



**women's**

**RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

Supporting Women's Groups and Networks Across Northern Ireland

# Membership Welcome Pack

**#VisibleForceForChange**



# History of WRDA

The Women's Resource and Development Agency began life in 1983 as the Women's Education Project. WEP was committed to women only classes where women were able to learn in a supportive environment, with a learning approach that broke down hierarchies and stressed the validation of personal experience. All this hard work paid off when, in April 1993, the WEP received its first substantial core funding from the Department of Health and the Central Community Relations Unit. WEP was now engaged in education and training, research and consultancy work.



In 1992 the membership voted to rename the organisation the Women's Resource and Development Agency to better reflect the remit of the charity. Two years later the support of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust meant WRDA was able to purchase 6 Mount Charles where we are still based today.

1995 marked another major milestone for WRDA with the establishment of our Community Facilitator Programme which is still going strong. The programme was established after Liz Curran (Outreach Access Worker) observed that there was a pool of women in communities with the commitment and capability to spread and facilitate awareness of and participation of women in training and educational opportunities.

WRDA recognised early the power of ICT to bring women together and strengthen the movement. In 1996 WomensLink, the first community based e-group in Ireland, was launched. WomensLink continues to be an online space for women's sector colleagues and activists to network, discuss and share experiences, and engage with other women on the issues facing the sector.

In 2010 WRDA was involved in a ground-breaking project that culminated in the publication of 'Women and the Conflict – Talking about the Troubles and Planning for the Future'. As part of this project 128 women talked about the impact of the Troubles on their lives and their hopes for the future. This remarkable document was called 'a vital piece of social history' by then Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson. WRDA remains committed to grassroots good relations work, there can be no peace without women.

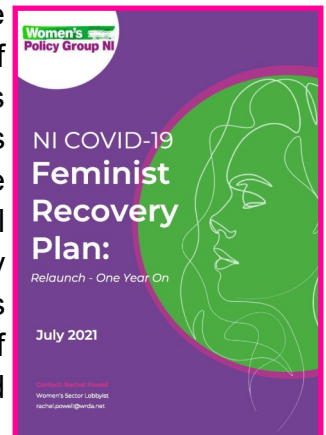
**"Hi everybody. I think we're hooked up to WomensLink as of this morning - let me know if you get this message. Is there any news of the baby donkey in Fermanagh yet? Bye for now"**



**WomensLink  
message No. 9 sent  
on the 5th  
September 1997**

# History of WRDA

The low numbers of women MLAs and Councillors meant that there were few champions to ensure that political decisions reflected the needs of women. It was decided that a lobbyist for the Women's Sector was needed to enhance channels of communication between the women's sector and decision makers. Lynn Carvill was appointed to the role Women's Sector Lobbyist in 2008 and the current Lobbyist is Rachel Powell. Over time this role has assumed great importance for the Agency and the Women's Sector as a whole, as engagement with political parties has been enhanced and women have a much greater understanding of policy issues and the importance of providing evidence-based information to decision makers.



WRDA was one of the first organisations in the formal women's sector to adopt a pro-choice position internally and explicitly state this in our work with partners. We have provided leadership in this area by helping facilitate training and capacity building for other women's sector organisations through partnerships like the Women's Regional Consortium or Reclaim the Agenda and grassroots women's centres. Our position paper on Reproductive Right and Justice is available at the back of this booklet.

Based on our vision, ethos, values and strategic plan, WRDA is a trans women inclusive organisation. We understand that trans women face additional barriers and inequalities just because they are trans. Further, we recognise the high levels of discrimination, violence and exclusion that trans women face in society. As a women's organisation, WRDA recognises the need to accept and support trans women through our work. We reject any trans exclusionary action or idea as it is incompatible with feminism, anti-sexism and equality. Our membership and all our services are open to trans women, non-binary and gender fluid people. Our full position paper on the inclusion of trans women and non-binary people is available at the end of this booklet.

For almost four decades WRDA has been a champion of women's rights. Our fortunes have fluctuated over the years but our commitment to feminist principles has never wavered. We remain completely committed to achieving a fair and equal society where women are empowered and are a visible force for change and influence in all areas of life. We are very pleased to welcome you to membership and invite you to join us in building a fair and equal society.

# Membership Benefits

- Bi-monthly newsletter keeping you informed of our work, the work of the sector and policy news that affects women
- Monthly Ezine emailed to you full of news about upcoming events and training opportunities, health & wellbeing features and lobbying updates
- Priority booking of our membership events (where funder constraints allow)
- Opportunities to publicise your events and the issues you are concerned about on our website, in our publications and social media accounts
- An invitation to our AGM

## Additional Group Member Benefits

- Entry in our online group directory
- Opportunity to have your group profiled in our publications to increase your visibility
- Voting rights at our AGM
- Technical Support

Technical Support Available to Group Members includes;

- ⇒ Support setting up and managing social media accounts for your group
- ⇒ Support establishing and managing email newsletters/ezines for your group
- ⇒ Data protection and GDPR related issues
- ⇒ Queries relating to volunteer programmes and student placements for your group





# WRDA's Relationship with Members

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 to the Women's Movement. We keep our members up to date with the latest developments in the wider women's sector and provide you with opportunities to publicise your own work in our ezine, blog and newsletter.

WRDA surveys the full membership once every year. The data gathered from this survey is used to inform our communications plan and what type of membership events we will run in the year ahead. The membership survey is your opportunity to let us know how you feel about the level of service you receive from us, what you're interested in and your opinions on the work we do.



WRDA responds to many statutory body and government calls for consultation responses and adopts a variety of position papers on issues to guide our work and ensure we continue to lead in the Women's Movement. All our consultation responses and position papers are the result of rigorous research by staff and (in the case of position papers) are approved by WRDA's experienced Management Committee. In general, it is not the practice of WRDA to consult with the membership on all such publications, but members are encouraged to provide feedback during our annual survey or by contacting the Communications and Membership Worker.



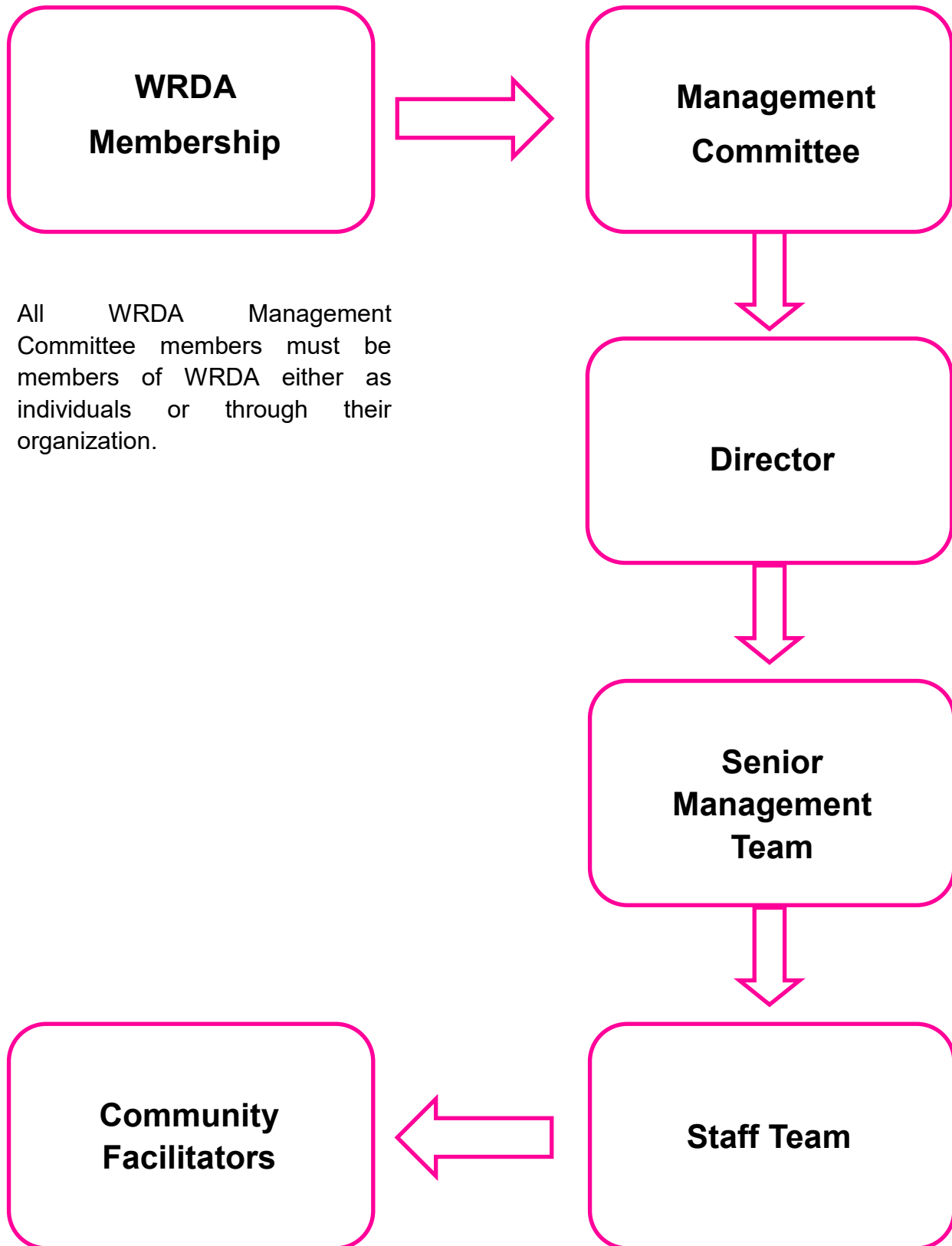
**Membership helps me stay on top of what's happening in the movement**

**My membership enables me to stay up to date with progress in the woman's movement**

**Sometimes I couldn't leave the house due to shielding so the online events were a life saver**

**I've really enjoyed meeting other women**

# WRDA Organisational Chart



# WRDA People

## Management Committee

Chair	Anne O'Reilly	Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)
Deputy Chair and Secretary Treasurer	Robyn Scott	Individual
	Karen Armstrong	Individual
	Eileen Weir	Shankill Women's Centre
	Sandra McCarry	Belfast HSCT
	Anne McGale	Community Facilitator
	Deborah Kelly	Individual
	Tara McGuire	Individual

## Staff

Director	Anne McVicker
Finance and HR Manager	Geraldine Burns
Training Development Manager	Deirdre Quinn
Women's Sector Lobbyist	Rachel Powell
Good Relations Coordinator	Elaine Crory
T&D Programme Worker	Katherine Robertson
T&D Outreach Worker	Paula Murray
MAS Project Coordinator	Clare Anderson
Communications and Membership Worker	Megan McClure Botha



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Registered Office: 6 Mount Charles, Belfast, BT7 1NZ

Tel: 028 9023 0212  
Email: [info@wrda.net](mailto:info@wrda.net)

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