



women's

RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Supporting Women's Groups and Networks Across Northern Ireland

Newsletter ~ April/May 2020

Maternal Mental Health Campaign

WRDA has been working on the urgent issue of perinatal and maternal mental health since 2017. The health inspection body the RQIA published a damning report into the state of perinatal mental health services just before the collapse of the NI Executive. As a result of the political situation and the demands placed on the Department of Health from the Covid-19 crisis, the important recommendations they made have not yet been implemented. These include things like creating a specialist mental health mother and baby unit so that mums with acute conditions who need inpatient care do not have to be separated from their babies. The report also calls for specialist multi-disciplinary teams in all health trusts including midwives trained in perinatal mental health, clinical psychologists, psychiatrists etc. There are currently only a handful of specialist providers and all are situated in the Belfast trust.



In 2019 participants from our Maternal Advocacy and Support (MAs) project met with Chief Medical Officer, Michael McBride. He pledged to secure urgent perinatal mental health services including an inpatient mother and baby unit and specialist perinatal mental health professionals in every trust. Neither of these things has happened.

The Women's Sector Lobbyist, Rachel Powell requested an urgent update from the Department of Health on these issues. The reply noted the need for mental health services would increase due to the pandemic but went on to say that the work on the Mental Health Action Plan has been suspended due to the pandemic. However, on Tuesday the 19th of May the Department for Health did publish the Mental Health Action Plan.

1 in 5 women will experience a mental health problem during pregnancy or in the year after giving birth



We are pleased to note that the plan contains a commitment to develop perinatal mental health services and we will continue to campaign for urgent implementation.

In This Issue

Maternal Mental Health Campaign

Another Successful Year for our BCB Programme

Hate Crime Review

Breaking Down Barriers Report Launched

Call for Anthology Submissions



@WRDA_team



@WomensResourceandDevelopmentAgency



Another Successful Year for Our Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme

This year WRDA delivered the innovative Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme to 2,237 people in groups from all across Northern Ireland.

The programme was developed to tackle the low uptake of screening invitations by women living in some areas of Northern Ireland and to promote informed choice. The success of these aims is evidenced by the improvement in willingness to attend for mammograms, cervical smear tests and willingness to use the FOB test kit.

Breast Session

Willingness to attend for a mammogram when invited improved from 87% before the programme to 98% after.

Cervical Session

Willingness to attend for a smear test when invited improved from 76% before the programme to 97% after.

Bowel Session

Willingness to use the FOB test kit improved from 79% before the programme to 99% after.

Treatment for early stage cancers can be more effective and less complicated than at later stages. It is vitally important attend for screening when invited.

WRDA are currently unable to deliver the PHA have taken the difficult decision to pause routine screening so that Health and Social Care staff and resources can be redeployed in response to COVID-19.

Even though the routine screening programmes have been cancelled you can still make an appointment with your GP if you are concerned. Early detection leads to better outcomes in breast, cervical and bowel cancer treatment and so it is important to know what to look out for (p. 3).

Hate Crime Review - Summary of WRDA's Response



The key asks from the WRDA are:

- Introduce of an adequate working definition of hate crime,
- Apply the statutory aggravation model to all protected characteristics
- **Recognise gender, specifically misogyny, as a protected characteristic**
- **Recognise transgender identity a protected characteristic**
- **Recognise intersex identity as a protected characteristic**
- **Consider recognising sex workers as a protected characteristic**
- Create a legal framework that recognises the importance of intersectionality to adequately reflect the experiences and identities of victims and motivations of perpetrators
- Remove “dwelling” defences
- **Recognise the severe harm caused by online hate speech again women**
- Update and amend existing legislation dealing with public order, malicious communications and harassment to reflect the changing nature of communications due to social media
- **Ensure online harm is fully covered within hate crime legislation**
- Strengthen law relating to public authorities tackling hate expressions in public spaces
- **Implement victim-led restorative justice programmes in collaboration with community based organisations**

You can read the complete response on our website.

Breast, Cervical and Bowel Cancer - Know the Signs

Bowel Cancer - Know The Signs



Blood in your poo



A persistent change in your bowel habits



Unintentional weight loss



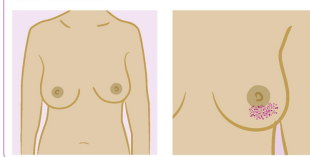
Persistent tummy pain, bloating or discomfort



Breast awareness looking out for changes

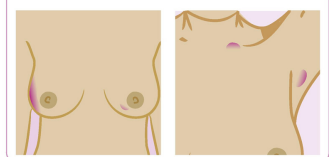
Appearance

A change in size or outline of either breast, especially those caused by arm movement; any puckering, dimpling or redness of the skin; or veins that stand out more than usual.



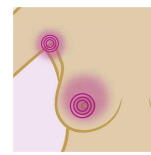
Lumps

Any lumps or thickening in either breast that feels different from the other breast; any swelling or lumps under your armpit or around your collarbone.



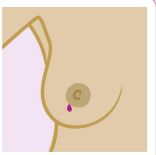
Feelings

Pain or discomfort in one part of either breast or in your armpit, particularly if new and persistent.



Nipple change

A nipple that has become pulled in, changed shape or shows signs of any discharge, bleeding, rash or crusted, flaky skin.



The breast awareness 5 point code

1. Know what is normal for you
2. Know what changes to look and feel for
3. Look and feel
4. Report any changes to your GP immediately
5. Attend for breast screening from the age of 50

Illustrations courtesy of Breast Cancer Care

HSC Public Health Agency



Public Health Agency
12-22 Lincolns Road, Belfast BT2 8BS.
Tel: 0900 555 0114 (local rate).
www.publichealth.hscni.net
www.cancerscreening.hscni.net
www.breastcancerawareness.info/breastcancer

Find us on:



You can find out more about reducing your risk and the signs to look out for by visiting <http://www.cancerscreening.hscni.net/>

Can You Help Researchers Study the Impact of Covid-19 on Family Life?

Researchers at University College London are studying the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on family and community life. They are looking for families with children under the age of 18, living in the UK to take part. They are especially interested in hearing from families with grandparents living-in, as well as from parents who co-parent across two households, but the main pre-requisite is being in a household with children. They want to hear from the whole family. If you take part, everyone over the age of 12 in the family will be asked to fill in diaries about your activities, how you are coping, and your understandings of the pandemic as it progresses. You would also be asked to take part in one or two online interviews. No face-to-face contact will be made with the researchers- it's all happening online.

You can find out more here: https://uclioe.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5gukWgLMahFSCHz

Breaking Down Barriers Project Report Launched



The Breaking Down Barriers project, which was funded by Belfast City Council, has had to end early due to the restrictions in place to deal with Covid-19.

The project focused on endemic sexist attitudes and behaviours which act as barriers to women's full

participation in our communities and public life.

The vision for this programme was to pilot a project that tackles sexual harassment and sexism as barriers to women's participation in community development and public life. It sought to provide awareness-raising on what constitutes sexual harassment and build capacity to act collectively to stamp out sexism in Belfast.

We cannot solve these problems by telling women to toughen up and to take sexist abuse or sexual harassment on the chin as the price of public life; we solve them by tackling the root causes.

Misogyny is at the root of all of these behaviours, and we must call it what it is, strive to understand it, and address it everywhere it exists. It is within our power to begin to tackle this issue, but it is a society-wide problem and needs a robust, committed, society-wide approach. We need more women at the table to make it possible for more to join them.

The final outcome of this project will be a Toolkit designed by the participants around tackling sexism in public life. As the project had to finish early, this is a work in progress. The full report into our Breaking Down Barriers project can be read on our website.

Call for Anthology Submissions

Culture Matters is taking an initiative in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis to compile a second anthology of working-class writing. We hope it will be one way for working people to creatively express their anxieties, experiences and thoughts about various aspects of their life in these troubled times.

Our first anthology of working people's poetry from contemporary Ireland, *The Children of the Nation*, was a success in the US and Europe, as well as in Ireland.

This second volume will focus on short prose: flash fiction, short stories, anecdotes, epigrams, memoirs and other kinds of life writing (diary, letter/email, essays, blogs, and black and white images). Relevant themes that come to mind include the Climate Emergency, the Coronavirus Crisis, Working Women, More Than Profit and Community and Global Solidarity – but also quite simply your everyday experience as a working person in contemporary Ireland.

We are unable to offer fees for publication, but will supply free and discounted copies to contributors.

Here are the stipulations: one or two submissions per person, unpublished in print. A maximum of 2,500 words per submission. In English or Irish (if in Irish our international readership will appreciate your English translation please). Black and white images should be jpegs of photos, drawings, cartoons etc. no bigger than 1MB. A brief biography outlining your connection with the working class, 150 words max. Deadline for submission: 31st July 2020 Submissions to be sent to: irishstories2020@yahoo.com

You retain copyright on any submission but your material may be published in print and online by Culture Matters.