

## Education Prospectus Launch

WSN has managed, on behalf of the WCRP, the development of the Women's Community Education and Training prospectus for 2008/2009 and co-ordinated the launch at NICVA, Duncairn Gardens on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008.



We are delighted that twenty four women's organisations have provided training details for the prospectus and we would like to thank all of the organisations who have taken the time to supply this information. The training will provide hundreds of women with a second chance of entering education and progress towards getting started on a new career. All the courses are offered in women's organisations, allowing women to train within their communities with childcare being provided at the organisation.

Maggie Taggart, Education Correspondent with BBC Northern Ireland, gave the introductory address at the event. She commended on the work of the women's centres in providing training to women and congratulated those women who have already taken the brave first step back to education and training.

Siobhan Doherty, Chair of WCRP commented 'The prospectus highlights the unique package of training and education services provided by the 24 women's organisations strategically located within socially and economically disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. The women's community based education and training sector offers 400 plus classes that are available to women across Northern Ireland, from GCSE I.T. to plumbing'.

This is the second year of the Women's Community Education and Training prospectus, and as such, the launch provided the perfect platform to hear from women who have benefited as a result of community based training in the past. Three women told their

personal stories of how education and training has helped them succeed at new careers.

Julie Ann McKeever is typical of many women who have gone through this women centred training. She left school with no qualifications but decided to go back into education when her son was born. With a baby in tow, finding training that also provided good quality childcare was a major problem. When she discovered the Women's Centre in Derry she spent two years training and is now a successful Visual Merchandiser and is even a trainer herself.

Ciara Walls, from Belfast, was interested in pursuing an NVQ in Plumbing. Her journey began with Women'sTEC as an apprentice in their new social economy business Tradeswomen NI. Ciara successfully secured a permanent placement within the heating/plumbing sector. Ciara said, "If Women'sTEC had not 'vouched' for me last October, I would have probably been put off the career path because it really is a hard industry to get into without support."

Amanda King, has three children and lives in a rural area. Amanda had a poor experience of education and left school with few qualifications. After a number of unsuccessful attempts at attending traditional educational venues, Amanda found Chrysalis Women's Centre about a year ago. In the last academic year Amanda achieved a lot of qualifications that include ECDL, CLAIT and OCR Word-processing. She is now pursuing her CLAIT Plus, Maths and higher level OCR word-processing qualifications.

The Women's Community Education and Training prospectus is published as part of WCRP's aim to enhance women's organisations' fundamental role of strategically developing and supporting a strong, effective and long-term partnership amongst women's centres and networks operating across Northern Ireland.

Copies of the prospectus can be obtained from WSN - Tel: 028 90236923 or email [info@womenssupportnetwork.org](mailto:info@womenssupportnetwork.org)

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## WELCOME

Women's Support Network would like to extend a warm welcome to Jéssica Sánchez Díaz.

Jéssica is a post-graduate student from Barcelona and she will be with WSN for a 12 week internship.

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**Women's Centre's Regional Partnership**

**WSN update**

**WCRP update**

The Women's Centres Regional Partnership is made up of representatives from WSN, NIRWN, WRDA and the North-West and involves FWIN and the 13 women's centres in receipt of Community Investment Funding (C.I.F.) and Neighbourhood Renewal Funding.

In this period the WCRP Directors worked with a consultant to facilitate two discussion sessions; one in Belfast and one in the North West, to create the opportunity for groups, working within the WCRP Partnership, to consider issues such as inclusivity and effective partnership working. These workshops were interesting and productive.

The next WCRP Network Meeting will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> November, location to be confirmed.



**WCRP Report Launch**

On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 the WCRP's 'Women and the Conflict - Talking about the 'Troubles'' Report was launched at the Stormont Hotel. Attendees heard from organisations involved in researching the report and also had an opportunity to watch a video of the conference report which featured interviews with women activists and guest speaker Professor Cynthia Cockburn.

Jeffery Donaldson MP, MLA also spoke at the event, he described women as 'the glue that held family & community life together' and he also spoke of the need for more women to be involved in public and political life. For further information or for a copy of the report contact Tiziana O'Hara, WCRP Co-ordinator, email [info@wcrp.org](mailto:info@wcrp.org) or telephone 9023 0212.

**Live & Learn bid update**

The WCRP is one of the 23 partnerships successfully selected for stage two of the Live and Learn programme. The WCRP bid will target more than 9,000 women in their local communities across Northern Ireland.

In this period the Business Plan has been researched and written. This was submitted to the Big Lottery at the end of September. We anticipate that it will be Spring 2009 before we are informed about the status of the bid.

**The impact of the closure of Peace II**

Between June and September 2008 the majority of Peace II funded projects closed with the result that vital high quality, locally accessible services for women and their families are being reduced in areas which are recognised and documented as those of greatest need. The impact of this will be felt not only in the women's sector but across communities in Northern Ireland.

In response to this the Women's Support Network (WSN), in partnership with the Training for Women Network (TWN), intend to lobby to focus attention on the funding crisis and the real threat of the loss of the key service provision of training and education within the sector. As a first step in this process WSN and TWN will record information on which funding streams are ending or being diminished, and the impact this will have on organisations. Information for this assessment will be obtained from the responses to a questionnaire sent out to fifty women's organisations in the community based women's sector in August/September of this year.

Using the data from the questionnaire WSN and TWN will be able to create an accurate picture of the current funding situation for women's community based education and training. This will be used to make the case for a more strategic approach to funding and sustainability for education and training within the sector and will form part of our evidence of need as we lobby government for secure funding.

For further information on this initiative contact: Siobhann McKeating/Kirsty McManus at WSN, by email at [outreach@wsn.org.uk](mailto:outreach@wsn.org.uk) or telephone 9023 6923.

**WSN Website**

Anyone who accesses information on the Women's Support Network (WSN) via our website will have noticed that we have revamped and revitalised our online presence, including a change in our web address. Our new address is:

**[www.wsn.org.uk](http://www.wsn.org.uk)**

We have redesigned the overall layout, which will enable you to find information more easily. The main sections of the website, including Members Information, Policy and Publications are broken down into easy to navigate subsections, so you can go straight to the information you require.

The new layout will also allow users to see the full range of work the Women's Support Network is involved with. For anyone who has yet to meet the WSN team face to face, we have posted staff pictures so you will know who is at the other end of a telephone line or email the next time you contact us.



## WSN Member spotlight on

## WSN Policy Update

### Women's Information Group

The Women's Information Group (WIG) is an umbrella organisation which brings together women's groups throughout Greater Belfast and the surrounding towns.

#### New Premises

WIG held an open day for the opening of their new premises on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2008. The event not only marked the relocation of the group, WIG also used it as an opportunity to celebrate their future and the new projects which will be undertaken.

#### New Projects

Some of the new projects being organised by WIG include a Young Women's Project and the establishment of a "Hey Girls You Are Beautiful" Project for larger women. Details of these can be found on page 4.

#### History of WIG

WIG was formed in 1980 because it was felt that women from different communities needed an opportunity to meet each other, to learn from each other, to enjoy each others company and to gather information, so that they would feel better about their work, become more interested in their lives and in their own neighbourhoods. The prominence given to the word information was deliberate - information is the key ingredient for any individual or group in the process of gaining confidence, of getting things done, or simply in being heard. It is a source of power and especially so for women, who are often isolated in their homes where information is much harder to acquire.

#### Information Days

To enable this vital exchange of information WIG hold monthly Information Days, which have continued to grow in popularity since their inception in 1980. The experience of involvement in the Information Days has shown the importance for women to challenge the traditional methods of committees and organisations. Women need to have confidence to demand new structures which will allow them to express their own individuality.

Groups attend Information Days in venues across Belfast and Northern Ireland, with women travelling into areas they might never otherwise visit. Women from different religious and cultural backgrounds meet each other and network in a relaxed and informal way.

#### Expanding the Work of WIG

The relocation to new premises will enable WIG to extend their annual programme of events. Part of the premises will be used as a training room and crèche, offering an extended service to the growing number of participants. Details of all events will be given in the monthly Newsletter, which is sent to each group. For further details on projects or Information Days contact Sunita, Angela or Kathleen at:

Women's Information Group  
 7 University Road, Belfast, BT7 1NA  
 Tel/Fax: 028 90 244119  
 Email: [women@infogroup.club24.co.uk](mailto:women@infogroup.club24.co.uk)

In this period WSN responded to three consultation documents as detailed below.

### Arts Council Northern Ireland's (ACNI) Drama Strategy and screening out policy July 2008

WSN responded to ACNI's summary report on Development of a Drama Strategy. We noted that the report is gender neutral in composition and whilst there is a screening document accompanying the strategy, the document itself contains little, if any, reference to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

WSN recommended that the strategy should make systematic reference to equality of opportunity and diversity throughout the document WSN contends that with the inclusion of our recommendations the further promotion of equality of opportunity between women and men will be achieved, which will add to a richer and more diverse Arts culture in Northern Ireland.

### Mental Health Commission (MHC) EQIA July 2008

WSN welcomed the fact that the MHC revised its decision not to conduct an EQIA. However, WSN believes that the EQIA should expressly identify the relevant sources of these principles in Human Rights Law. WSN particularly regrets that there is no reference to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, the MHC is obliged to act compatibly with these rights.

WSN recommended that there is engagement with the Women's Sector with a view to designing support measures for dealing with complaints relating to physical violence or sexual abuse or other complaints.

### Civic Forum Review, August 2008—

WSN worked with the other partners of Women's Centres Regional Partnership (WCRP) to respond to this review. Some of the key points include:

WCRP endorses the re-establishment of a Civic Forum. This is a positive step forward in enhancing civic participation within Northern Ireland. However in order to ensure that the Civic Forum is an effective body, we strongly believe that the role and purpose of the Forum should be clearly defined from the outset.

WCRP advocate that the case for a Civic Forum should be to make Northern Ireland politics more user friendly and improve access to political debate for marginalised sectors. Historically female representation at a political level has always been poor. Currently women comprise 17% of the Northern Ireland Assembly, 21% of local Councillors and 32% of the membership of public bodies. Therefore the issue of appropriate gender representation needs to be integral to the re-establishment of a Civic Forum.

**To read the full policy responses please check the policy section of the WSN website at [www.wsn.org.uk](http://www.wsn.org.uk)**

## Events & News

### Women's Information group (WIG): Young Women's Project.

WIG is inviting young women to become involved with the **Young Women's Project**. The young women involved will decide on and plan the project, and select topics which are relevant to them. Issues which may be dealt with by the project could include health, education or fashion – anything the young women consider to be important. A planning day for the project is due to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 at WIG's new premises. Venues for further meetings will be decided upon by the project members, with crèche, transport and refreshments being provided.



The new **"Hey Girls You Are Beautiful"** Project, supported by WIG, will provide an opportunity for women to come together, enabling them to gain confidence, knowledge and to make new friends. This weekly project will meet every **Monday**, beginning from the **6<sup>th</sup> October 2008**, at 10.30am – 12.30pm, at WIG premises on University Road. Planned activities include Yoga, a Walking Picnic, Creative Fashion, a day at a Segregated Gym, and an optional Weigh In. Talks will also be held as part of the project with speakers covering topics ranging from Healthy Lifestyles and the Side Effects of Diabetes to Sex Life and more.

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### Centre for Global Education Call for Funding £1000 - £10,000

### Development Awareness Fund: Mini Grants Scheme

The Mini Grants scheme is aimed at organisations or networks with an interest in development education work in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who want to undertake 1-3 year projects which seek to raise awareness and understanding of international development issues; of our global interdependence; of the need for international development; and of the progress that has been made and that is possible.

**Deadline** for receipt of applications under the 2009/10 funding round is **5pm on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October**

For further information contact:

Stephen McCloskey  
Centre for Global Education  
9 University Street  
Belfast BT7 1FY  
Tel: 028 90 241879  
Email: Stephen@centreforglobaleducation.com

### ROSA

Rosa is a new organisation to champion and invest in exciting initiatives to improve the lives of all women and girls in the UK



While many women now enjoy great freedom and success, there are many more that do not. **ROSA** has been established to help champion these women and girls, to help them create change for their lives and the lives of others.

**ROSA's** aims are to invest in 'initiatives that tackle age-old problems in fresh ways'; to 'spread understanding of the issues'; and to 'galvanise support for organisations working with women and girls'.

Using revenue generated from donations **ROSA** plans to support groups working in areas ranging from:

**Improving women's health and well-being** - adolescent girls are more likely to experience depression and eating disorder than young men

**Improving women's safety** - since 1984, nearly half of all Rape Crisis centres have been forced to close due to lack of funding

**Improving the financial situation for women** - 3 in 4 part time workers are women, most of whom are overqualified for the job they're in

**Improving women's representation at all levels of society** - Women make up 26.3% of senior civil servants, 20.6% of local authority chief executives, 12.3% of senior police officers, 9.8% of the judiciary, 0.4% of senior ranks in the armed forces, 13.2% of university vice chancellors and 36.2% of secondary school heads

For further details about **ROSA** contact:

Tel: 0207 324 3044

Email: [info@rosauk.org](mailto:info@rosauk.org)

Website: [www.rosauk.org](http://www.rosauk.org)

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