



women's

RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Newsletter - January 2017

Women Campaigning for a Better Belfast

Belfast's first community plan, **The Belfast Agenda**, has been published and **WRDA wants you to get involved**. We believe these plans are only useful when we tell our stories of how issues affect women's lives.

Building on the advice contained in the publication '**Women Speak Out on Community Planning**' we will be working to ensure that the sessions are as accessible and inclusive as possible. The format will be designed to encourage and equip women to tell their stories and connect those to the 4 ambitions, goals and work streams outlined in The Belfast Agenda.

As public policy in Northern Ireland moves towards an outcomes based accountability model there is an increasing focus not just on providing baseline statistics as a starting point to measure success, but also on exploring the 'story behind the baseline'. **Women's organisations have a great deal of experience in demonstrating the ways in which women's experiences are often not the dominant narrative when public policy is being shaped due to their under-representation.** Therefore we see this project as a way of bringing **women's stories to the fore** and highlighting ways in which policy like The Belfast Agenda may need to be adjusted to take into account the real differences in men and women's lives.

It is our aim for women who participate in the sessions to be able to provide valuable feedback that will be fed into the consultation on The Belfast Agenda. Simultaneously we aim **to build the capacity of participants as they gain experience of telling their story in a way that can bring about change.** We want each woman to be offered an experience where she knows that her story is valuable and important to bringing about real change. In this way we may be able to encourage women to become more actively engaged campaigners within their own communities.

We will be hosting 4 workshops that will provide:

- ⇒ the chance to have your say about The Belfast Agenda
- ⇒ a discussion of each theme and how the plan will affect women
- ⇒ the chance to learn new skills as an active campaigner in your community



Shankill Women's Centre	02/02/2017 10.30am-12pm	Women in the Community
WOMEN'STEC	07/02/2017 10.30am-12pm	Women, Work and Money
Belfast Feminist Network (The Hive)	16/02/2017 19.00-20.30pm	Women and the City
Windsor Women's Centre	24/02/2017 10.30am-12pm	Women, Education and Employment

If you would like to participate in any of the sessions please book your place through Eventbrite using the links on our website at www.wrda.net.

Alternatively you can book by contacting Katie on info@wrda.net or 02890 230 212.

Representatives from Belfast City Council's Community Planning team will be present at the meeting to introduce The Belfast Agenda and take comments and feedback.

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Update on Stormont Crisis by Women's Sector Lobbyist

They say 'a week is a long time in politics'. Well having submitted **WRDA's response to the Programme for Government consultation** in late December I took 3 weeks off and came back on the day that the **Executive and Assembly was rocked by the resignation of the Deputy First Minister**. Suddenly everything had changed.

There is no doubt that the scandal connected to the running of the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme had to be tackled as the latest in a series of questions surrounding the accountability of some of our Executive parties. **In a climate where women are suffering disproportionately from an austerity agenda and women's organisations are facing unprecedented funding cuts, it is vital that our public money is put to its intended use, building a society that works for everyone including the most vulnerable.**



However, **the collapse of the Executive and Assembly has consequences for women** as it puts on hold the development of important law and policy. For example, **progress made through the Department of Justice on creating a domestic violence offence**, including ground-breaking work on coercive control, **is now left hanging in the balance**. Calls from women's organisations to the Minister of Education to publish the **long-overdue Childcare strategy** and assign a budget will have to wait until after the establishment of a new Executive. Likewise our questions about the intention of the Minister for Communities regarding the now **out of date Gender Equality Strategy** will remain unanswered. The outcome of **the working group on fatal foetal abnormality will remain a mystery** and the private members bill introduced by MLA David Ford to decriminalise abortions where women have received a fatal diagnosis for their pregnancy is off the table. The funding of innovative work under the Fresh Start Agreement, including a work stream to support women in communities experiencing paramilitary violence, is now in suspension.

If we want to see these issues progressed when the political institutions are re-established then we should ensure that all candidates seeking our votes know what we expect of them in terms of women's rights and equality. **The 2016 Women's Manifesto provides an excellent resource for engagement with political parties on the campaign trail**. Find out how committed they are to prioritising your rights before you give them your vote. I hope that the outcome of all the current political upheaval will be an Executive and Assembly that is more accountable for how it spends our money and how it respects and protects our rights.

Face the Fact on Cervical Cancer Prevention Week

Cervical Cancer Prevention Week runs from January 22nd—28th aimed at raising awareness of Cervical Cancer Screening.

Cervical screening aims to prevent cervical cancer from developing. It's a test to check the health of the cervix, which is the lower part of the womb. It is often also referred to as a smear test and involves taking a small sample of cells from the surface of the cervix.

Around 95 women each year are diagnosed with cervical cancer in Northern Ireland alone, by having your smear test you could reduce your risk of developing cancer. For most women the test will not show anything however you can look and feel perfectly normal but still have changes in your cervix.

Face the facts...

- ⇒ Attending for a **cervical smear** is an important step in taking care of your health.
- ⇒ **20 – 30 women** die each year from cervical cancer in NI.
- ⇒ Early detection and treatment can prevent **7 out of 10 cases** of this cancer.
- ⇒ In **Northern Ireland cervical screening** is available every three years for **women** aged 25 – 49 and every five years for women aged 50 - 64.
- ⇒ Cervical screening prevents **75% of cervical cancers** from developing.
- ⇒ In the UK **one in four women** do not attend cervical screening when invited.



We hope that we have encouraged you to pick up the phone and book your outstanding smear test today. Take control of your own health and you could be saving your own life.

For more information on the Breast, Cervical & Bowel Screening Awareness Programme with WRDA or to book the programme for your community group, please contact **Katherine Robertson** on **028 9023 0212** or email katherine.robertson@wrda.net

We also deliver this programme to groups with **additional support needs** and can adapt the materials accordingly. If you are interested please contact **Emma Gray** on emma.gray@wrda.net.



Your Health is Your Wealth Event Ormeau Library

WRDA attended Ormeau Road Library Your Health is Your Wealth Health information Day on Monday 16 January 2016 with an information stand publicising WRDA's Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme.

Describing the event Library Branch staff said *"the purpose was to showcase the resources in the community and it was a great opportunity for organisations that cover this area to network and publicise their work. The public very much appreciated the helpfulness of the staff with the information stands and also were particularly interested in those stands with an interactive element to them".*

Pamela Armstrong one of WRDA's trained Community Facilitators attended the event and was able to use resources including breast models, the breast beads and photos as well as leaflets and shower cards to promote the Breast, Cervical and Bowel screening awareness Programmes to local groups and individuals.

Pamela said *"The health day was an opportunity to publicise the wide range of work that WRDA covers. Some organisations were aware of WRDA's Lobbying work but not of the health and education programmes available to groups in the community".*

Katherine Robertson (Training and Development Worker) said *"attending health fairs gives WRDA the opportunity to reach out to local groups and individuals interested in participating in the Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness programmes across Belfast and Northern Ireland."*

If you are interested in a Breast Cervical and Bowel screening awareness Programme being delivered to your group please contact **Katherine Robertson** at WRDA on **02890230212** or katherine.robertson@wrda.net



Save the Date

International Women's Day is a worldwide event that celebrates women's achievements – from the political to the social – while calling for gender equality. It has been observed since the early 1900s and is now recognised each year on March 8th.

This year's theme is Peace, Solidarity and Sustenance—Keeping Body and Soul Together.

This year to celebrate WRDA will be hosting an open house event on **Wednesday the 8th of March** to bring women together across Northern Ireland to celebrate the history of International Women's Day and the work of women within our own communities.

We will provide a light breakfast, live music and the opportunity to add your International Women's Day wishes to our wishing tree.

Join the fight for gender equality!

Our drop in event will run from 9.30am-11.30am .



Women on the Cutting Edge Save the Date

In follow up to our report **Women on the Cutting Edge** launched at Reclaim the Agenda's Conference on November 15th we have gathered the voices and concerns of attendees on their demands for gender equality to produce a report of specific key asks.

We will use these key asks to hold the NI Assembly accountable for gender equality.

At this point we are asking all those who attended the launch and those who could not make it to save this important date in your diary.

You will hear about our next steps in this campaign and have first access to this report.

When? 16th February 2017, 10am-12.30pm

Where? UNISON, Galway House, 165 York St, Belfast BT15 1AL

If you are interested in attending please contact kellie.turtle@wrda.net





Membership

We offer membership to both individuals and groups that are interested in fostering stronger links with us and the wider women's sector. Becoming a member of the WRDA is easy and more importantly free to join. We continually strive to work towards women's equality and to keep our members up to date and although membership is free, we do accept donations to continue the vast amount of work we are involved in.

If you are interested in becoming a member of WRDA please download the Membership Form from our website and return to us either by post or emailing it to info@wrda.net.

Member of the Month Windsor Women's Centre



Windsor Women's Centre is situated in the Village area of **South Belfast** and has been operating since **1990**. The centre works within a community development framework to develop and promote equality of opportunity and champion practices and policies to better the lives of women and their families.

Situated in an area of **high social and economic deprivation** **Windsor Women's Centre** provides much needed services to meet the **diverse needs of women and their families from the surrounding communities**. The centre typically works with around 300 service users a week. The services provided includes access to a range of both accredited and non-accredited training and education courses, quality day care, after schools provision and advice and information.

Windsor Women's Centre is committed to providing **high quality training and education courses that will make a positive contribution to the lives of women and their families**.

Windsor Women's Centre has been delivering Training and Education to local women for over 20 years in a welcoming, friendly and supportive environment. With a range of courses available at different levels from entry level to level 3 we provide a starting point for learners regardless of their ability and/or previous experience enabling progression.

Windsor Women's Centre recognise that the health of women is critical to families and communities. We are committed to improving the Health and Wellbeing of women from the local community. A woman's health is dependent on her physical, psychological, spiritual and cultural wellbeing.

For more information on the centre please visit their website on www.windsorwomenscentre.com.



On Saturday 21st January at Belfast's City Hall 1200 (PSNI estimate) people gathered to support women in solidarity with the **oppressed, the marginalised, and the angry**. Speakers from Belfast Feminist Network, Black Lives Matter, Housing for All NI, and Friends of the Earth addressed the rally and spoke of the many injustices faced locally and globally not least a culture that considers misogynists as leaders; and I am not referring to former First Minister Arlene Foster's claims here.

At the Washington rally – the 500,000 strong crowd (City officials estimation) listened to one of the speakers we will be **welcoming to Belfast for International Women's Day; Professor Angela Davis**.

At the Women's March, Davis made a passionate call for resistance and asked the audience to become more militant in their demands for social justice over the next four years of Trump's presidency.

"At a challenging moment in our history, let us remind ourselves that we the hundreds of thousands, the millions of women, trans-people, men and youth who are here at the Women's March, we represent the powerful forces of change that are determined to prevent the dying cultures of racism, hetero-patriarchy from rising again."

"The freedom struggles of black people that have shaped the very nature of this country's history cannot be deleted with the sweep of a hand. We cannot be made to forget that black lives do matter. This is a country anchored in slavery and colonialism, which means for better or for worse the very history of the United States is a history of immigration and enslavement. Spreading xenophobia, hurling accusations of murder and rape and building walls will not erase history."

Angela Davis will give the International Women's Day lunch time lecture on **Wednesday 8th March Central Hall Belfast**, and booking is recommended. We are honoured to have such a **social justice warrior** joining us to inspire, motivate and continue the fight for social justice for women around the world.

This year's programme of events will be launched by **Reclaim the Agenda** on **February 22nd at the Black Box, 6pm-9pm**.

Everyone welcome!