



## CHILDCARE FOR ALL FAMILY FRIENDLY CAMPAIGN LAUNCH!



You are warmly invited to attend a **family fun day** on **Sat 17<sup>th</sup> Nov from 10am -12pm in the Mencap Centre** in South Belfast to get involved in the Childcare For All campaign.

We've launched the campaign in Stormont and got great political support but we have to make this accessible for families to get involved.

So on the day there'll be:

- Activities and entertainment for kids of all ages
- Banner and placard making workshop
- Arts and crafts
- A politicians' corner discussion hosted by children where you can quiz politicians about what they're doing on childcare
- A pop up film studio where you can record your own message for the childcare for all social media campaign
- A chance to meet all the organisations behind this campaign

We are really looking forward to getting more parents, grandparents and kids involved so please spread the word and register on Eventbrite by searching for 'childcare'

The women's sector has been campaigning on childcare for so long – this is a chance to bring all our demands together and be part of something big! Hope to see you there.



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## We need Childcare and Eldercare provision to fix pension poverty

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of November The Government again raised the State Pension Age (STA) for women to 65 as part of a plan to equalise STA for both men and women at 68. This increase and the preceding increases from 1995 will not create pension equality but entrench and exacerbate the pension poverty many women already face. This is particularly true for women born in the 1950s who had their retirement age hiked with little or no personal notice (1995/2011 Pension Acts), faster than promised (2011 Pension Act), and with no time to make alternative plans.

The changes to STA for women born in the 1950s make no allowance for the fact that **until the 1990s many women weren't allowed to join company pension schemes**, the care burden for children and the elderly falls disproportionately on women and many employers are reluctant to hire older people. These factors have had a devastating impact on women's ability to plan for their own retirement. Research carried out by Aegon shows that 25% of women aged 55-64 and 44% aged over 65 have no pension arrangements in place. Only 6% of women were 'very confident' that they will have enough to retire on. **Many of the women impacted by the changes were given only 1-6 years notice to change their plans.** Making up the shortfall was simply impossible for the vast majority of women.

**Women received only 1-2 years notice that they would have to work 6 more years before receiving a state pension**

**The average women's pension is 45% lower than the average man's**

**Its hard to avoid pension poverty when you don't have time to plan**

The change to STA will also impact younger women as the core inequalities between women and men which drive pension poverty remain unaddressed. Auto-enrolment in private pensions will not solve the problem. A man currently aged between 25-34 putting money into a pension in line with the governments recommendations for auto-enrolment will have a pension pot of £142,836 by age 68 but a women in the same age bracket will end up with a pot worth only £126,784. This disparity is caused by the career breaks disproportionately taken by women to care for children or older people. The burden of unpaid care work means that many women are also excluded from auto-enrolment by their working pattern. Most part-time workers are women and if they earn under £10,000 a year they are excluded from auto-enrolment. In 2016 this excluded 31% of eligible women workers.

**Young women often take on the full cost of childcare**

**They cut their pension contributions to afford this**

**The average women's pension is 45% lower than the average man's**

WASPI is calling for a bridging pension to help women born in the 1950s deal with the poorly notified changes to their STA and a compensation package for those impacted who have subsequently reached retirement age. **WRDA supports this demand** and we are also cognisant of the fact that pension poverty will continue to unfairly impact on women until the fundamental inequality between men and women is resolved. **Equalising STA won't help create gender equality, comprehensive and well-resourced childcare and eldercare provision will.**

## WRDA 35th AGM and Call for New Board Members

WRDA celebrated our 35<sup>th</sup> AGM on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October. We were joined by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Emmet McDonough Brown who read out a message of support from the Lord Mayor, Deirdre Hargey.

The highlight of this year was celebrating our Finance and HR Manager, Geraldine Burns' 30 years of service to WRDA. Our Chair, Anne O'Reilly called Geraldine 'a resilient stalwart and positive influence'. Geraldine said WRDA was a wonderful organisation and had empowered thousands of



women in the time she had worked there. Geraldine said she became the person she is today because of WRDA and that she taught those values to her children. She received a standing ovation and was presented with a bouquet of flowers as a token of thanks for her years of dedication by the Deputy Lord Mayor.

Marie Abbott has stepped down from the Management Committee after 6 years of service. Anne O'Reilly mentioned Marie's wise nature and perspective and that she will be missed by the other board members. Anne presented Marie with a bouquet of flowers.

WRDA is seeking to increase the diversity of our Management Committee. We are particularly keen to hear from young women, disabled women and women from BAME communities. If you are interested in being considered for the Management Committee please contact Megan via [info@wrda.net](mailto:info@wrda.net) or call on 028 9023 0212.



## Independent Reporting Commission on Paramilitarism: First Report

On October 24<sup>th</sup> the Independent Review Commission launched their first report on tackling paramilitarism, which was then discussed at an event organised by Falls Community Council and the Community Relations Council on November 6<sup>th</sup> by Commission member Monica McWilliams, PSNI's Bobby Singleton, Sinn Féin's Sean Murray, Dr. John Kyle from the PUP and Julie Harrison from the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme.

The report makes for sobering reading and progress has been slow. This is most obviously due to the political stalemate, exacerbated by a lack of funding and a reluctance to make any decisions in the absence of ministers. Many panellists and audience members expressed the view that the situation is as bad now as it has been at any time since the Good Friday Agreement.

There were a number of useful aspects of the report and discussion from the point of view of WRDA, and a number of observations bore out what we are hearing from women across Northern Ireland, especially in our Good Relations work.

One undeniable factor is the role of economic deprivation that feeds into recruitment to paramilitary organisations. The report details how 218 of the 462 wards in Northern Ireland saw some form of paramilitary activity in the last year, with 9 of the 10 most deprived areas seeing at least one incident each, and 8 of the 10 most deprived seeing a higher frequency than that. This is of course only accounting for known paramilitary activity, as opposed to incidents that are not reported and therefore not recorded; the PSNI agreed there was an unwillingness to speak openly about paramilitary activity out of fear.

This connection is hard to deny, and the representatives from both political parties agreed that this is something they are hearing on the ground within their own communities. They pointed to a lack of educational attainment and skills, exacerbated by a lack of employment opportunities for those who do have skills and qualifications. John Kyle stressed a lack of role models in the community beyond paramilitaries who have wealth and status and all agreed that there was a lack of leadership to reach the most vulnerable in our society, especially disengaged teens. Sean Murray emphasised that young people have to have hope for the future, and that things seem bleak for many.

This is something we have heard again and again from women on the ground who see this happen in their communities and to their loved ones. It has informed work that we have done and led to our assertion, backed up by this report, that the problem is a systemic one that cannot be resolved by piecemeal or ad hoc interventions.

The Commission made a number of recommendations that might prove useful, including a broader approach that involves all departments and does not just focus on criminal justice, for example education, infrastructure and finance. This could be facilitated by regular meetings of MLAs from all parties, even when the Assembly is not sitting. An audience member suggested involving hospitals in recording injuries from paramilitary activity, as has been tried in Scotland, to remove the fear of recrimination associated with police involvement, and the Commission will consider that. All parties agree that transition is not just an event, but an ongoing process with a lot of grey and very little black and white – but that frustration is evident.

Monica McWilliams stressed that women need to be involved more with the process, and she finished her contribution by calling for patience and persistence, and stressing that we must move to "deeds and not just words", echoing Emmeline Pankhurst's call to suffragettes. Our work has shown us again and again that there is an abundance of ideas as well as a will to do this work among the women of Northern Ireland, but we need the approach to be systematic and not to rely on brave women who are being asked to risk a great deal for their communities with very little structural support.



## 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](http://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](mailto:info@wrda.net).

## Community Facilitator Focus

Sarah Morris trained as a Community Facilitator in 2014 and shared her experiences at our 35th AGM.

I feel very privileged to have been given the opportunity to train as a community facilitator with WRDA. I am passionate about this work, as these are the three main cancer killers in N.I. We engage with a wide demographic of society and I enjoy meeting and working with a wide cross section of people.

I have delivered to all ages of women's groups, seniors, church groups, male only groups, Surestart and Homestart groups with the mums, dads and babies/toddlers present during the session. The latter was quite a challenge, but equally important to get the message to everyone.

### WHY DOES IT WORK?

Because we provide a comfortable, safe environment to raise awareness, openly discuss the signs/symptoms of Breast, Cervical and Bowel issues and abnormalities. We provide the correct platform, draw up a contract and put participants at ease early on also with the 'Hopes and Fears' exercise. I know from feedback the information not only helps the group, but many of them have told me that they pass it on to the family and friends.

Sessions are informative, interactive and fun but the open and honest dialogue/discussion enables participants to learn from the others experiences.

The main impact of the sessions are:

- ⇒ To overcome barriers
- ⇒ Face up to Fears
- ⇒ Prioritise your own health
- ⇒ Acknowledge that embarrassment may be an issue but it should not be your Death Sentence.

The main aim is to ensure that individuals and their families are operating on a daily basis at their optimum health.

A lot of women have expressed to me that they enjoy the 'Clock Exercise'. This outlines all the list of duties that women undertake from getting out of bed to night time. This highlights that women have very busy lives and are the primary carers for their families from babies to elderly parents and relatives. It enables them to realise that they must prioritise their own health and find time in their busy lives to attend medical appointments. It also gives them confidence and empowers them to accept how important and necessary their role in society is.

I love when participants have told me that as a result of attending BCB training, they have been pro active and made that appointment for a long overdue smear test, a mammogram or to see their doctor. Also younger people have let me know that they will encourage their parents, grandparents to return the FOB Kit (used to detect bowel abnormality).

This for me is very encouraging and I get a feel good, feeling when I am told the sessions have helped de-mystify the Cancer word and hopefully therefore saved lives. Since we all know someone affected by Cancer it is great that groups from all walks of life can come together, open up and talk about a topic that is not often discussed.

## WRDA Out and About

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

- ⇒ West Bann Development Court  
Coleraine BT51 3TP Women's Group & Mens Group
- ⇒ Home Start Banbridge 40 Banbridge  
Enterprise Centre Scarva Road  
Banbridge BT32 3QD
- ⇒ People First Lisburn
- ⇒ Home Start East Belfast
- ⇒ Lakeland Community Care Belcoo
- ⇒ Holy Evangelists Primary School
- ⇒ Antrim Enterprise Agency
- ⇒ Bessbrook Community Centre
- ⇒ W Club (Mens Group East Belfast)
- ⇒ Ely Centre Enniskillen
- ⇒ Tonagh Neighbourhood Initiative
- ⇒ Shankill Sure Start
- ⇒ Ballymacnabb GFC
- ⇒ South Fermanagh Foundation

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

