



women's

RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Newsletter - March 2017

Time to Commit to Women #Time2Commit



In the run up to the election 2nd March, women's groups united to have a series of meetings with all the main political parties to demand action on women's rights and equality. These were based on the feedback from the **Women at the Cutting Edge Conference** and the **three key demands put forward by participants**. You can read the conference report here: <http://www.wrda.net/Documents/Publication2%20rtatt.pdf>

WRDA's Women's Sector Lobbyist organised the political party meetings under the **Time to Commit to Women** campaign in conjunction with Reclaim the Agenda and has summarised the responses from the parties on this blog: <https://time2commit.wordpress.com/>

During the course of the meetings we heard unanimous **support from all parties for the ground-breaking work on domestic violence and stalking that had been started by the Justice Minister** with all representatives saying they are committed to ensuring this opportunity isn't lost after the election. We were also pleased to hear **all the parties claim to prioritise childcare and acknowledge the severity of the problems created by our lack of affordable childcare in Northern Ireland**, especially in communities where women struggle to get back into training and work after having children. **The biggest divergence in opinion between the parties was on the issue of abortion** with some calling for this to be completely decriminalised and regulated as a healthcare service, while others want to see limited or no liberalisation of the law. Some parties approach it as an issue of personal conscience and allow a free vote. **We stressed to the parties that the current arrangements create huge inequality between better off women who can afford to travel and pay for private health care and women who have limited choices due to lack of money.**

The Time to Commit to Women campaign has helped remind all parties that issues affecting women should be firmly on their agenda if they are seeking women's votes. It was difficult to get firm commitments to particular actions because of the uncertainty about what will happen after the negotiations.

We would like to see some 'red line' issues for women's rights being included. For example:

- Single equality legislation and the bill of rights
- Investment in childcare
- Abortion law reform
- Civic engagement and genuine partnership

If you'd like to get involved in the steering group for this campaign please contact kellie.turtle@wrda.net.

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Why we need Feminist Economics?

As part of the ongoing Imagine Festival WRDA and BFN organised an event entitled **'Why we need Feminist Economics'**. The key note speaker was Katrine Marcal, an eminent Swedish economist and journalist who is the author of the best seller, *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner*.

Katrine's talk was very engaging and she made economics accessible in a way few economists can. She introduced us to what is described as the central question in economics, how you get your dinner, which was first asked by Adam Smith in 1776. Smith's famous answer was **"It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest"**. His seminal work has had a huge impact on economics and the idea that competing self-interests create a market which then serves the needs of us all has become a kind of gospel, indeed Marcal refers to economics as a modern religion.

The core problem with Smith's answer to how the market works is that he totally forgot the role of women. Smith's mother, Margaret Douglas made his dinner and kept his house as most women did for their male relatives at the time and even now. Marcal pointed out that Smith's theory of self-interest and all subsequent economic thought based on it can't explain Margaret Douglas's role in how he got his dinner. She, like every woman who undertakes unpaid care work, did it at least in part because of love and benevolence.

Marcal made the point that as well as an **'invisible hand'** the market needs an **'invisible heart'** to work properly and this means accounting for the value of unpaid care work. **Unpaid childcare alone is worth nearly 350 billion pounds to the UK economy**, three times more than the total value of the financial services sector, and yet it is not counted towards GDP. This leads to **women's unpaid work being treated like a free good** and creates the scandalous situation where a woman at home looking after her own children or grandchildren is labelled **'economically inactive'** but if she was to take a job outside the home caring for someone else's children she would count as **'economically active'**.

The undervaluing of care work is a key prop to patriarchy and helps to explain why **70% of the world's poor are women**. Adding unpaid work to GDP calculations would help rebalance this by demonstrating the true economic value of women. Marcal explained that **the capabilities to do this exist but not the political will** and this might have something to do with how deeply sexist the discipline of economics is. When she interviewed the Nobel Prize winning economist Prof. E.F. Fama he asked her 'who wrote your questions?' and female economists have to publish more to be promoted than would be expected of their male colleagues. **Marcal said women need to engage in economics to make this change and her talk shows us that it is not overly complicated science but common sense.**

International Women's Day Highlights



This year's International Women's Day programme of events did not disappoint. On Saturday 4th of March, women, men and children gathered at Writer's Square for this year's **IWD Rally**. The rally was head up by Shankill Women's Centre this year who celebrated their 30th year of service to the community. As we came together in solidarity we made our way through the centre of Belfast to City Hall. At Belfast City Hall we heard speeches from the **Lord Mayor of Belfast, Baroness Blood, Paula Alda, Clare Daly and Youth Action**.

Speakers highlighted the ongoing struggle for women against austerity and cuts in Northern Ireland and encouraged us not to give up on our fight for gender equality.

On Wednesday 8th March we celebrated International Women's Day in style with our open house event. At our offices we displayed the **'QUILT for Beijing'** which **depicts the lives and experiences of women throughout Ireland in the 1990's**. The quilt was hung in the European tent at the 4th UN World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995. Staff and members enjoyed the opportunity to sit back, listen to some live music and meet other likeminded women from across Northern Ireland.

On International Women's Day WRDA staff attended an event at Belfast City Hall which welcomed **Prof. Angela Davis. Angela Davis, a radical black feminist, political activist and academic**, whom told a packed audience of the struggle ahead to oppose the policies of newly elected US President Donald Trump. She reflected on her time spent in Northern Ireland back in 1995 and showed solidarity for women in Northern Ireland and campaigns such as **#strikeforchoice**.



Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness

The **Women's Resource and Development Agency** is currently providing training across Northern Ireland. The **Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Training Programme** takes place over three two hour sessions and is available to individuals, organisations and groups across Northern Ireland. The programmes are provided at no cost to groups.

We have worked with a wide variety of groups to deliver the programme and this has worked really well. We work in a participative way with groups and have a variety of resources to help in the delivery of the programme. For example breast models where participants will be able to feel what a lump might feel like. We also explore the reality of women's lives with competing demands on time and the importance in prioritising women's own health. Although the training gets across a very important message the Facilitators make the sessions fun and interesting.

The sessions cover:

- **Breast Awareness and Breast Screening**, including a practical demonstration on how to check your breasts and the signs and symptoms to look for
- **Cervical Screening**, including what happens at a smear test the types of results and what they mean
- **Bowel Cancer Screening**, including the signs and symptoms to look out for and how to take the screening test.



WRDA Programmes are delivered by experienced trainers qualified to Level 3 in Training and Development through WRDA's Community Facilitators Training Programme that provides employment for local women whilst building Community Capacity.

If you are in contact or associated with a local community, parents, women's group or men's group that would benefit from this training feel free to get in touch with **Katherine Robertson** by calling **028 9023 0212** or by emailing katherine.robertson@wrda.net for further details.

Homeless Period Belfast



Just a reminder that WRDA is now a drop off point for the Homeless Period Belfast. Our offices are open Monday– Friday 9am– 5pm.

Your support so far has been invaluable and has meant that the Homeless Period Belfast have been able to distribute their care packs to:

- Homeless women living in hostels
- Homeless women sleeping rough
- Female refugees and asylum seekers

- Women who are victims of domestic violence
- Women on low income who depend on food banks

Donations needed:

- Sanitary towels
- Wipes
- Hand sanitiser
- Liners
- Tampons
- New underwear



For more info on the project: <https://www.facebook.com/TheHomelessPeriodBelfast/?fref=ts>

Controversial Conversations

As a regional women's organisation it is always good to get out and about and 'feel the pulse' of local women and explore what the issues are for them at present. So in the last two months I have been out meeting and engaging with women from Limavady, Strabane, Portadown, Cookstown, Hilltown, Newry and Derry. **Our Good Relations workshops or 'Controversial Conversations' have really ignited the imagination of women's groups and allowed them the space to discuss everything from relationships between Catholics and Protestants, shared housing, integrated education, the RHI scandal, and newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers.**

Given the nature of our snap elections, there has also been plenty of political debate and discussion and also the nature of politics in Northern Ireland. **The feedback has been excellent and women feel that they have had the opportunity to have their opinions heard, learn some new information and also to feel challenged about some of their presumptions.** I am delighted to say that I have been invited back by most of the groups to do more work with them which I am really looking forward to doing. Women's opinions need to be heard; their voices need to be amplified and they need to be around decision-making tables. These workshops validate their opinions, concerns and ideas for building a better future; be that in their communities or in a more formal arena.

If these discussions are something that would interest your group please contact **Kellie O'Dowd** on kellie.odowd@wrda.net or call **028 9023 0212**.



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. To donate visit our Localgiving page on

www.localgiving.org/charity/WRDA.

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



The Rainbow Project is a health organisation that works to improve the physical, mental & emotional health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender people in Northern Ireland.

They are the largest LGB&T organisation in Northern Ireland and have two centres: one in Belfast city centre and the other in Foyle, L'Derry.

The Rainbow Project is devoted to promoting the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgendered people and their families in Northern Ireland, as well as those questioning their orientation or gender, through partnership, advocacy and the development and delivery of appropriate support services.

This mission is achieved by:

Introducing best practice based on evaluation of services, research and engagement with partners and LGB&T people.

Being innovative in both the development and delivery of services.

Working in partnership, with statutory, community voluntary and private sector organisations to ensure the needs of LGB&T people in Northern Ireland are met.

Influencing policy by lobbying policymakers in constructive and concerted campaigns.

Raising awareness of The Rainbow Projects expertise in relation to issues impacting on LGB&T people in Northern Ireland.

On 21st March TRP delivered a LGB&T awareness session to WRDA staff and members which provided clarity on appropriate language and terminology, raised awareness of key barriers to LGB&T community and left staff feeling more confident in supporting LGB&T people in NI.

To find out more about The Rainbow Project visit their website on <http://www.rainbow-project.org/>

WRDA Out and About

Check out where our Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme has been delivered since January!

Magherafelt and Cookstown Volunteer Centre

The Base Magherafelt

Muckamore Abbey Hospital Killead Ward

The British Deaf Association Belfast

Moylinn House Craigavon

Ballybot House Newry

Gloucester Day Centre Larne

Cookstown Day Centre

Lisburn Assessment and Resource Centre

Mindwise Downpatrick

The British Deaf Association Ballymena

Coalisland Day Centre

Oakridge Social Education Centre Dungannon

The Chinese Welfare Association

Action Mental Health Dunmurry

Lislea Community Association

Richmount Elders Group

North Down YMCA

Chrysalis Women's Centre

Peninsula Healthy Living Centre

North Down Men's Shed

Seniors Group

Orangefield Men's Shed

Ormeau Men's Shed

Greenway Women's Centre

Ballymena South Cluster Lunch Club

Edenderry /Holycross Cross Community

Parents Group

Tildarg Primary School Parents Group

Tagnevin Community Centre

Avert Training Foyle Women's Aid

Glenbrook Sure Start Baby & Parents



Shepard's Cross young parents Group

Cherish Sure Start Stay and Play

Roslea

Ardoyle Women's Group

The Vine Centre

Cherish Sure Start Irvinestown

Lisburn & Colin Sure Start Tonagh Group

Mumo Project Forth spring inter Community Group

Ballykeel Adults Lunch Club

Fertility Network

Cherish Sure Start Newtownbutler