

women's

RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Newsletter - November 2016

Women at the Cutting Edge Conference



WRDA has launched its paper on **'Women at the Cutting Edge: The Impact of Spending Cuts on Women's Community & Voluntary Organisations in Northern Ireland.'**

This research was carried out to document **how far the cuts have threatened the Women's Sector and the vital services provided by it.** The information in the report was gathered through an online survey, face to face interviews and in-depth case studies.

On **November 15th** the paper was launched at **Reclaim the Agendas Women's Conference**. The conference explored the cuts to funding and the impact on service delivery to women and children in local communities with the aim to plan how we as a sector challenge these decisions and the broader austerity agenda.

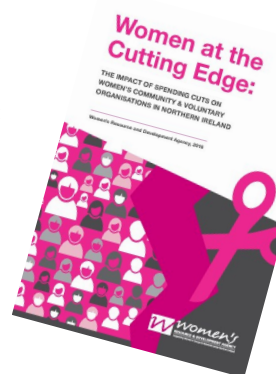
The conference hosted a range of speakers to include: Anne McVicker and Kellie O'Dowd (WRDA & RTA), Evelyn Collins (Equality Commission), Clare Bailey (Green Party MLA), Dawn Purvis, Professor Eileen Evason, Patricia McKeown and two pieces of research launched by Clare Pearson and WRDA Women's Sector Lobbyist Kellie Turtle. Clare Pearson's research took a look into peacebuilding and the Women's Sector in Northern Ireland with support from the Community Relations Council and Institute for Conflict Research. The aim of the research is to provide a body of evidence which supports the assertion that the increased inclusion of women in peacebuilding will help achieve sustainable peace.

There were over 100 attendees with representatives from women's organisations and centres, statutory organisations and feminist activists. Facilitated table discussions allowed participants to **discuss their own experiences** of the issues that arose from the two pieces of research. Each table was asked to develop a list of **three key asks for Stormont** which will be fed into a report that will be launched early next year.

We were really excited by the opportunity to gather as a sector to review and reflect on the last few years of biting cuts to our budgets while demand for our services continues to increase. It was also a chance to generate a robust plan to challenge these decisions and mobilise into a force to be reckoned with.

'Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the World. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has' - Margaret Mead - Women's Rights Activist

Copies of the full report are available on our website at www.wrda.net.



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WomensResource
andDevelopmentAgency



@WRDA_team
@WSLobbyistNI

A Woman's Guide to Controversial Conversations



Are you tired of listening to MEN talk about the 'important' issues?

“ You see them'uns it's all their fault...
They should just go back to where they came from... ”

Then this short interactive workshop is for you!

Learn about:

- Why different people have migrated to Northern Ireland
- How far have women come in achieving equality
 - The history of the 'Troubles'
- Where are we now 18 years after the Good Friday Agreement

For further information contact:

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women's
RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
Supporting Women's Groups and Networks Across Northern Ireland

Community Relations Council



As women we have all been there. We've all been at meetings large and small where men have completely dominated the conversation and/or the discussion. They talk ad nauseum and at length often making broadcasts as opposed to saying things that **A: haven't been said before but they clearly like the sound of their own voices or B: that are anyway relevant and would move the conversation along.** Juxtapose this with women's social conditioning to remain quiet or silent, **our constant fear of reprisals for speaking out, making a mistake or giving inaccurate information and also our fear of offending anyone; and you have a very toxic dynamic of engagement.** The important role women have played and continue to play in supporting peace-building has been well documented, **however 18 years after the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement what women have found is the reassertion of male control in communities and the diminished opportunities to for women to participate in political discussions.** Take for example the composition of the Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition Commission, of which only one of the 15 nominees is a woman.

To recognise these dynamics is the first step in changing them and that is what a women's guide to controversial conversations is all about. The workshops provide the opportunity for women to explore issues relating to sectarianism and racism in an uninterrupted space which also provides a gender context. It also provides recognition given to the gendered experiences and legacies of the conflict which have resulted in particular inequalities and experiences of loss for women. It provides the time, space and oxygen for the consultation and participation of women; something that has been deeply lacking in our peace building projects. **But most importantly, it provides a safe space for women to come together to discuss sensitive and controversial issues without fear of reprisal or silencing or further marginalisation within communities.** It is much needed work that WRDA Good Relations Worker is proud to be undertaking.

Make Yourself Aware Bowel Screening Awareness Programmes

WRDA is currently providing **FREE training across Northern Ireland.** The **Bowel Screening Awareness Training Session** takes place over a two hour session and is available to individuals and organisations working with local community, women's or men's groups across Northern Ireland.

The session covers:

Bowel cancer screening awareness including the signs and symptoms to look out for and how to take the screening test.

Participant quotes:

"The screening instructions given made it much easier to understand what to do. I will complete it the next time I receive one"

"It made an embarrassing subject more comfortable to talk about"

"I will encourage family members to use it"

WRDA programmes are delivered by **experienced trainers qualified to Level 3** in Training and Development through WRDA's Community Facilitators Training Programme.

If you are in contact or associated with a local community, women's or men's group that would benefit from this training feel free to get in touch with **Katherine Robertson** by calling **028 90230212** or by emailing **[Katherine Robertson](mailto:Katherine.robertson@wrda.net)** for further details.

WRDA Members Event Programme for Government Consultation Event

When? 1st December 2016

10.00am-12.00pm

Where? 6 Mount Charles, Belfast

BT7 1NZ

There is no overarching acknowledgement in the Draft PfG that women, as over half the population, are still experiencing inequality across all areas of life compared to men.

Take this opportunity to have your say and feed into our response to the Programme for Government!

The eight week consultation closes on December 23, 2016.

Join us and help us respond as a united sector!

To register contact Katie on T: 02890 230 212 E: info@wrda.net





Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition Engagement Session

You may be aware that the **Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition** has been established as part of commitments made under the Stormont House and Fresh Start Agreements.

In order to inform its work, the Commission is now beginning the process of engagement to gather the views and opinions of those who wish to contribute from across our community.

WRDA has been approached by the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition to help them facilitate an engagement session with the Women's Sector.

When? 12th December 2016, 10am

Where? NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast BT15 2GB

Please RSVP attendance to: fict.secretariat@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

Sample questions/discussion points

- ⇒ In your opinion how can we ensure that in Northern Ireland we develop a rich diverse community in which cultural expression can be celebrated?
- ⇒ Do you have any examples of positive practice in relation to display of flags, identity, culture and tradition that have been accepted in a positive manner by communities of different backgrounds and traditions?
- ⇒ What do you consider are the issues in respect of flags, identity, culture and tradition in your community or within Northern Ireland as a whole?
- ⇒ What barriers presently exist to making progress to become a society that understands and accepts different cultures and expressions of these?

WRDA Members Event Lessons Learned and Lessons Shared | Colombian Peace Process |

When? Wednesday 14th December

10.30am-12.00pm

Where? 6 Mount Charles, Belfast

BT7 1NZ

Colombia has been in conflict for over 52 years and seeks to learn from the peace process from Northern Ireland. Juan Manuel Santos, Colombian President, said he told fellow Colombians to "look to Belfast" when trying to show them the dividends a peaceful future can deliver.

Speakers include: Denise Hughes from the Institute for Conflict Research and Geraldine Mc Ateer from the West Belfast Partnership Board.

After their recent trip to Colombia Denise and Geraldine will give an overview on the current Colombian Peace Process and the impact of lessons learned and lessons shared with Northern Ireland.

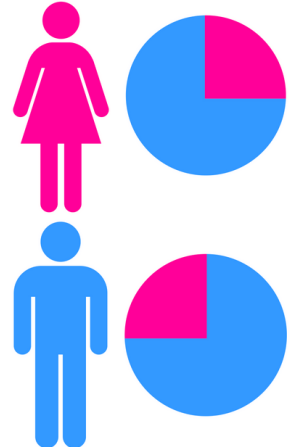
To register for this event please contact Katie on T: 02890 230 212 E: info@wrda.net

Consultation response on the Executive Office's proposal to stop publishing the Gender Equality Statistics Update

WRDA response to the Executive Office Consultation on proposals for the withdrawal of two compendia official statistics publications - 'A profile of older people in Northern Ireland' and 'Gender Equality Statistics' annual publications.

WRDA objects to the removal of these two publications by The Executive Office as they form a vital part of the process of monitoring equality outcomes for older people

and women. As an organisation working for women's equality we will focus particularly on the Gender Equality Statistics Update.



There is a **legal duty** on the Executive to **monitor the impact** of all law and policy on women, looking for any **direct or indirect discrimination**. This duty exists in domestic equality and human rights law as well as through obligations under international human rights treaties. For example, in order to meet the core obligations of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the UN Committee requires that the Executive adopt the following implementation measure: *'Developing and establishing valid indicators of the status of and progress in the realization of human rights of women, and establishing and maintaining databases disaggregated by sex and related to the specific provisions of the Convention.'* (**UNCEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 28**) The Convention on Economic and Social Rights also requires the Executive to *'develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the implementation of laws and policies aimed at promoting the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by men and women do not have unintended adverse effects on disadvantaged or marginalized individuals or groups, particularly women and girls.'* (**CESCR Committee, General Comment 20**)

As users of government data, **WRDA is urging the Executive Office to retain the Gender Equality Statistics Update as it is currently the only statistical publication that provides a cross-cutting review of indicators of gender equality.** In line with the Executive's own commitment **we call on the Executive Office to 'proactively release' this very 'relevant' and comprehensive dataset.** While the Women in NI report produced by NISRA from the NI Labour Force Survey provides a valuable evidence base on a range of work and education related indicators, it is narrow in its scope.

Read our full response on www.wrda.net or email info@wrda.net for a copy.



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 British Deaf Association NI



BDA's mission is to ensure a world in which the **language, culture, community, diversity and heritage of Deaf people in the UK is respected and fully protected**, ensuring that Deaf people can participate and contribute as equal and valued citizens in the wider society. This will be achieved through:

- Improving the quality of life by empowering Deaf individuals and groups;
- Enhancing freedom, equality and diversity;
- Protecting and promoting BSL.

The BDA is a Deaf people's organisation representing a diverse, vibrant and ever-changing community of Deaf people. Their activities, promotions, and partnerships with other organisations aim to empower their community towards full participation and contribution as equal and valued citizens in the wider society.

1. Protecting Deaf culture and Identity – valuing Deaf peoples' sense of Deaf culture and identity derived from belonging to a cultural and linguistic group, sharing similar beliefs and experiences with a sense of belonging.

2. Asserting linguistic rights– valuing the use of BSL as a human right. As such, BSL must be preserved, protected and promoted because Deaf people have the right to use their first or preferred language.

3. Fostering the community– valuing Deaf people with diverse perspectives, experiences and abilities. BDA are committed to equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination with a special focus on those affecting Deaf people and their language.

4. Achieving equality in legal, civil and human rights– valuing universal human rights such as the right to receive education and access to information in sign language, and freedom from political restrictions on our opportunities to become full citizens.

5. Developing alliance - valuing those who support BDA and allies because they share BDA's vision and mission, and support the BSL community.

BDA have recently taken part in our Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme and have been selected as our member of the month due to their strong commitment to improving the lives of deaf people and protecting their rights, culture and identity.



Periods are not a great time of the month for any woman, but for many homeless and vulnerable women with very limited access to the expensive 'luxury' of sanitary items, it is a truly awful and humiliating time, and because of the taboo that surrounds the topic, it's something that doesn't often cross our mind.

Some women are forced to use ripped up cloths, old socks or toilet roll from public toilets, or make a few tampons last the entire length of their period. This can lead to infections, so it doesn't just have an emotional impact but is a danger to women's physical health.

The Homeless Period Belfast is a volunteer led project set up to collect donations of wipes, underwear and sanitary items and produce female care packages which will then be delivered to various projects and shelters across Belfast.

If you would like to help, you can donate via their **GoFundMe** page or simply call into one of their pink bin locations to donate sanitary towels, tampons, baby wipes, new underwear, hand sanitiser and deodorant.

If you would like to donate in bulk please contact them via their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/TheHomelessPeriodBelfast.

The money and donations go towards creating special **period care packs**, each containing underwear, wipes, and a selection of sanitary products. These packs will be going out to other homeless charities and projects in Belfast to make a difference for as many women as possible who are in difficult circumstances, allowing their dignity and health to be maintained through their periods.

The Homeless Period Belfast are on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Check it out and follow their journey.



[Facebook.com/TheHomelessPeriodBelfast](https://www.facebook.com/TheHomelessPeriodBelfast)



[@HPBelfast](https://twitter.com/HPBelfast)



[@homelessperiodbelfast](https://www.instagram.com/homelessperiodbelfast)