Annual Report

A Visible Force for Change

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

Vision, Mission & Aims

WRDA's vision is of a fair and equal society where women are empowered and are a visible force for change and influence in all areas of life.

WRDA works regionally to advance women's equality and participation in society.

Strategic Aims

Empowerment and Tackling Inequalities

To develop the capacity of women from disadvantaged urban and rural communities to tackle inequalities affecting them.

Policy and Advocacy

To advance women's equality and participation in all aspects of policy and decision-making.

Leadership and Infrastructure Support

To provide leadership, infrastructural support and advocacy within the women's sector and movement.

Organisational Development

To strengthen the capacity of the organisation to carry out its role effectively.

Contents

Chairperson's Report	04
Director's Report	05
Maternal Advocacy and Support Project	07
Our People	08
WRDA Representation	09
Training and Development	10
Lobbying, Policy and Advocacy	12
Good Relations	14
Raise Your Voice	16
International Women's Day 2020	18
Communications	19
Membership	20
The Women's Regional Consortium	22
Accounts	24
Acknowledgements	27

Chairperson's Report

WRDA Chair, Anne O'Reilly

WRDA's vision to be a visible force for change came through into sharper focus in 2020.

Externally all changed with Covid 19 and there was a sense of urgency to bring to political attention the acute impact on women and families in terms of income, childcare, eldercare and the role of women at the frontline in retail and care services. The action taken by the Women's Policy Group and others to produce the Covid-19 Feminist Recovery Plan is to be commended.

Partnership working also came to the fore with the women's sector working together to provide practical and emotional support to women and families in communities across NI through programmes such the Department for Communities Emergency Leadership Group; Community Foundation Covid Support Programme and the responsiveness of funders such as Joseph Rowntree Charitable Foundation.

One wonders what would have happened without the work and presence of Women's Sector organisations and groups and their flexible and effective response at a time of real concern and crisis.

As a Board, one of our most critical roles over this period was our duty of care to staff and our need to meet regularly with Anne as Director to ensure staff working from home had all they needed, to maintain morale and provide support as needed. Anne's leadership in this regard has been outstanding and the staff's flexibility and adaptability has been nothing less than remarkable. On behalf of the Board of WRDA I would like to thank each and everyone.

Now as we leave 2020 behind may we find renewed strength and energy to action the work on the issues that were stalled and to continue to maximise the strategic influence of the work of WRDA and the wider Women's Sector .

Director's Report

Picking up from last year's Annual Report the three biggest issues highlighted affecting our membership were abortion services, Brexit and universal credit and its disappointing to note these issues remain unresolved and indeed compounded by Covid-19.

WRDA Director, Anne McVicker

At the time of writing this report the Northern Ireland Executive have just announced another four week 'partial lockdown' effective from Friday 16th October and I'm sure like you receiving this news was depressingly gloomy given what we endured over the past seven months, but also accepting the need for restrictions in order to reduce the 'R' Number and protect our national health service.

Although the pandemic has impacted on everyone, it affects men and women differently and, in many cases, deepens inequalities women experience on an everyday basis with the impact worsened for women from particular backgrounds i.e. BAME, disabled, LGBT+ and women with caring responsibilities. The pandemic has put in sharp focus the value and importance of care work both paid & unpaid the majority of which is undertaken by women.

To demonstrate who undertakes most of the care work I would like to share some facts on the lives of the 11 women working in WRDA offices during the first lockdown.

- 11 women all have caring responsibilities
- 6 women provide unpaid elder care support
- 8 women provide unpaid childcare support
- 1 woman classified as disabled
- 4 women providing home schooling for nine children
- 11 women expressed concerns accessing health services & support
- 11 women all expressed concerns regarding mental health & well-being

If the facts above are scaled up across Northern Ireland it is clear that women will bear the brunt of this crisis with vast implications for women's equality both locally and globally and further highlighting the need for decision makers to take action to ensure a gender-sensitive response as we transition from crisis response to recovery.

In the interests of health, safety & wellbeing of WRDA staff & users, we took the decision in early March to have all staff working from home (WFH) and that situation remains. The first few weeks were difficult as we adjusted to unfamiliar working patterns while juggling with individual elder & child caring responsibilities and settled into the new normal living through a pandemic. However, within weeks and with the help of various technologies we recalibrated and embraced the challenges and opportunities in continuing to meet the needs of our membership and funder contracts while working from home.

Director's Report

The Breast, Cervical and Bowel Cancer Awareness Programmes were adapted to online delivery and by Quarter Two the sessions were being offered in two formats: the breast, cervical and bowel sessions online as webinars and delivery of each session online in a virtual classroom via Zoom. We decided that we needed something special to launch our online services and came up with the idea of short animated storyboards for each of the Breast, Cervical and Bowel sessions.

The breast storyboard has worked really well, with 14,000 shares on Facebook to date and we are currently working on storyboards for both the Bowel and Cervical which will be ready to go out shortly. You can view the breast storyboard on our YouTube channel (*Womens Resource Development Agency*).

Similarly, our Good Relations workshops have been moved online and a series of webinars are currently being developed covering women, peace & security issues in a post Covid environment and demand for this training is steadily growing.

The Maternal Advocacy and Support project (MAS) is an example of a programme unsuitable for online delivery. This project was delayed by nine months as the eight women's centres were closed. I'm pleased to report that MAS is now back on track and operational from beginning of October with the majority of partners offering support & activity programmes before Christmas 2020.

The Women's Sector Lobbyist (WSL) has transitioned all Women's Policy Group (WPG) work to an online digital format. Membership of the WPG has increased with the inclusion of more LGBT+, young, migrant and BAME women. Attendance at the WPG has increased significantly and regular publications, briefings, consultation responses, political engagements and lobbying is ongoing through collaborative work with all WPG members.

The WSL coordinated a significant amount of work from the WPG relating to COVID-19, particularly the 127-page WPG Feminist Recovery Plan and subsequent summary documents, promotion and correspondence with all ministerial departments, politicians, officials and media. The WSL coordinated and chaired a launch event on Wed 29th July 2020 where there was extremely high attendance from MLAs, department officials, media, voluntary and community sector organisations and individuals. With a successful Adaptation Fund application to JRCT and the appointment of a consultant, the Feminist Recovery Plan will be further developed and disseminated over the next year, while the WSL is currently drafting a campaign action plan for engagement with women's centres and women's groups in relation to the plan.

Director's Report

Despite the challenges we all face living through a pandemic and working from home there are good synergies and collaborative work happening in our sector and an excellent example is the work going on with "Raise Your Voice", a partnership project with WRDA, WSN, NIRWN & RTA tackling sexual harassment across all communities in NI. The three-hour workshop has been adapted to two, one hour online sessions covering "What is sexual harassment" and "What constitutes consent" and demand is phenomenal. All 11 councils have been lobbied to adopt motions calling out misogyny under the slogan 'Community safety begins with ending sexual harassment'. This project and campaign has captured the attention not only from individuals but significantly from politicians, statutory agencies and sports associations who have requested training for their staff and members.

Excellent communications are a top priority for both our staff and members while WFH and Megan our Communications & Membership Worker has been an absolute star in not only managing this work but in developing and implementing new communications channels for WRDA and the Women's Regional Consortium (WRC). In addition to monthly ezines and bimonthly newsletters, Megan introduced monthly Covid bulletins and well and truly smashed targets and outcomes agreed with multiple funders. We also engaged with a PR company to advertise and promote much of our work which has been a good call as the reach in the press and TV has been amazing and well worth the investment made.

In conclusion, there is very much a 'can do' attitude with the staff team and indeed within our women's sector, great examples of sharing stories and just being kind and supportive of each other's personal circumstances which I really hope will be sustained post Covid. My expectations regarding the conversion of current training & workshops to on-line delivery have been realised and exceeded, credit is due to all staff who worked collectively to overcome many obstacles and made this happen. WRDA has demonstrated leadership throughout this pandemic in many ways and I could not ask or wish for a better staff team and I'm feeling confident that post Covid recovery WRDA will be in a stronger position in continuing to work towards our strategic aims and higher-level outcomes.

Maternal Advocacy and Support Project

My name is Clare Anderson and I am the new MAS Project Coordinator at WRDA. This three year project funded by Big Lottery will work with eight Women's Centres, setting up peer support groups with women who have been impacted by perinatal mental health related issues. The project workers will lead discussion and activities, encouraging women to support each other to stay well. When the groups are established we will engage the women in a campaign for change and improved services, encouraging them to express their voice and experience and be a visible force for change for enhanced provision. To date we have delivered induction training to the centres and I am engaging with Aware NI to create a bespoke training package for the MAS team. Each year, 18 workshops will be delivered to the groups of women in each of the centres. Increasing awareness amongst the women and in the wider community about the service provision deficit is key to creating change and influencing decision makers. I am delighted to lead on this innovative new project that will encourage women to support each other and use their lived experiences to be motivation for creating future change and improved service provision for women in Northern Ireland.

Mas
MATERNAL ADVOCACY & SUPPORT

Our People

Management Committee

Chair	Anne O'Reilly	Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)
Deputy Chair	Robyn Scott	Individual
Secretary	Caroline McCord	Women's Information Northern Ireland (WINI)
Treasurer	Karen Armstrong	Individual
Member	Patricia Donald	Advice NI
Member	Eileen Weir	Shankill Women's Centre
Member	Sandra McCarry	BHSCT
Member	Cathy Chambers	Individual
Member	Shannon Greene	Individual
Member	Anne McGale	Community Facilitator
Member	Deborah Kelly	Individual
Member	Tara Maguire	Individual
Member	Roisin Kelly	Individual (until 17.1.2020)

Staff Team

Director	Anne McVicker
Finance and HR Manager	Geraldine Burns
Training Development Coordinator	Deirdre Quinn
Women's Sector Lobbyist	Rachel Powell
Good Relations Coordinator	Elaine Crory
Training and Development Programme Worker	Katherine Robertson
Training and Development Outreach Worker	Emma Ward and Paula Murray
MAS Project Coordinator	Clare Anderson
Communications and Membership Worker	Megan McClure Botha

WRDA Representation

Policy and Advocacy

- ⇒ Women's Policy Group
- ⇒ Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group
- ⇒ Rural Women's Policy Forum
- ⇒ Childcare for All
- ⇒ Equality Coalition
- ⇒ Expert Panel on the Gender Strategy (NI Assembly)
- ⇒ Brexit and Human Rights Working Group
- ⇒ Bill of Rights Working Group
- ⇒ Raise Your Voice
- ⇒ Reclaim the Agenda
- ⇒ All Island Network of Women Peacebuilders Steering Group
- ⇒ Joint Forum Voluntary and Community Sector Representation
- ⇒ Department for Communities Emergency Leadership Group
- ⇒ All-Party Groups on Domestic and Sexual Violence; UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security; Childcare and Early Years Education

Health Inequalities

- ⇒ Belfast Community of Interest for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention
- ⇒ North Down and Ards Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Community of Interest

Leadership and Infrastructure Support

- ⇒ NICVA Executive
- ⇒ Government/Community and Voluntary Sector Joint Forum
- ⇒ Board of Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
- ⇒ Board of Northern Ireland Women's European Network
- ⇒ Forum for Adult Education Northern Ireland

Training and Development

2020 has been a year to remember. Whilst we met all our delivery targets for the PHA contract 2019-2020 by mid-April it became apparent that the lockdown would last at least several months and we would need to develop a strategy to deliver the screening awareness sessions online.

The first couple of weeks were dedicated to supporting staff to make the transition to working from home, ensuring that we all had the resources needed to work from home, whilst looking after our own mental health during lockdown. Practical elements included upgrading some IT equipment to allow for online working and mindfulness training was organised, together with more regular meetings to allow everyone to 'meet' and support each other.

Adaptation to Services

This has two elements, we now offer the breast, cervical and bowel sessions online as webinars and we are also offering delivery of each session online in a virtual classroom via Zoom. We arrived at these methods of delivery after much engagement with community groups, staff and Community Facilitators, checking out which platforms could be used and were accessible, investigating the different platforms for recording and taking advice on designing webinars, from NICVA, OCN and HereNI, to name a few.

Deirdre delivering training online

As a team we have all engaged with online training and gained new skills. For instance Emma has completed the Certificate in Education and Training during this period, which will directly benefit our groups, particularly those with additional support needs as the course focused on groups that face barriers to engaging with education and training. Katherine, Paula and Deirdre have all had training to deliver on online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams and practical experience making webinars. Megan, our Communications and Membership worker, was an invaluable support throughout as we navigated the online world.

Launch of Online Services and Media Campaigns

In addition to Megan's fab work with the Newsletters and Ezines (which contained many articles about the Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening Awareness Programme, and two website articles where we have shared our plans for online delivery and also updates from the PHA re screening) the team decided we needed something innovative to launch our online services and decided on the creation of a storyboard for a breast self-examination tutorial.

A still from the breast self-examination storyboard

Training and Development

Working with Philip Wilson from InternetSense, we designed a two minute animated promotional video to launch our services. A clever tool, it links with our online services and provides contact details for anyone wishing to book an online session or to watch the webinar. It worked really well, with 14,000 shares on Facebook to date and we are currently working on storyboards for both the Bowel and Cervical.

You can view the storyboard on our YouTube channel (Womens Resource Development Agency)

We also engaged PRKelly to produce two PR releases. The first was to promote our online services for breast cancer awareness month and the second was to launch our Community Campaigners Course. The PR launch secured Deirdre an interview on Good Morning Ulster to highlight our online breast cancer awareness services on Friday 9th October 2020 and also an interview with U105 to talk about the Community Campaigners which aired on Sunday 14th October 2020.

Community Campaigners Course

Additionally we successfully applied for and were granted a Belfast City Council Capacity Building grant to run three Community Campaigners courses and three Women in Leadership courses to 60 women from the Belfast area between April 2020 and March 2021. The first Community Campaigners course is currently running, after a very successful PR launch, and we will run a further two before Christmas.

WRDA Community Facilitator Marian Ferguson (left) and Training and Development Worker, Katherine Robertson

Lobbying, Policy and Advocacy

Demonstration outside of the NI Assembly on the day of decriminalisation in October 2019

It has been a very busy year since my introductory message in the Annual Report last year! Right from starting the Women's Sector Lobbyist role in October 2019, we were busy with the decriminalisation of abortion and creating the Women's Manifesto for the General Election 2019. From the beginning of 2020, a significant amount of lobbying was done in responding to New Decade, New Approach alongside co-ordinating responses to consultations on the Abortion Framework, Dormant Bank Accounts, Hate Crime Legislation Review, Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill and much more. Ongoing lobbying on a range of topics across local councils, the Assembly and Westminster on issues ranging from emergency funding for domestic violence support charities, showing solidarity with the trans community, calling for the full implementation of abortion services in NI, opposing the further restriction of abortion, calling for a gendered response to COVID-19 and much more.

Since the Executive has returned, it has been a busy time for All-Party Groups on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence; Childcare and Early Years Education; and most recently, Women's Health. I have also also been busy representing the women's sector and WRDA on Joint Forum; the Expert Advisory Panel for the Gender Equality Strategy; Department for Communities Emergencies Leadership Group for COVID-19 and the Steering Group for the All-Island Network of Women Peacebuilders. Lobbying and advocacy has also continued on a range of issues and partnerships including Childcare for All, International Women's Day, Brexit, tackling sexual violence, welfare reform, a Bill of Rights for NI, treating misogyny as a hate crime and much more. Without doubt though, the biggest project in the past year has been responding to COVID-19 specifically, though the creation of the Women's Policy Group NI's COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan.

WPG COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan

Given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women globally, the Women's Policy Group spent a significant amount of time since the beginning of the pandemic calling on elected representatives to mitigate against the impact on women. This involved creating briefings, articles, publishing statements and submitting evidence to NI Executive Ministers and the Westminster Women and Equalities Committee. As the month went on, little reference to the disproportionate impact on women came from our elected representatives.

Lobbying, Policy and Advocacy

Therefore, the Women's Policy Group created a **COVID -19 Feminist Recovery Plan for Northern Ireland**. This plan set out WPG recommendations for recovering from COVID-19, as elected representatives and decision-makers must take into consideration the institutionalised inequalities that exist and co-develop recovery planning with the communities affected. Our comprehensive 127-page long plan included evidence and recommendations under the following pillars: economic justice; health; social justice; equality; the implications of Brexit and examples of international best practice. The plan was officially launched on Wednesday 29th July 2020 and received widespread broadcast, print and online media attention. In addition, the Plan was presented to the APG on UNSCR 1325 WPS and the WPG received a response from each department in the NI Civil Service. More work will continue over the next 12 months to further develop, disseminate, and lobby on the evidence and recommendations from within the Plan.

Feminist Recovery Plan – Webinar Series and Further Development

Following the successful launch of the Women's Policy Group COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan, a range of events have been organised to explore the various pillars of the plan in more details. This included a WRDA event organised by Good Relations Coordinator, Elaine Crory for Good Relations Week 2020 looking at Women, Peace and Security Post COVID-19. Other events that have happened in this series includes:

⇒ WPG Feminist Recovery Plan Webinar Series: Poverty, Austerity, Debt and the Impact on Women in NI
⇒ WPG Feminist Recovery Plan Webinar Series: COVID-19 and Rural Women (in collaboration with NIRWN for World Rural Women's Day)
⇒ WPG Feminist Recovery Plan Webinar Series: Global Outlook – Social Justice and Gender Equality (in collaboration with Social Change Initiative)

Upcoming events in the webinar series include:

⇒ COVID-19: Additional Health Impacts for Marginalised Women (in collaboration with WRDA, Transgender NI, Alliance for Choice, Migrant Centre NI and more) on Wednesday 11th November from 1pm-2pm
⇒ COVID-19 and Increasing Violence Against Women (in collaboration with Raise Your Voice, Women's Aid and Amnesty International) Thursday 26th November from 1pm-2pm

These events will continue for the coming months. More details and recordings/summaries of past events can be found on our website - https://wrda.net/feminist-recovery-plan/

Feminist Recovery Plan – Research Contractor

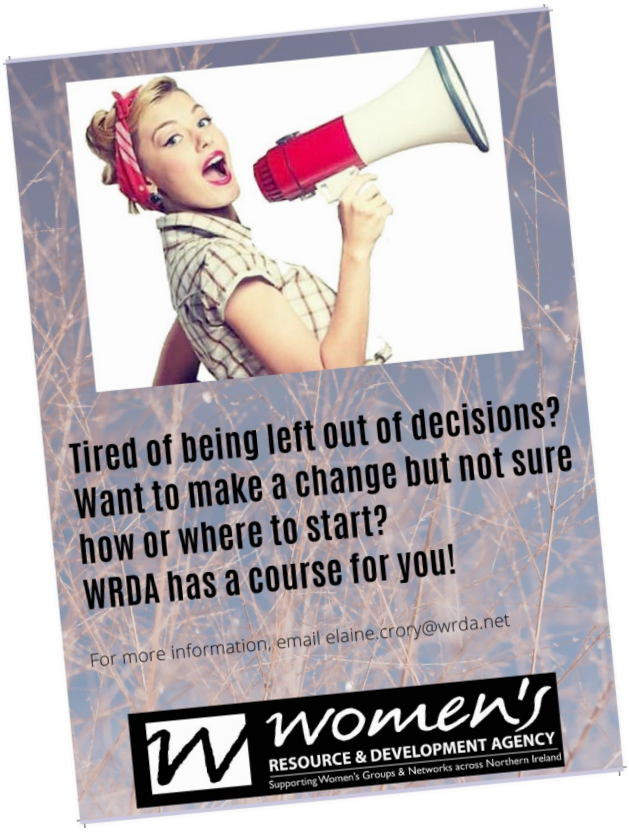
We were successful in our application for an Adaptation Grant from Joseph Roundtree Charitable Trust. With this, we have now successfully appointed Aoife Mallon as a Research Contractor to support the Women's Sector Lobbyist with the further development and dissemination of evidence and recommendations within the Feminist Recovery Plan over the next 12 months. We look forward to working with Aoife on this project.

Good Relations

WRDA is in the process of delivering a Good Relations programme that runs across two years, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. The purpose of this programme was to work more closely with the groups that we engage with, focusing on long term engagement to look in depth at community relations issues and the problems that lie behind them, these included tribal politics, sectarianism, and social and financial inequality. The goal of this work was to inform and equip these groups to address issues in their own community.

When circumstances changed due to COVID in March 2020, we were close to completing work with the six groups we were working with for the 2019-2020 term. It was disappointing that we did not have an opportunity to complete that work, because up to that point the work had been very fruitful.

The longer-term engagement had allowed us to explore in depth the issues and concerns of these various groups of women. We structured the sessions in such a way that we allowed the participants themselves to lead us to the structural issues, by asking them to brainstorm and list the issues of most concern in their local communities. From this we moved forward, asking the participants to link their concerns to larger issues, and to draw out the connections between the issues. Rather that frame this as teaching, we asked questions and guided the participants to draw the conclusions themselves through workshop facilitation.



The issues chosen by the groups were remarkably similar – there was variance, but they often overlapped with each other. Again and again people listed similar issues: concern over the mental health crisis and high rates of suicide; paramilitarism; increasing addiction issues; a lack of jobs and opportunities; and the perception that the narrative is dominated by those who do not seem to want to move on or heal old wounds or are disinterested in the work that would be needed to tackle complex issues like mental health or addiction. All groups, without exception, expressed a view that nobody with power or influence wanted to know what they thought about the issues, and this was often seen as a lack of interest in the views of working class women, rather than any kind of sectarian motivation.

Good Relations

Our goal was to help them see the structural issues behind many seemingly unconnected and specific issues, and we found that very often this was not a challenge. The promise shown in Year one is now being developed in the 2020-2021 year.

We continue to deliver this programme and are delivering as much of this as possible online, via Zoom or through other platforms as appropriate. As Covid guidelines change, some of this work may be deliverable in person as the programme design originally stated. While some are eager to continue to work online, others are limited in terms of access to technology, high speed internet and especially to the time it takes to engage in these workshops – particularly relevant concerns are difficulties around childcare and potentially the need to resume home-schooling at some point, which at present seem set to continue to be barriers to women's participation in this work and indeed in the workplace and public sphere as a whole. We will work to overcome these barriers as much as possible.

To supplement our online delivery, we will soon launch a series of online Good Relations lectures, covering such issues as; the need for gendered Good Relations work; the importance of UNSCR1325 and more. This follows on from our successful Good Relations Week event, Women, Peace & Security in a Post-Covid World, building on our contribution to the WPG Feminist Recovery Plan. Our Good Relations programme is still recruiting new groups, and we will work with you to meet your needs.

Raise Your Voice

The Raise Your Voice project to tackle sexual harassment and sexual violence in communities in NI has continued to grow from strength to strength this year, and has overcome many of the challenges posed by COVID by moving much of its work online.

Beginning in the second half of 2019, by 2020 the project had hit its stride and facilitators were travelling to deliver workshops all across Northern Ireland. By the time the virus caused the shut down of normal operations in March, the programme was on course to exceed its original target of 16 workshops with women and girls and they were highly-rated by participants. With the change in circumstances, workshops have moved online, and this has had the effect of broadening the reach, as individuals who are unaffiliated with an established group can sign up independently. The workshops are still ongoing, and the fact that they are online means that they are now open to men as well as to women as all participants are anonymous, using the chat function to interact with facilitators who can ensure that they remain a safe space for people to ask questions and share their experiences and insights. They have also been scheduled for various time slots to meet the different needs of various demographics. We have also worked with other groups to deliver bespoke training including Queen's University Belfast students as part of Fresher's Week, Youth Action and we soon hope to work with sports clubs to deliver our training to young men.

Raise Your Voice Workshop with Youth Action

Raise Your Voice at QUB Fresher's Week

Raise Your Voice

It was always intended that Raise Your Voice would lobby for legislative changes relevant to our goals, and when a review of NI's Hate Crime Legislation was announced in late 2019, we began work to ensure that gender – specifically misogyny – would be included as a category of hate crime. We met with the Judge to explain our position, and worked with a number of other women's organisations, LGBT+ organisations and more to perfect our response. As a result of this work, we put together a motion that was brought before Belfast City Council just before International Women's Day, supporting our position that misogyny should be recognised as a category of hate crime and declaring their support for our project by sharing our posters in Council properties, and it passed unanimously. A welcome amendment was added that will see us deliver our training to Belfast City Councillors in November. After our success in Belfast, we have worked with local Councillors to successfully bring the same motion to Ards & North Down, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Derry City & Strabane Councils, with more to come. In addition to this, we are working to lobby around how cases of sexual violence are reported in the media, and to get a provision to ban "up-skirting" into law here, and we made contributions to the WPG Feminist Recovery Plan covering issues like media reporting, the need to fully implement the Gillen Review, the impact of gender stereotypes on girls and women and more.

Raise Your Voice is a partnership project, led by WRDA and including Reclaim the Agenda, Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network and the Women's Support Network, and the partnership itself has been a significant part of the success of the project. Working together our expertise and our reach has proven to be far greater than one organisation alone, and it can be used as a template to organise future partnerships. We also have volunteers to look after social media and this helps to spread the word of our work and keep our followers up to date, as well as to get more people involved, for example in contacting their Councillors in advance of a motion. The project is being independently evaluated and this will help to disperse the learning and ensure that the lessons learned from this partnership can be used for other projects in future.

Raise Your Voice activists and Councilors from Lisburn and Castlereagh Council

Raise Your Voice is really succeeding in changing the ways that people think about sexual harassment and violence, and we hope that the work can continue to reach people – providing education, awareness and support for those who need it.

International Women's Day 2020
Rights In Sight

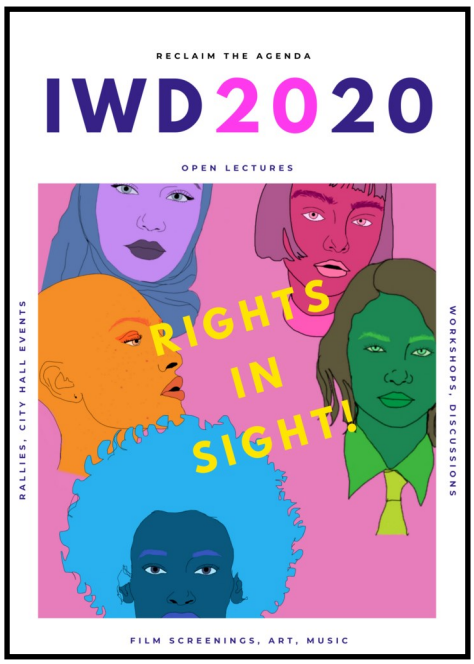
On the 7th of March a large crowd of people gathered in Writers Square to mark International Women's Day. Before the march took off, the crowd were entertained by group singers, face painting and free tea and coffee was available which was very welcome on a bright but cold day. The theme for this year, Rights In Sight, was chosen to celebrate the rights we have achieved such as Equal Marriage and legal access to abortion but also to remind us that these rights are just in sight, we still have to achieve delivery.

The march made its way through the streets of Belfast to curious looks and shouts of support. We were marching to live free from poverty, discrimination, domestic and sexual violence. We were marching for healthcare that meets our particular needs, affordable childcare and equality in decision making.

The march was addressed by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Peter McReynolds, who welcomed us to City Hall. The crowd was also addressed by Elaine Crory from Raise Your Voice, Katrina McDonald from NIRC, Danielle Roberts from Here NI, Sipho Sibanda from End Deportations Belfast, Jennifer McCarey from Unison Glasgow and Ellie Crawford from UK Schools Climate Strike. Sipho Sibanda called to our attention the women held in Larne House Detention Centre.

The stacked inequalities faced by migrant women in particular should galvanise us to fight back against the system even stronger than before. As feminists when we hear of vulnerable women being given paperwork by the government telling them they are 'liable for deportation at any time' we should remind the government that they are liable for revolution at any time.

International Women's Day 2020 was organised by Reclaim the Agenda.



Communications

WRDA's mission is to advance women's equality and participation in society and communication is a key tool in achieving that transformation. Since our beginnings in 1983 WRDA has been a reliable source of information for the women's movement and this has never been more important than during the current crisis. In addition to our monthly Ezine and bimonthly newsletter we issued a special Health and Wellbeing Update for the duration of lockdown. This special monthly update kept our members informed about how WRDA was responding to the Covid-19 restrictions and promoted ways of looking after our whole health and contributing to our communities during the pandemic.

'Thanks for keeping the updates coming throughout lockdown'

'I enjoy the newsletter. My group have benefited greatly in the past from courses facilitated by WRDA'

'WRDA has enabled me to keep updated and informed on women's issues in NI, I feel I have more of a voice'

Member quotes from our recent survey

Our Facebook and Twitter accounts continue to be valuable engagement tools and in 2020 we added an Instagram account to our social media offering. We posted to our social media accounts over 600 times in 2020 and our website has been visited 20,316 times in the last 12 months. The website also benefited from being redesigned in September to increase usability.

Our blog, Bold Women Blogging, has covered topics as diverse as racism in Northern Ireland, reproductive rights and mental health. It is a public submission blog so any woman can write a piece for it, if you are interested please contact Megan via info@wrda.net. The blog is available on our website.

Membership

It is a strategic aim of WRDA to provide leadership, infrastructural support and advocacy within the women's sector and movement, providing appropriate support to our Members is part of this aim. Maintaining strong links with grassroots women's groups and individual women through our membership helps keep us relevant and ensures we are working on the issues which really matter. We keep our members up to date with the latest developments in the wider women's sector and provide them with opportunities to publicise their own work in our ezine, blog and newsletter.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing restrictions, the membership quiz was the only membership event held in a physical venue in 2020. An enjoyable night was had by all and we will host the event again in 2021.

Quiz Winners 2020

WRDA rose to the challenge and offered our members and the public a range of events online. Our membership events for 2020 focussed on demographics which were underrepresented in our membership. The events were all well attended and the majority of attendees expressed a preference for events continuing to be online in the future. We will seek to offer a series of similarly engaging events to our members over the next twelve months.

'Event was very enlightening. It was a safe space to discuss the issue and free from the usual trolling and abuse. Very well chaired'

'Great speakers and very well run with good facilitating. Thank you!'

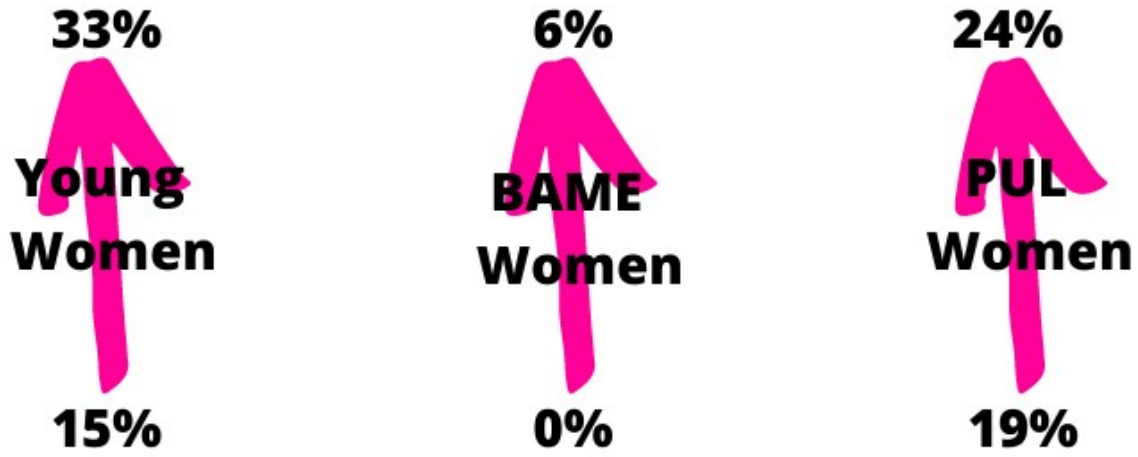
'It was a really interesting discussion and one that clearly needs to be had and explored more. I learned a lot and it challenged some of my own prejudices'

Quotes from event attendees.

Examples of some of the membership events held virtually in 2020

Membership

A comprehensive survey of our members was completed in September 2020 with overall membership increasing from 281 in 2019 to 337 in 2020, an increase of 20%.

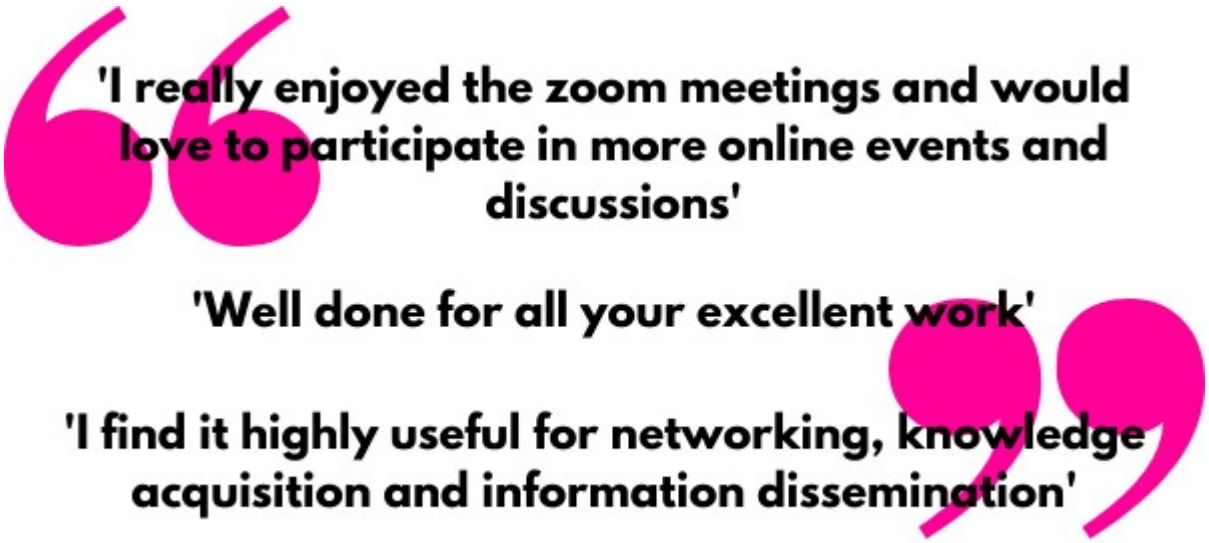


Increase in target demographics between 2019-2020

We have achieved our goal of increasing individual members in the 18-34 demographic as 33% of our members are now in this age range compared with 15% in 2019. We have also achieved our goal of increasing the proportion of members from BAME communities. In 2019 we had no BAME members and we set a goal of reaching 2% within a year to be inline with the general population, 6% of our members now come from a BAME community. We also hoped to increase the percentage of members from the PUL community to be more inline with the proportion in the general population. This goal was also achieved as we increased our membership of PUL women from 19% to 24%. Although we recognise this is still a long way off proportional representation, it is to be welcomed as a step on that journey.

It is the mission of WRDA to work regionally to advance women's equality and participation in society and the composition of our group membership is in line with these goals as 74% of our group members work in an area other than Belfast. Furthermore, 34% of our group members have no annual funding or an annual income of less than £10,000. This indicates that WRDA is reaching every section of the women's movement including organisations most in need of infrastructure support and advocacy.

In 2020 we will continue to work for our entire membership by offering an extensive range of membership events, increasing the resources available to our members and ensuring we are responding to the needs of our members by regularly canvassing their views.

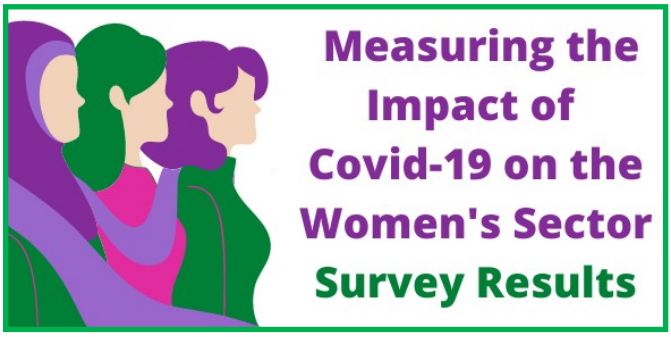


Quotes from the Membership Survey

The Women's Regional Consortium

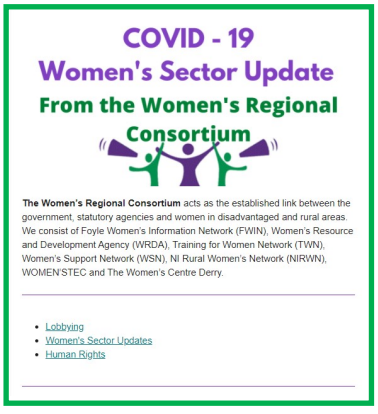
WRDA is one of seven partners who make up the Women's Regional Consortium (WRC) which is funded under the Department for Communities' Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP). The aim of WRC is to provide a strong voice for women from disadvantaged and rural areas by providing advocacy and leadership, policy and research analysis, service support and engagement to ensure that their views are respected by decision makers.

In response to the pandemic the WRC has produced a monthly Covid-19 Women's Sector Update in addition to the regular monthly ezine. This update kept women informed on the response of the NI Women's Sector and also featured global best practice with a view to our long term recovery. The WRC also surveyed all group members to gather evidence of the impact of Covid-19 on the women's sector.



- ⇒ **40% of respondents received Covid-19 related financial help**
- ⇒ **The majority of respondents felt their funders were understanding or somewhat understanding about the impact of the crisis on targets and agreed outcomes**
- ⇒ **34% of respondents reported they are unable to deliver any of their normal services**
- ⇒ **20% of respondents reported that they have been able to offer new services**
- ⇒ **77% of respondents have been able to move some or all of their services online**
- ⇒ **27% of respondents were concerned about the impact of social isolation on staff and service users**
- ⇒ **No group/organisation reported redundancies**
- ⇒ **73% of respondents reported a reduction in staff wellbeing but only 22.5% said they had taken steps to promote staff wellbeing**
- ⇒ **66% of respondents reported staff were struggling with adjusting to working remotely/working from home**
- ⇒ **34% of respondents reported staff were struggling with childcare**
- ⇒ **23% of respondents reported staff were struggling with eldercare**

During this reporting period the Consortium responded to various government department consultations including, Parental Leave and Pay, Carers Leave, Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill and the Hate Crime Review. All of these consultation responses are available to download from the WRC website (http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/) along with many other useful publications. A comprehensive communications plan was also developed to maximise the Consortium's reach.

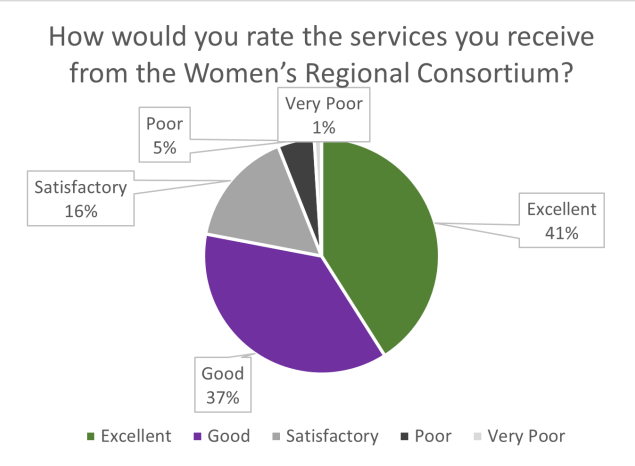

COVID - 19
Women's Sector Update
From the Women's Regional Consortium

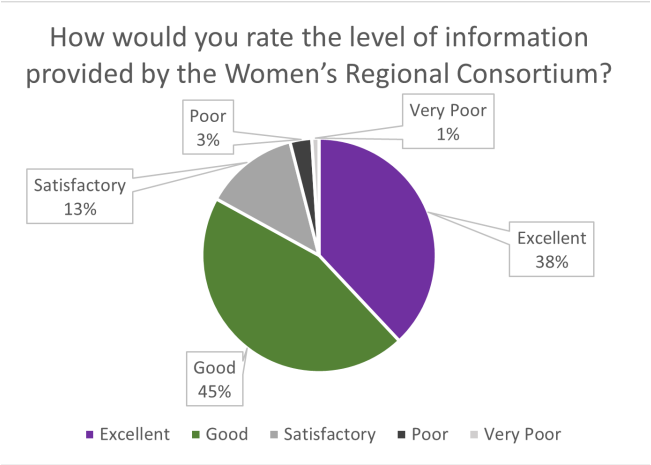
The Women's Regional Consortium acts as the established link between the government, statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas. We consist of Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN), Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), Training for Women Network (TWN), Women's Support Network (WSN), NI Rural Women's Network (NIRWN), WOMEN'STEC and The Women's Centre Derry.

- Lobbying
- Women's Sector Updates
- Human Rights

The Women's Regional Consortium

The Consortium membership was surveyed in April 2020 to gauge Partner members' current engagement with, awareness off and satisfaction with the work of the Consortium. The feedback from the survey was very positive with 83% of respondents rating the information provided by the WRC as excellent or good. The results of the survey were used to plan future work.





The Consortium's social media channels are used to raise awareness of the work of the partners and so operate as a booster for their social media presence. The Consortium's Facebook page is liked by over 400 people and the Consortium twitter has 1,250 followers. Both cover a wide range of content from all seven Partners as well as original content. The website is updated monthly and has a large resources section.

An example of Consortium social media post

Find us on Facebook @WomensRegionalConsortium

Follow us on Twitter @WRC_NI

Explanation of 2019/20 Accounts

The audited accounts have been adopted in line with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice which is applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS 102) which is effective from 1 January 2015.

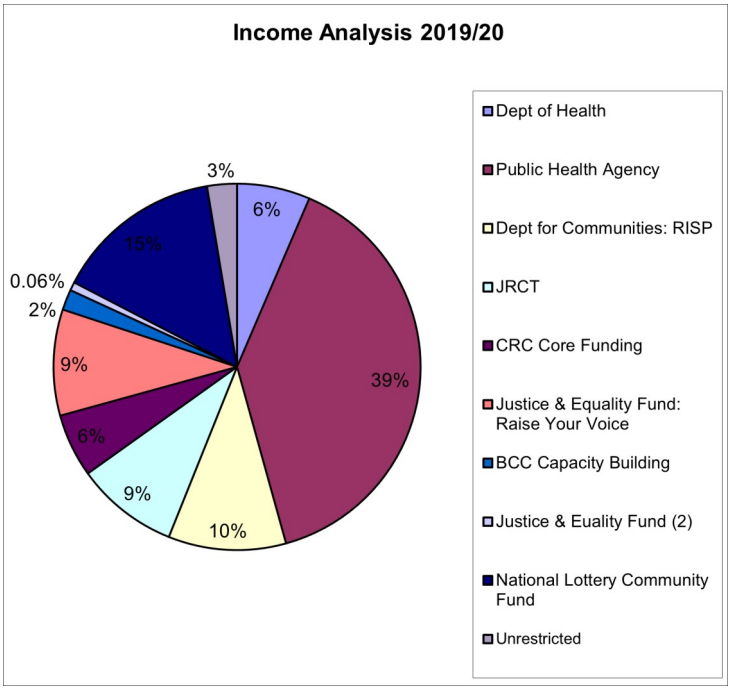
Income

Income this year was £584,208 an increase of £140,178 on the previous year with £520,173 of funding from grants. Last year's restricted income was £420,419, an increase this year of £99,755.

The breakdown of unrestricted funding (£14,035) for 2019/20, was as follows:

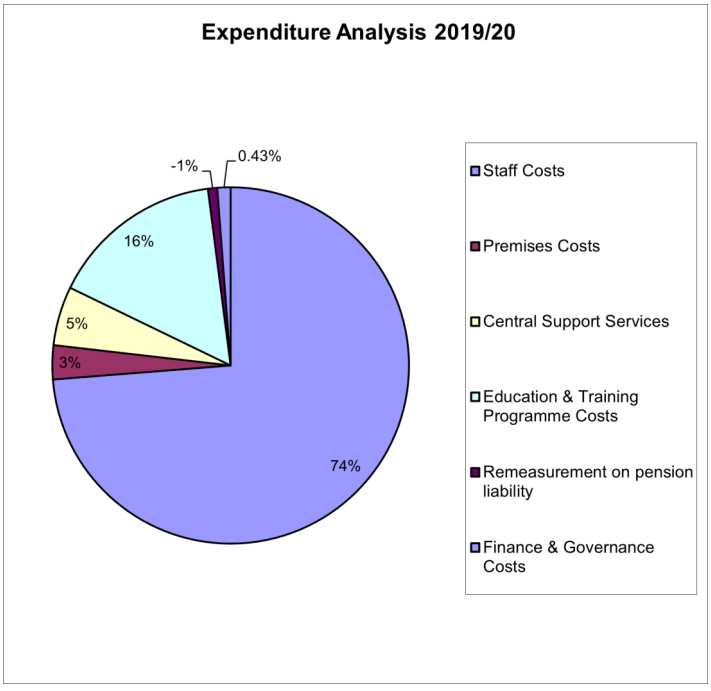
- Use of premises £7,355
- Bank interest £175
- Other £6,505

Last year's unrestricted income was £23,475 a decrease this year of £9,440



Expenditure

Expenditure this year was £404,588, last year the expenditure was £397,279, an increase this year of £7,309. This increase was due mainly to increased programme costs, staff travel and refurbishment costs. The largest expenditure which is on salaries increased by £19,864 from £283,607 to £303,471.



Financial Position for the Year Ended 31 March 2020

This year the accounts show a nett surplus of £179,620, with an unrestricted surplus of £126,073. At 31 March 2020 the pension liability has been calculated at £200,997 a decrease of £18,161 on 2018/19.

It should be noted that a £50,000 loan from Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for the purchasing of 6 Mount Charles has been written off and is now reflected as income in the Financial Statements.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2020

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	31.3.20 Total Funds £	31.3.19 Total Funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWNMENTS				
Donations and legacies	148	-	148	137
Charitable activities	215,572	304,601	520,173	420,418
Other income	63,887	-	63,887	23,475
	279,607	304,601	584,208	444,030
EXPENDITURE ON				
Charitable activities				
Direct Charitable Expenditure	156,139	251,912	408,051	385,929
Other	(3,463)	-	(3,463)	11,350
Total	152,676	251,912	404,588	397,279
NET INCOME	126,931	52,689	179.620	46,751
Transfer between funds	(858)	858	-	-
Net movement in funds	126,073	53,547	179,620	46,751
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	12,955	192,088	205,043	158,292
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	139,028	245,635	384,663	205,043

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 MARCH 2020

	31.3.20 £	31.3.19 £
FIXED ASSETS		
Tangible assets	241,759	241,759
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	105,989	65,038
Cash at bank	241,032	170,524
	347,021	235,562
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due within one year	(3,120)	(3,120)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	343,901	232,442
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	585,660	474,201
CREDITORS		
Amounts falling due after more than one year	-	(50,000)
PENSION LIABILITY	(200,997)	(219,158)
NET ASSETS (LIABILITIES)	**384,663**	**205,043**
FUNDS		
Unrestricted funds	139,028	12,955
Restricted funds	245,635	192,088
TOTAL FUNDS	**384,663**	**205,043**

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice,) including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'. The financial statements also comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors on 20 August 2020 and signed on behalf of WRDA by Patricia Donald, Director, Eileen Weir, Director and Caroline McCord, Company Secretary. The financial details provided in this report are intended to provide a summary of the full audited accounts. A full copy is available on request.

Acknowledgements

The staff would like to thank our Management Committee, Community Facilitators, volunteers and members for their support and commitment throughout the year. We would also like to express our gratitude to the following organisations for their financial assistance and support for our work:

COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
Equity | Diversity | Interdependence

Justice and Equality Fund
MANAGED BY ROSA

Belfast City Council

COMMUNITY FUND

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie

Department for Communities

HSC Public Health Agency

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Email: info@wrda.net

A Visible Force for Change

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