



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

Newsletter ~ September 2021

Over 40% of Women Experience Sexual Harassment at Work

Women's Resource & Development Agency supports employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace

A new report from leading gender equality organisations led by the Fawcett Society, shines a light on sexual harassment in UK workplaces and equips employers to understand and tackle the root causes of this form of abuse. Despite the fact that sexual harassment in the workplace has been unlawful for decades, it's clear that too many women experience it at work and more must be done to protect them. We know that harassment has not stopped due to the pandemic – it has simply moved online and into workers' homes.

The report produced by the Fawcett Society in partnership with Women's Resource and Development Agency, Chwarae Teg, Close the Gap and supported by TIME'S UP UK and Rosa shows that:

- **At least 40% of women experience sexual harassment during the course of their career**
- **45% of women in a recent survey reported experiencing harassment online through sexual messages, cyber harassment and sexual calls.**
- **Almost a quarter of women who had been sexually harassed said the harassment had increased or escalated since the start of the pandemic while they were working from home**
- **Almost seven in ten (68%) disabled women reported being sexually harassed at work, compared to 52% of women in general**
- **Ethnic minority workers (women and men) reported higher rates (32%) of sexual harassment than white workers (28%) over the last 12 months**
- **A poll of LGBT workers found that 68% had experienced some form of harassment in the workplace**

[Read the full story here.](#)

This project is funded by Rosa UK: Justice & Equality Fund

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Over 40% of women experience workplace sexual harassment

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A Visible Force for Change



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Thank You Lauren! MAs Volunteer Reflects on Project



As an art therapy student, I have a passion for advocating and working towards improved mental health and wellbeing and am particularly interested in the area of perinatal mental healthcare and the needs of mothers and their families in Northern Ireland. Having recently completed my dissertation on this particular subject, I was delighted to be offered the opportunity to complete my final placement of my course working with the women and project workers involved with the MAS Project. During my time here, I was able to offer one-to-one art therapy sessions as well as facilitate group art for wellbeing workshops across the centres. **My experience with WRDA has been amazing and I can't thank the staff and Mums enough for their warm welcome and kind encouragement over the past few months.** I hope I can reconnect with you all again in the near future.

What is Art Therapy?

Art therapy is a professional form of psychotherapy which uses creative expression to facilitate a person's communication, emotional exploration and develop greater self-awareness and insight. Art therapists require a Master's degree in an approved program followed by registration with a governing body before they are legally qualified to practice in the UK.

Art therapy uses the creative process to help people resolve personal issues, develop coping strategies, manage distressing behaviours, reduce stress and improve self-esteem and awareness. As a form of therapy, it is still relatively unknown and often misunderstood in Northern Ireland however it has been proven effective in treating a wide variety of emotional and psychological conditions such as anxiety and depression, trauma, relationship concerns, dementia, learning disabilities and behavioural disorders to name a few.

A common misconception of art therapy is that it is similar to an art class however no previous skill or experience in art is required and it can be beneficial to anyone regardless of age or artistic ability. Art therapy can be a very powerful form of expression which can help communicate verbal and non-verbal emotions, process difficult or challenging experiences and uncover new and insightful self-discoveries.



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NI Women urged to prioritise their health in fight against breast cancer



Katherine Robertson and Paula Murray with waterproof cards that hang in the shower to give instructions on the best procedure for breast self-examination.

Women from some of the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland are being urged to prioritise their own health to ensure faster diagnosis of, and treatment for, breast cancer.

While eight out of ten women from more advantaged backgrounds accept their invitations to attend breast screening, the figure falls to four out of ten for women living in certain deprived areas in Northern Ireland.

To address this we are delivering a comprehensive face to face, and online, breast screening awareness programme encouraging women to be more cancer aware and to attend vital screening appointments.

The WRDA's awareness programme, funded by the Public Health Agency, was developed to help tackle inequalities in the uptake of breast cancer screening.

One in 10 women in Northern Ireland will get breast cancer during their lifetime. There are around 1,450 cases diagnosed every year with more than 300 women dying of the disease.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Deirdre Quinn, the WRDA's Training Development Co-ordinator appealed to women in Northern Ireland to access its free services, which are available online and through community workshops.

Ms Quinn said: "Women in more disadvantaged communities often feel they don't have time to look after themselves. They are too busy struggling to make ends meet or looking after their families. Our message to them is - prioritise yourself. Don't ignore your screening invitation. Also remember to do a regular breast check."

The WRDA has restarted face to face breast cancer awareness sessions, due to huge demand from community groups, amid fears there are a lot of undiagnosed cases. A total of one million women across the UK have missed vital breast screening because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms Quinn added: "Our community workshops are free and tailored to reach all communities. We now have signing for the deaf community and translators available for those who don't speak English. There is also a webinar available for individuals."

A short online video produced by the WRDA could also help save the lives of women across Northern Ireland. The WRDA video, entitled 'In the Zone' gives a simple, step-by-step guide to women on how to examine their breasts and look for any changes.

It advises carrying out monthly checks and to make sure to check the entire area including under the arm, collarbone, nipple, and the breast itself and to immediately contact their GP if there are any irregularities.

The WRDA is currently taking bookings for group sessions delivered in the community and on Zoom. The In the Zone video and three webinars are also available on the [WRDA website](https://www.wrda-ni.org/)

This project is funded by the Public Health Agency.

Thank You Lauren! MAs Volunteer Reflects on Project

What is Art for Wellbeing?

Creating and engaging with creative activities has been proven to have a significant positive impact on our mental and emotional wellbeing. It's benefits have become so recognised that many GP's and practices are beginning to offer 'arts on prescription' services to help support and maintain the positive mental health of their patients.

An art for wellbeing group offers the opportunity to connect, socialise and create in a fun and supportive environment which can offer a variety of benefits such as building a sense of connection to others, enhance emotional wellbeing and offers a sense of achievement through creating and making an image/object for yourself. Art for wellbeing groups can be tailored to focus on diverse themes, abilities and art activities which can enhance confidence, allow the development of new skills, reduce stress and improve mood. Art for wellbeing workshops should feel therapeutic however, they are not 'art therapy' in the literal sense.



This project is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund; Peoples and Communities Programme.

Putting Women's Voice at the Core - New Evidence

The Women's Policy Group has produced a substantial body of primary research on the impact of the pandemic on women across Northern Ireland.

[WPG COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan Supplementary Research Report: Putting Women's Voices at the Core.](#)

The findings from this research paint a stark picture of women's experiences in Northern Ireland relating to health, employment, poverty, disability, racism, care work, violence against women and more.

Consultation Responses

WRDA and the Women's Policy Group NI regularly respond to government consultations. We aim to ensure that policy makers hear the views of women.

- [WRDA Response to Department of Health Integrated Care System NI Draft Framework](#)
- [WRDA Evidence Submission: Parental Bereavement \(Leave and Pay\) Bill](#)
- [WPG Response to Department for Economy Skills Strategy or Northern Ireland: Skills for a 10x Economy](#)
- [WPG NI Response to Justice Committee Call for Evidence: Justice \(Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Victims\) Bill](#)
- [WPG Response to Non-Fatal Strangulation: A Public Consultation](#)