



A Positive Blog for a Good Week

Recent news has been dominated by Northern Ireland's record-breaking period without a government and the terrible fire in Primark in Belfast City Centre, as well as the now-normal barrage of Trump and Brexit bad news. While all of this is undoubtedly real, serious stuff and deserving of our attention, sometimes it can feel that there's too much of this to deal with, especially when we all have a whole glut of our own concerns to attend to as well. Many of us might be feeling a little downhearted as we wave goodbye to the summer and get ready for back to school, so this blog is going to attempt to provide a little distraction from the worries of day-to-day life over the course of Monday evening with a short list of suggestions of mood-lifters that might help us all to recharge.

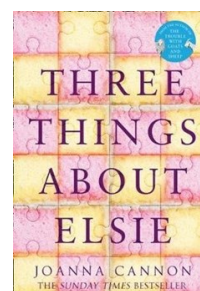
#1 A Book – Gail Honeyman's Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine

"Hugely original, a funny and sad tale of a survivor who tackles the challenges of emotional reconnection with grave courage. Unmissable" Sunday Express

A few of us in the office have recently had the joy of reading this lovely book. I read it myself when I was feeling in a bit of a funk and it really made me feel better about the world. The characters feel real and seeing Eleanor journey out of loneliness and find that she has the power to change her place in the world and to enjoy being part of a community in a way she hadn't thought possible really challenges the feeling that the world is just a big, bad place. The whole thing feels like a tribute to human kindness, and the real hope and power that exists in all of our relationships.

Note, Eleanor Oliphant does go to dark places before it comes back to the light, and the book deals with themes of child abuse, alcoholism and depression and suicide, so it might not be for you.

If you've already read, and hopefully enjoyed Eleanor's story, Waterstones recommends these if you're in the mood for something similar.



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We have had no government for nearly 600 days and on the 28th of August the Women's Sector Lobbyist, Kellie Turtle published the results of a survey asking what impact this failure to deliver has had on those who lobby and campaign on women's rights. Encouragingly, 80% of those surveyed said they have continued to lobby decision makers in the 19 months since the collapse of the Executive, but the majority felt that it is now much harder to make progress on the issues that affect their organisations and communities. It should be noted that the survey respondents still rated MLAs as the most effective route for lobbying and that only 4% said they found MPs to be the most effective. What sums up the majority of responses is frustration and it is hard to see an end in sight.

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

"I'm exasperated: we need abortion rights, equal pay; domestic violence protection; better court responses to rape and sexual crime; pension rights; care and Homs rights.... I really could go on and on."

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

"Domestic violence legislation, abortion rights Universal Credit rollout needs to be halted and reversed."

"Abortion legislation reform, equal marriage reform, addressing gender based poverty, and strategic equality strategies."

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

"Need to get Stormont functioning again in a sustainable way so as to legislate for universal childcare, abortion rights, domestic violence and stalking legislation, deal with the welfare mitigation policies which will be coming to an end, need for a gender equality strategy, encourage more women into politics, mental health services and to help prepare us for Brexit and mitigate against any negative impacts of Brexit."

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

"The key priority is to get gender sensitive policies in place to begin with, and this requires both an understanding and a willingness to take action. Unfortunately the evidence is that even while the institutions were in place, the priority given to women's issues was low."

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait

On Monday Naomi Long of the Alliance Party called a meeting of all the parties and independent MLAs to try and get things moving again but it is unclear how much impact this has had. After the meeting Naomi Long posted on Facebook that those who attended had 'engaged, honestly and candidly. Talking to each other has to be better than talking about each other'. The meeting is definitely a positive step and it should be noted that a representative from every party except the TUV attended.

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

A new election needs to take place of new politicians who commit to doing the job they are elected to do. The old guard is worn out and redundant!

I think we need the state party to admit we are currently in direct rule instead of denying the reality and jeopardising people's health and dignity in their ineptitude.

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait

The indications from the DUP and Sinn Fein is that neither party is anticipating a return to Stormont soon. Nigel Dodds appears to be preparing for a version of Direct Rule when he said 'with Parliament returning this week, the government will be required to live up to its commitments to ensure the good governance of Northern Ireland...the people of Northern Ireland deserve better and we will ensure that Westminster acts in their best interest'. Meanwhile Sinn Fein's Alex Maskey said following the meeting that the party will 'participate in any process which is credible and can achieve a successful outcome'. However according to SF's Conor Murphy, "Our intention is to have ministers in place by April 1, 2019' so we can expect 7 months more hiatus at least.

Campaigners for women's rights tell us what they want addressed as Stormont deadlock continues:

Get back round the table and get the work done: Abortion rights, childcare, gay marriage and dealing with the past.

Assembly needs up and running to bring forward vital legislation around coercive control, funding issues and other vital pieces of legislation like equal marriage and abortion law reform

(from a survey of 45 campaigners and lobbyist in the women's movement)

#womenwontwait



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 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 contact the Communications and Membership Worker, Megan McClure Botha via info@wrda.net.

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#2 Meet a Friend – Get hold of a pal, maybe someone you haven't seen in a while, whether in person or on the phone. It's always nice to make a connection and let somebody know you're thinking of them, and have someone listen to you too. If you're in or around the Belfast area it's a great opportunity to get back into the city and show solidarity with all the retailers who have been experiencing a decreased footfall after the Primark fire too, though do be aware that the air quality isn't great after the fire and if you're sensitive to this or have respiratory problems you might be best to avoid the area. Many of Belfast's shops are open to 9pm on Thursday so a perfect way to beat mid-week blues!

#3 Positive News – These days we're all connected to the 24 hour news machine pretty much all the time. If you need something to shift your perspective and open your eyes to all the good things that are happening, have a look at Positive News, "good journalism about good things". You can read many free articles on the website. The whole project is based around the idea that too much bad news isn't good for us and it might be just what you need to see to feel a little better about the world this week.

#4 Podcasts, Audiobooks and Music – The Positivity Playlist One of the many great things about music, audiobooks and podcasts is that they're a mood lifter that you can fit in anywhere, you can have your headphones in or the radio on while you're doing your grocery shopping, driving, or just standing in the kitchen waiting for the kettle to boil, and it can always put a smile on your face.

Finally, I want to make it clear that we aren't trying to patronise anybody, these things are intended only as friendly suggestions to perk up your start to the week and distract from daily life stresses. There are plenty of us out there who might need more than this. If that's you, there is absolutely no shame in seeking the help you need, and there are people and organisations who can help you, whatever your situation. PIPS – 0800 088 6042

Lifeline – **0808 808 8000**

Women's Aid – 0808 2000 247

GenderJam – **028 90 996 819**

LGBT Switchboard – 0808 8000 390

WRDA Out and About

Reach Out! A selection of where we have been promoting and delivering the BCB programme in May and June.

- ⇒ Derrygonelly GAA
- ⇒ Clogher Valley Sure Start
- ⇒ Larne Community Development
- ⇒ Cancer Lifeline
- ⇒ A Safe Space to be Me Antrim
- ⇒ Garvagh Presbyterian Women's Group
- ⇒ Inspire Wellbeing Hope House
- ⇒ Towerview TRC
- ⇒ Inspire Wellbeing Scrabo View
- ⇒ The Base Cookstown
- ⇒ The Base Larne
- ⇒ AMH Promote
- ⇒ Reconnect

If you are interested in the Breast, Cervical and Bowel screening awareness programme please contact our office on **028 9023 0212**.

