulster Unionist Party suggested.... why don't you have a go at doing it then Lesley?!! Why did the sweat break out at that thought! The risks that I conjured up in my head made me sweat even more!! But could I? Could I be instrumental in having a direct positive and progressive effect on politics in Northern Ireland?

As I contemplated the facts, I realised that as a Independent Community Development Facilitator and Consultant I am dealing daily with community issues at all levels, working with people from different social, political and educational backgrounds, empathising and really getting under the skin of why people are passionate about their beliefs. I facilitate workshops addressing community tensions and negotiating ways forward. Hmmm maybe I do have the relevant experience!

So after some weight being lost through midnight sweats, at the thought of the personal and professional risk I was about to take, I decided to put my name forward as a potential Candidate. Little then did I realise that there was now a rigorous process in place to decide at what level I would be allowed to stand for election.

Saturday 26 September 2009 was the day I attended a 5 hour assessment process! Before I left the house I deliberated why was I putting myself through this and I wept as I thought of the risks that I was taking and whether I could actually survive this process.

The day started with two essays to be written on your political thoughts and vision for the future of politics in Northern Ireland. Half an hour was allocated for each essay. Next I was interviewed for 45 minutes on my professional background, how I managed particular difficult situations, my political opinions, dealing with the media and my personal coping mechanism for dealing with the ugly side of political life. The girl was coping and actually was excited by it all!!

Next I was given a subject title, deliberately chosen out of my comfort zone, and then I had to write and deliver a presentation. I knew this was one of my strengths and approached it with confidence. Presentation over, and I was ushered into a room to complete a constituency in-tray exercise, where I had to prioritise eight constituency scenarios, reasons for the ranking given and then follow through with writing letters, press releases, agendas etc. Confidence was now at an all time low. Head was fried! To end the whole process off, for the next hour, I was then given a group role play to enact while two political policy directors observed.

Exhausted and bewildered I drove home! At 3.30am the next morning, an email came in informing me of the results. I was now included on the Full Candidates List meaning that I could stand for Europe, Westminster, MLA or/and Local elections.

To all women who know they could do a better job in the politics in Northern Ireland, please come forward. Be yourself, bring with you your valuable opinions, experiences and abilities. Be the change you want to see. Stormont needs more high heels clicking on its marble staircase! Politics in Northern Ireland needs you!



Comments

Whilst we recognise that around 8% of women attending our Political Leadership Skills training are interested in pursuing a political career, the skills we offer do prepare potential female candidates to go through the mill as Lesley did. Our programmes cover topics such as coping with the media, campaigning, presentation skills and certainly take women out of their comfort zones as part of confidence building. Not all political parties follow the same recruitment and selection process for their prospective candidates and WIP is currently working with all the political parties on this specific issue. Well done Lesley, the hard work now begins.

Falls Women's Centre Advice Column

As Christmas approaches, we start to feel excited. We all know that Christmas can be a very expensive time of the year and in order to make ourselves feel good and bring pleasure to others we overspend on gifts for family and friends. Given the current financial climate/crisis, we realise it is impossible this year to spend money as it is realistically not available.

We are offering women the following advice to help them and their families from falling into debt which they will have to face after the Christmas period.



Set a realistic budget which you can stick to:

This can be difficult as you try to provide your children with everything they ask for. Talking to your children could help to ease the pressure.

Make a list and stick to it: Do your best to shop around to find the best prices.

Only take with you what you can afford to spend: This will prevent overspending and helps you stick to your budget.

Always get receipts for everything you buy and keep them in a safe place. Know your rights on refunds and exchanges and finally, keep your gift vouchers safe and cash them in within their qualifying period.

The Falls Women's Centre offer advice and advocacy on debt and other financial difficulties. We are hosting our annual Christmas Fare on 10 December at 12.00 noon and we welcome all women. You can contact us on **028 9032 7672**.



Women's Support Network launches pilot project to support female offenders in the community

WSN are delighted to announce that we have secured funding from the LankellyChase Trust Foundation for a 7 month pilot project to research how the community based women's sector can support female offenders in the community.

The project supports a part time Project Officer/Co-ordinator at WSN to co-ordinate research and develop a model outlining how agencies in the community, voluntary and statutory sector may work together in partnership to achieve positive outcomes for women who offend.

The pilot project includes input from three women centres i.e. Falls, Shankill and Windsor. Each centre has been provided with resources from

the LankellyChase Trust Foundation for a part time staff member to attend training to develop knowledge and expertise in working with female offenders, designed and delivered by the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO). The women centre staff will assist WSN in the development of the model by researching suitable programmes and support mechanisms which will assist female offenders.

This project will forge formative links and relationships with NIACRO and Probation Board Northern Ireland (PBNI). This three way link between the voluntary, community and statutory sector will develop a model which will support and enable an enhanced service for women offenders. For example this

project links directly into a new project developed by PBNI called 'Inspire'; a new probation centre in Belfast specifically developed for the delivery of services to women.

WSN are confident that the model produced will be an effective tool that will assist the community based women's sector to work with and support women who have offended or who are at risk of offending.

WSN will keep you up to date with the progress of the project and please contact the Project Officer, Jennifer Haren at volunteer@wsn.org.uk if you require any further information.

Women's TEC calls for Equal Pay for Women

Caroline McCord—Outreach and Development Officer at WSN attended a very successful Women's TEC Conference at Hillsborough Castle on 6th October 2009. When women from across Northern Ireland called on Government for more to be done to close the gender pay gap and help women get into non-traditional jobs.

At the conference in MP Baroness Margaret Prosser, Chair of the Women and Work Commission said that more needed to be done in Northern Ireland to improve equality. "You need the political will to get behind this to make the change. In 2006 Gordon Brown was persuaded to support funding in England to improve equality for women in work when it was revealed that the under-employment of women was costing the economy between £15 and £23 billion per year. The lack of spending power for women caused by working in jobs below their ability is a serious factor for government to consider," Baroness Prosser said.

The conference, 'Gender Equality and Skills Building; Practise, Policy & Partnerships', was organised by WOMEN'STEC in a bid to find ways to address issues facing women in Northern Ireland today.



"There is a perception that women are moving forward and that there isn't a problem anymore but unfortunately that is not the case," said Anne McVicker, of WOMEN'STEC.

According to the monthly Labour Market Report produced by the Department of Enterprise, Training and Industry, the gender pay gap has been relatively unchanged in Northern Ireland over the period 2006-2008.

The report adds: "It should be noted that gender pay differences continue to exist for various occupational and industry groupings in NI, as evidenced by weekly and annual earnings trends."

Women's TEC representatives at Hillsborough Castle

Anne McVicker added: "Women still aren't paid as much as men; in specific sectors there are few females in senior posts and it is increasingly difficult to break into non-traditional sectors. There are fewer apprenticeships due to the economic situation and it seems that girls are not being given the chance to explore careers in areas such as construction, electrics, joinery and plumbing. We need to tackle these inequalities and ensure there is equal pay and equal opportunities for women." Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission, outlined the legislative framework on gender equality in Northern Ireland and emphasised the importance of clear government strategy to address gender-based inequality. The event was also addressed by Department of Social Development director of Voluntary Activity Unit Maeve Walls and Dr Aodheen O'Donnell, chairperson of WOMEN'STEC.

The conference was attended by more than 70 people from political parties, private sector businesses, Belfast City Council, Invest NI as well as representatives women's centres and community groups.



NEWS

The Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) launched the new report:

"Barriers Facing Women in Disadvantaged Communities"

This comprehensive report commissioned by DSD in partnership with the WCRP and written by Helen McLaughlin provides lengthy analysis and proposals for key actions which challenge all government departments to enact measures to improve opportunities for participation.

For copies please contact:
Tiziana O'Hare: info@wcrp.org.uk

NEWS

Congratulations to Susan McCrory who has been appointed the new Centre Manager of Falls Women's Centre.

