

National Women's Council of Ireland E –Newsletter

Comhairle Naisiunta na mBan in Eirinn Nuachtlitir Leichtreonach

August 2008

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NWCI POLICY NEWS

National Women's Strategy Co-ordinating Committee Holds First Meeting

The First meeting of the National Women's Strategy Co-ordinating Committee was held in Government Buildings on July 3rd. The NWCI was represented at the meeting by Rachel Doyle (Head of Outreach and Support on behalf of Joanna Mc Minn), Tess Murphy (Longford Women's Link) and Ruth Smith (Tipperary Women's Network and Aontas on behalf of Frances Byrne).

The meeting was chaired by Minister of State John Moloney and attended by Pauline Moreau (DJELR – responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the strategy) a wide range of Government Departments, social partners (ICTU, IBEC and the Community Pillar) and other organisations including the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the Equality Authority and the Women's Health Council.

The NWCI raised a number of issues which at this early stage we believe need to be addressed in order to ensure that the monitoring process is a meaningful and effective one. These included;

- The frequency of meetings and the need to look at the possibility of establishing sub structures and working groups,
- The need to ensure that progress reports reflect not just what has been achieved but actions outstanding in the strategy,
- The importance of ensuring that the needs of diverse groups of women are taken into consideration in the monitoring process,
- The need for the establishment of a steering groups for the Equality for Women Measure,
- The importance of clear linkage with the social partnership process and the review of Towards 2016,
- The impact which the current economic situation could have on the implementation of the strategy.

The NWCI also highlighted as a matter of serious concern, the negative impact which the Childcare Subvention Scheme is having on women and the need to ensure that these concerns are taken into consideration when the scheme is being reviewed.

Discussions were also held on the poor level of progress in relation to work on the gender pay gap, the need to maximize the potential of all representatives on the committee to bring added value to the promotion

of women's equality, the need for regular updating of statistics and information in relation to the position of women in Ireland and the need for a clear strategy to promote women's participation in the local and European election in 2009.

We will continue to keep you updated on progress in relation to the NWS.

Towards 2016 Review

The Social Partners and Government met in Dublin Castle (Friday, February 15th, 2008) to begin the first review of the Towards 2016 (T16) national agreement. As a Social Partner within the Community & Voluntary Pillar, (C&V) the NWCI has raised a number of issues related to the status of women in Ireland and the conditions of their lives. We have, and continue to make, direct representation to the Government and individual Departments through unilateral and bilateral meetings.

A high level objective for the NWCI is to ensure integrated gender analysis and proofing throughout the Social Partnership Agreement. As is clear in the T16 document, the Lifecycle Approach, newly adopted in this agreement, is not gender sensitive. In particular, the category of "People of a Working Age" does not attend to the specifics of women's lives as workers, carers or citizens. The "person" of a working age is essentially the familiar male bread-winner, implicitly working in traditional forms of employment outside the home. Thus, women's atypical, caring, household and unpaid work is fundamentally ignored within the T16.

The National Women's Strategy (NWS), which goes some way to address these issues, has yet to be initiated and implemented. In addition, the lack of targets and timeframes within the NWS will seriously hamper its implementation.

Nonetheless, the NWCI continues to engage in the Partnership Process and, as part of the current Review, has made submissions on four priority areas:

1 – Implementation of the National Women's Strategy.

The capacity of T16 for improving gender equality depends largely, although not solely, on the implementation of NWS. In particular, we are concerned at the lack of linkage between commitments made in the NWS and T16 (e.g. NAPS, discussion on Carers Strategy).

The next three priorities centre on the significant obstacles to advancing women's equality via the T16, specifically where there are no mechanisms to address them effectively.

2 – Women and Decision-Making

- women occupy 13% of seats in the Dail,
- 34% of members of the Irish State Boards are women and
- 17% of Chairpersons are women.

We believe the inadequate representation of women at a high level in senior administration, public and political life should be placed as core priority in the next phase of the implementation of T16. Specific mechanisms and resources should be allocated to put in place a plan of action.

3. Affordability of Childcare

The cost of childcare is making it prohibitive for mothers to take up employment, to reduce the gender pay gap, and to participate equally to men in all aspects of society. Costs for two children on average in Dublin is €1,200–€1,400 equivalent to a second mortgage and is not sustainable.

In addition, the NWCI expressed extreme concern at the introduction of the **Childcare Subvention Scheme** planned for July. This subvention will;

- create new poverty traps for women returning work,
- discourage moving from part-time to full time employment,
- act as a disincentive, rather than facilitating, the take up of employment by women
- contradict objectives and commitments in the NWS and proposals to support mothers back into employment in the National Employment Action Plan.

We called for the postponement of the introduction of the Subvention.

4 – Women and Social Welfare

We note the following;

- the Programme for Government has committed to making the social welfare system fairer for women,
- the negative implications of having a social welfare system based on a male breadwinner model must be countered.
- proposals to support lone parents and qualified adults must be progressed speedily

In 2008, for a married woman to remain dependant on her husband for her income is a fundamental inequality. It should not exist in a modern, developed economy and society.

The NWCi selected these priorities as we believe that they present an obstacle to the realisation of the goals of T16 and to the overall advancement of women's equality in Ireland. We also believe that a problem-solving approach through social partnership could progress these issues leading to long term effective solutions.

Update on the NWCi Social Welfare Reform Campaign

The National Women's Council has been campaigning to end discrimination against women in the social welfare system. We have been promoting this campaign for the past year in different parts of the country. The main basis of the campaign is the fact that the social welfare system denies women full independence. We are continuing to work for the recognition and establishment of full independent rights for women in all areas of Irish economic, political, social and cultural life.

Regional Level

We have set up two focus groups one in Cork/Kerry and the other in the western region this consists of women's organisations in Limerick/Clare and Tuam. We have also met with groups in the border counties and in Tipperary and Kildare. These meetings are informing women's groups around the country of the issues so we can have as much support as possible in the campaign to make changes within the Social Welfare system.

Actions at regional level will consist of:

- **Information mornings**
- **Setting up a forum of politicians for a questions and answers session**
- **Documenting stories from women and launching them at a seminar**
- **Using drama to highlight the lack of pensions for women**

National Action

The focus groups have been identifying actions both at regional and national level.

The issues identified at national level are those thought to be of priority to women. The two main issues emerging are the issue of pensions for women and the Marriage Bar.

We are planning a strategy within the campaign to highlight these two issues for the local and European elections next year. This strategy will begin in January 2009.

Meeting with Minister

On the 28th of May Joanna Mc Minn Director of the NWCI and Orla O' Connor Head of Policy and Valerie O'Carroll Campaign Development Worker met with Minister Mary Hanafin who now holds the portfolio of Social & Family Affairs. We discussed issues which have been identified throughout the campaign.

At the meeting we highlighted the difficulties for women accessing pensions in their own right due to the fact that many women have to take time out of employment due to caring issues.

We promoted the need for the social Welfare system to recognise and incorporate an ethic of care within the system, valuing care and parenting.

We also discussed the issue of the marriage bar and how thousands of women were discriminated against by being forced to leave work on marriage. We felt that this is an area which could be dealt with immediately by a scheme of retrospective justice from 1973 (reforming homemakers credits and for all care responsibilities). We suggested that in the development of the green paper the Department of Social & Family affairs needs to recognise that the current system is discriminatory for women because the system is so closely tied to earnings from employment, in order to have decent income in older years, depends on your earnings ability. We pointed out that:

- **Women earn less than men, the gender pay gap is currently 15%**
- **Women are more likely to work part-time over 75% of part-time workers are women**
- **Women provide the majority of formal care work**

We put a strong emphasis on state pensions universally guaranteed to all at pension age

The Minister listened attentively and we hope we have given her some ideas on how to make the social welfare system fairer for women.

Legal Case

This work is ongoing and we are still in the process of consulting with FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre) they are very interested in the issue of the marriage bar. Initially we narrowed the letters down to just ten. From these FLAC have now identified two women with whom they would like to further discuss their cases. We are in the process of contacting them and setting up meetings over the summer months.

What Women Want Pensions Publication:

The publication **Pensions: What women want** which is a model of pensions that guarantees independence for women. The NWCI have consulted with our affiliates on the report and it has been influenced by many of the letters we've received from women around the country. You will notice some of the quotes on the cover and inside have been taken directly from many of the letters. All of these women gave permission for their letters to be used in the pursuit of economic independence for women. This report is also our submission to the Green Paper on Pensions.

If you would like a copy of the Pension report or further information on the Social Welfare Campaign please contact Valerie on 0876724785 or e-mail valerieoc@nwci.ie after the 11th August.

What Women Want: a model of Pensions that guarantees independence

The Government published the Green Paper on Pensions in October 2007 and called for a widespread debate on the future development of old age pensions. **What Women Want: a model of Pensions that guarantees independence**, is the new policy on pensions by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) as its contribution to the emerging debate on pensions. The NWCI developed the policy because women's issues, voices and perspectives have largely been absent and ignored from the pensions debate in Ireland. While women make up the majority of older people, the impact of pension policy now and into the future has been developed and continues to be progressed without clearly assessing its impact on women and women's equality.

Currently fewer women than men in old age have independent access to pensions. These differences arise due to their ascribed roles in the

economy and the family: women still earn less, work fewer hours and leave paid employment because of care responsibilities to a greater extent than men.

The international experience of pension reform shows that women and men may be affected differently by any given reform option. In other words, the NWCi is concerned that some reform options mooted for consideration in Ireland may be distinctly unfair from a women's equality perspective. The government, for instance, has attempted to make the case for mandatory supplementary pensions because of the low take-up of voluntary pensions. Such a reform would tie the pensions system as a whole more closely to earnings from paid employment and would therefore reinforce inequalities for women.

Central to pension reform for women is the principle of economic independence for women and the inclusion of an ethic of care that values and rewards care in the context of gender-neutral care policies. These principles have implications for many aspects of pension provision. At a general level it requires policy makers to ensure that the pensions system as a whole is not predicated on male lifetime patterns of work and earnings: on the contrary, the NWCi insists that women's continuing experience of lower earnings, fewer years employment and greater contribution to unpaid care work should not exclude them from an adequate, independent pension in old age. As women rely more on the state pension system for their income in old age in comparison to men, the role of the state pension is key to the reform of the pension system.

The critical decision is the relative importance in the pension system of the first-tier state pension. Specifically, the core of the pension system should be an adequate, comprehensive pension guarantee for all individual men and women. The stronger the first tier of pensions, the lower the level of poverty and the greater the access women have to an independent pension in old age.

Pension Policy should not only prevent financial poverty but guarantee a decent quality of life by offering an amount significantly above the 'poverty line'. This will require a redistribution of resources away from the private pension system and into the state pension. Currently the Government is spending 2.9 billion on tax reliefs for private pensions; this is equivalent to the amount being spent on state pension. Even if these are not wholly equivalent, there is a clear trade-off between tax subsidies (for example to occupational and private pensions) and improvements to the state pension. Indirectly, women benefit less than

men from tax expenditures. The Economic and Social Research Institute have estimated that by reducing tax relief's to the standard rate of 20% and increasing the state pension by €50 per week, poverty for older people would effectively be eliminated.

Policy on pensions cannot be analysed or developed out of context, it must be formed within a context of broader social policy and its impact on women's lives. Women and men do not suddenly arrive at old age; rather ageing is a cumulative process and the resources and assets that are brought to older age are those that are gathered over a life time of working and caring. Connecting our pension system so closely with earnings from paid employment systematically disadvantages women. Women earn less than men, the gender pay gap is currently 15%, women are more likely to work part-time and women provide the majority of informal care work. The reality of women's lives means that women are spending and will spend more time than men in care work and outside of paid employment to a greater extent than men. A new policy on pensions requires a greater distribution of resources and a greater distribution of care work between men and women, it should form part of the building blocks used to construct a world of gender equality in work, care pensions and life.

The NWCI recommendations do not solely focus on the state pension system, but what is clear is that it is only in a predominantly state supported system that an ethic of care can be fully integrated and inequality can be compensated for effectively. In order not to reinforce the gender equality that exists in our society, pension policy must compensate for the cumulative discrimination which has built up for women across their lives.

The main recommendations of the NWCI are a **universal pension for all that provides a decent standard of living in older age.**

The NWCI acknowledges that a pension appropriate to Ireland's circumstances requires a second tier pension; however the NWCI suggests that neither the recently introduced PRSA scheme nor the option of a compulsory private pension is appropriate. These pensions are reliant on the ability of workers to fund pensions and therefore depend on their level of incomes and employment: this would be to women's disadvantage. The NWCI recommends that if a second-tier pension is to be introduced, it should take the form of a state earnings-related pension that builds on the existing, social insurance system. .

A central recommendation of the NWCI policy is for **retrospective pension justice** for women who have reached pension age and are not entitled to a state pension. This relates to women who were forced to leave their employment on marriage and women who have worked on family farms and in family businesses. These women are facing serious discrimination because of the time spent caring and supporting their families.

The NWCI policy has been formed by the views and perspectives of the members of the NWCI and by the thousands of women who have written to the NWCI and participated in the campaign for social welfare reform. The main theme of these letters is the demand to live in old age with respect and dignity not just above the poverty line and to do so as individuals in their own right.

Submission to Cosc on the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform advertised a 'Call for submissions' on the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence, in the Irish Times on Friday, the 8th of February.

The National Women's Council of Ireland prepared its submission on behalf of the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women, which includes all the national NGOs working to eradicate violence against women. The Irish Observatory is part of a wider group, the Observatory of the European Policy Action Centre (EPAC) on Violence Against Women, managed by the European Women's Lobby (EWL). The European Women's Lobby policy centre has produced policy proposals towards a common European framework, which aim to monitor progress in combating violence against women. Our submission transposes this proposal into the national context, in order to inform the development of the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence in Ireland and at the same time, contribute to a common approach among the European Observatories on violence against women.

Our submission sets out a policy framework, indicators and sub indicators in the areas of budgets, legislation, justice, service provision, training of professionals, civil society, data collection and prevention

As an example, under the section on the Criminal and Justice System, one of the indicators is custody and access. Within this section of the National Strategy we would propose that reference be made to the following sub-indicators that could be monitored:

- Numbers of cases where child custody is given to the father even though it is a case of domestic and sexual violence.
- Number of cases where family mediation has been proposed by the judicial system, in cases of domestic and sexual violence.
- Specific training on the impact of domestic and sexual violence on the children, for NGOs working around child protection/ for Guardia/ for professionals of the judicial system.
- Make link between the penal court and the family court.
- Specific recommendation in order to avoid that child custody can be an additional factor of danger for the women victim of violence.
- Conditions that should be complied with by the party in whose favour the order of contact has been made.

Similarly, under Service Provision, the indicator we have proposed of Refuge provision, and other provision, fully sets out the range of sub-indicators we have proposed for the National Strategy that could then be monitored:

- Reference to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament's recommendations of 1 shelter per 10,000 women
- Number of shelters/ refuges and safe places per population
- Geographical spread
- Accessibility of all women (including black and minority ethnic women, disabled women...)
- Number of request for shelter over the past year.
- Number of available places over the past year.
- Number of refusals over the past year.
- % of shelters/ refuges managed by NGOs and women's organisations.
- % State managed shelters/ refuges.
- Funding of shelters
- % or proportion of funding in relation to other services provided for women (and children) confronted with violence.
- Number of voluntary and paid staff.
- % of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds / with disabilities.
- Support service for women, victims of violence.
- Accessibility of services.
- Number of legal advice services.

- Conditions for obtaining free legal aid.
- Local/ regional national free-phone service.
- Number of calls received over the past year.
- Funding of services: number funded by State funds and/or other public funding; number of private funded services.
- Proportion of services set up and managed by NGOs and women's organisations.
- Evaluation of services, by whom.
- Second stage/ transitional housing availabilities.

The full NWCI submission can be viewed on the website at www.nwci.ie

NWCI NEWS

NWCI Annual General Meeting 2008

The 2008 AGM of the National Women's Council of Ireland took place on Friday 20th June in the Academy Plaza Hotel in Dublin.

Fifty seven affiliates and eighty four delegates attended the AGM and heard the keynote speaker, award-winning journalist Susan McKay, speak about her recently published book, "Bear in Mind these Dead", which addresses the aftermath of the Northern conflict for those most deeply affected, the injured and bereaved. She described the experiences and told the harrowing stories of a number of families and individuals featured in her book. She referred to the difficulties involved in building solidarity amongst women across communities and the work done by many women's groups and women's centres in trying to build that solidarity and support for women. Susan's presentation had a profound effect on those listening; it was both moving and disturbing to hear, and was followed by a thoughtful and appreciative questions and answers session.

In the afternoon, the business of the AGM was introduced, primarily the Election of a new Executive Board and voting on the Motions. As there had been no nomination for a Chairperson this new Board, the current Chair presented a proposal from the existing board that an EGM be held as quickly as possible to appoint a new Chair. The proposal was carried unanimously. The results of the election for the Executive Board are as follows:

Deputy Chair

Therese Murphy (ESBOA)

Ordinary Members

Maura Butler – Irish Women lawyers Association

Isobel Butler – AIM Family Services

Aileen Heverin – Women of North East Galway

Kate Morgan – Second Chance Education Project for Women

Ellen O'Malley Dunlop – Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Kathleen O'Sullivan – ASTI

Breda Raggett – Irish Countrywomen's Association

Clare Treacy – Irish Nurses Organisation

Nusha Yonkova – Immigrant Council of Ireland

MOTIONS

Members also discussed, debated and voted on a number of Motions that had been submitted. The following Motions were carried:

ADEQUATE ASSISTANCE AND SERVICES TO WOMEN AND GIRLS TRAFFICKED INTO IRELAND

The NWCI is invited to support the call for provision of adequate assistance and services to women and girls trafficked into Ireland for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The NWCI is invited to participate in the campaign launched by the Immigration Council of Ireland.

GENDER GUIDELINES FOR ASYLUM/PROTECTION DETERMINATION PROCESS

AkiDwA calls on the NWCI to propose that gender guidelines, as outlined by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), should be implemented in Ireland and included in the Immigration, Residence and Protection (IRP) proposed legislation and such guidelines shall be adhered to by all asylum/protection officials adjudicating asylum/protection claims in Ireland.

ARTICLE 41.2.1 OF BUNREACTH NA HEIREANN

Article 41.2.1 of Bunreacht na hEireann, under the heading "The Family" reads: "Article 41.2.1 in particular,
The State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved."

Conference calls on the NWCI to work towards the repealing of Article 41.2.1 of the constitution.

BREASTCHECK

We are calling on the NWCI to lobby BreastCheck, the National Breast Screening Programme, to extend the upper age limit for breast screening to 70 without delay, and to allow women over 70 the right to request a mammogram every two years if they ask.

FAMILY FRIENDLY/FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS IN ALL WORKPLACES

The ASTI calls on the NWCI to lobby for the early implementation of a statutory entitlement to family friendly/flexible work arrangements in all workplaces.

RESOURCES & SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS/COLLEGES CATERING FOR MINORITY ETHNIC STUDENTS

The Teachers' Union of Ireland calls on the NWCI to demand that schools/colleges catering for significant numbers of minority ethnic students, are provided with the resources and supports including interpreter services and intercultural training for teachers, to ensure that both the schools/colleges and parents can participate fully in the educational development of minority ethnic students.

The following Motion was deferred to the 2009 AGM:

ENSURING REPRESENTATION OF COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCING SOCIAL EXCLUSION ON THE NWCI BOARD

Pavee Point calls on the NWCI to introduce a quota system at Executive Board level where at least 4 (approximately 1/3) board members represent the diversity of women in Ireland in line with the spirit of the Equal Status Act 2000. Representatives should be drawn from organisations who work with the following:

- 1.Older women/Young women
- 2.Traveller women
- 3.Women from religious minorities
- 4.Disabled women
- 5.Women from minority ethnic groups
- 6.Lone parent women
- 7.Lesbian women

8. Women living in poverty (not covered under the ESA but a core focus of NWCI work)
9. Women experiencing violence (not covered under the ESA but a core focus of NWCI work)

The Chair explained that as this motion required a change to the Memorandum and Articles of association it could not be put to the floor. Such a change would require notice of 21 days of the intention to propose a resolution requiring a special majority (that being 2/3 of the members) and as said notice had not been sent it could not be voted on. The staff of the NWCI has been asked to work on a wording to change the Memo and Arts with the proposing organization. The amended motion will be put forward at the 2009 AGM. This would still allow for implementation within the desired time frame.

Date for your Diary NWCI Members Meeting September 18th 2008

The next NWCI Members Meeting will take place on Thursday September 18th in the Royal Dublin Hotel O'Connell Street Dublin1 from 11.00 am –3.00pm. The theme of this meeting will be Marriage Equality. Further details will be available at the beginning of September.

The Charities Bill 2007

The Charities Bill 2007 is currently at Report Stage and due for Consideration by the Seanad. This is the final stage before the enactment of this bill and our final chance to influence changes to this Bill. The following are a summary of concerns/issues emerging in relation to the Charities Bill which have been highlighted by the Community Platform and which all organisations in this sector should consider making known to their local TDs and Senators.

1. Definition of Charitable purposes

The Charities Bill 2007 does not include the advancement of **human rights and social justice or the promotion of equality and diversity** under the definition of Charitable purposes.

In order to ensure that human rights and equality bodies qualify for charitable status, as well as maintaining the public perception that those organisations are striving towards a charitable goal of demonstrable benefit to the community we should include the advancement of human rights and the promotion/advancement of equality and diversity as express provisions under the category of “charitable purpose”.

Advocacy

The Bill states ‘Advocacy, campaigning or lobbying are not included in the proposed definition of “charitable purposes”. An organisation whose principal objects came within the proposed definition of “charitable purposes” would, however, be able to engage in advocacy, campaigning or lobbying as **ancillary** activities i.e., activities undertaken solely in furtherance of the charitable purposes of the organisation concerned – without impacting on its status as a charity’.

There is some concern that a failure to expressly enshrine in the legislation the right of charities to engage in advocacy would either deny charities this right altogether or would make it difficult to decipher how much advocacy was permissible by a registered charity, without endangering its charitable status.

2. The definition of ‘excluded body’ in the Bill includes ‘a political party or a body the principal part of which is to promote a political party, candidate or political cause’.

In effect those organisations that are concerned with influencing/ changing Government legislation/policy may not be eligible for Charitable status.

3. The third concern relates to how the implementation of the legislation will be resourced, managed, monitored etc

- a) Organisations will have to upskill in relation to the new requirements such as the production of financial plans, risk assessments and guidelines for trustees etc. Who will provide the advice, training to organisations? Will the Government provide a transitional fund (as was the case in Scotland) to assist organisations adhere to the new guidelines? There is a commitment in T2016 to resource the transition.

- b) Will organisations be compensated for the costs associated with the additional requirements such as financial plans, risk assessments etc?
- c) The Government propose to establish a Charities Regulatory Authority to support and monitor the legislation. Will it have a policing or a supportive role? Will it be independent?
- d) The Government propose to establish a Charities Appeal Tribunal – What will be the make up of this Body?

It would appear that decisions have not yet been made in relation to the issues listed under this heading; there may therefore be opportunities for the C&V sector to seek to influence how they are designed and rolled out.

Below is an outline of the stages of the Bill

- Publication of the Consultation Paper
- Feb–May 2004– Public Consultation process
- Analysis of the response to the Public Consultation
- 2006 – Publication of the General Scheme of Bill (Heads of Bill) 2006
- April 07– Minister Ahern announces Government approval of the Charities Bill 2007
- April 07– Charities Bill 2007 presented to the Dáil.
- April 07 –Charities Bill 2007 with Explanatory Memorandum published.
- Nov 07 –Charities Bill 2007: completion of Second Stage in Dáil Éireann
- Jan 08 – Charities Bill 2007: completion of Committee Stage (Third Stage) in Dáil Éireann.
- **Currently at – Report Stage**
- Probably July 2008 – Consideration of the Bill by the Seanad
- Enactment of the Bill
- The making of statutory instruments under the Act
- Establishment of the regulatory body
- Review of the Act after 5 years in operation.

As the Bill is still at the Report stage there are some opportunities to seek to influence it before it goes to the Seanad. It would appear that the Parliamentary Deputies (both Government and opposition) share our concerns about the revised draft of the Bill.

Suggested amendments to the Bill

- The advancement of human rights and the promotion/ advancement of equality and diversity should be named as express provisions under the category of “charitable purpose”.
- Proposed legislation should acknowledge the role of advocacy in a positive fashion either by including reference to advocacy in the definition of ‘advancement’ or by re-defining the concept of public benefit so as to clearly permit such activity.
- Bodies whose principal object it is to promote a political cause should not come within the definition of “excluded body”. Similar wording should be adopted to that in the Charities and Investment Trustees (Scotland) Act 2005, which provides that a body does not meet the charity test if, “it is, or one of its purposes is to advance, a political party”.

NWCI and the Media

Muslim Women’s Forum: Challenging stereotypes & misconceptions of Muslim Women in Ireland

The Communications Officer attended the ‘Behind the Veil: Speaking from Muslim Women’s Perspectives’ Conference in Trinity College on March 28th. The conference was organised by the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and aimed to address many of the issues facing Muslim Women in Ireland. The stereotypes of Muslim women in the media and in common belief, being subservient and ill-treated by their male counterparts was one such issue that was discussed on the day. The conference was important for the NWCI Communications Officer as she was about to embark on ‘Media Training’ with the NWCI/NCCRI ‘Muslim Women’s Forum’. The views that were expressed throughout the conference allowed the Communications Officer to become initially informed about the experiences of Muslim Women in Ireland.

The Media Training with the Muslim Women's Forum took place over three half days and introduced the group to the Media in Ireland and dealt with ways in which the group could interact with the media to challenge the misconceptions of Muslim women. The group gave excellent feedback following the training and they look forward to hopefully be able to put their learning into practice. The NWCI will support the group in their efforts in this regard.

Media Coverage of the NWCI

It has been a relatively quiet time since March of this year with regard to media requests to the NWCI. It has also been a quiet time in terms of direct coverage of the NWCI. Media interest was raised with the launch of the Pensions Research ('Pensions: What women want') in May, with radio being the predominant medium which took an interest in the research and the issues it threw up, along with some print coverage in the form of an Opinion & Editorial Piece in the Irish Examiner on the morning of the launch.

In June, the ESRI and the Equality Authority produced a report: 'Gender Inequalities in Time Use – The distribution of Caring, Housework and Employment among women and men in Ireland' on June 19th 2008. Several requests for radio interviews came in to the Council following the report's release. Joanna McMinn conducted all interviews including a spot on Morning Ireland on RTE Radio 1.

Complaint to the Press Ombudsman – July 2008

The NWCI has made a formal complaint to the Press Ombudsman concerning the article written by Kevin Myers (Africa is giving nothing to anyone – except AIDS) July 10th 2008 in the Irish Independent. The NWCI, along with several other organisations and individuals, including the Immigrant Council of Ireland and the National Consultative Committee on Racism & Interculturalism (NCCRI) made their complaints based on the belief that the article was in direct contravention to Principle 8 of the Press Council Code of Conduct and also, we believed to be in breach of Section 2 of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act (1989). We will await the decision of the Press Ombudsman and will keep you updated of same.

Recent NWCI publications

The NWCI is working with a new design house to produce our publications. FORM, a company based in Dublin has been chosen to

produce all our recent publications. We are very pleased with our working relationship with them and with the quality of the work that they have produced for us this year.

Pensions Research Report – ‘What women want– a model of pensions that guarantees independence’ was launched in May. Available on the website: www.nwci.ie/publications.

NWCI Annual Report 2007: The Annual Report for 2007 was launched at the AGM in June. Available on the website: www.nwci.ie/publications

NWCI Membership Leaflet: A new membership leaflet has been produced for the NWCI. The leaflet is proving popular and we intend to use the leaflet as an information tool and as a means of promoting the organisation to potential new members.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

Women's Lives, Women's Voice -An appreciation of women in Donegal

To mark Donegal Women's Network 10th Anniversary, the Network has compiled this book as an appreciation of women in Donegal. It was recently launched by Michael Daly, Editor in Chief , Donegal Democrat.

For the past six years, a wide range of Donegal women have been writing very movingly about their lives in the "Women's Lives, Women's Voices" column that the Donegal Women's Network contributes to the Donegal Democrat..

The book has also received special recognition from President Mary McAleese, who said in a special message: "The publication of this collection of 'Women's Lives, Women's Voices' articles is a wonderful celebration of this important anniversary. It is a fitting tribute to the women of Donegal, which gives a wonderful overview of the extraordinary wealth of talents of the women of that splendid county."

Donegal VEC and an anonymous donor have contributed to the publication of this book.

"Women's Lives, Women's Voices" costs 7.50 euros and is available from Atlantic View CDP Ballyshannon or Donegal Women's Network, Tel No: (074) 913 2023.

EUROPA Donna Ireland – National Conference

Europa Donna Ireland, The Irish Breast Cancer Campaign

2nd National Conference

SURVIVING BREAST CANCER

27 September 2008

10am – 3pm Alexander Hotel, Dublin 2

EDI is holding its 2nd National Conference, which will be opened by Mary Harney, Minister for Health and Children, and is aimed at highlighting progress and plans in relation to Specialist Breast Centres in Ireland – one year on from the shocking misdiagnosis revelations of 2007. With over 25,000 women living in Ireland following a diagnosis of breast cancer, the conference will focus on follow-up and advocacy in action.

Speakers include:

Judy Caldwell, Founder, Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, British Columbia/Yukon Region

Professor Tom Keane, Acting Director of Cancer Control

Professor Niall O’Higgins, Professor Emeritus, University College Dublin

Dr Tracey Cooper, Chief Executive, Health Information and Quality Authority.

Email: ediconference08@gmail.com

Phone: Deirdre 01 496 0198

www.europadonnaireland.ie

Catkins on the Move, Mobile Childcare Solutions

We aim to remove barriers to participation by providing a flexible childcare service that can travel to you. Our initial target market is “Training Courses” and “Training Centers” whether public or private. There is a recorded low attendance of women at training courses and other events due to the lack of options for short-term childcare, which in turn leads to difficulties in gaining employment. If there is a suitable room available in the same building, we can go there and create a crèche environment for the duration necessary. This has a 2-fold benefit, as the

training providers may get a higher attendance at their courses they provide, and women can access services that previously would not have been possible.

We are not limited to training courses however; we will also be able to attend other events such as

- Weddings
- Conferences
- Corporate Events
- AGMs
- Trade Shows
- Board/Committee meetings
- Family events (birthdays, christenings, funerals)
- Any other suitable venue/event

So if you are organizing an event..

...we can

- transform an area into a suitable crèche environment
- Provide professional qualified garda vetted staff
- Fill your children's day with fun, stories and activities

...if you can provide

- A suitable room
- Venue, date and time!
- Your requirements and number of children

What does it cost?

Cost is determined by

- Numbers of children (child:staff ratios)
- Ages of children (ratios depend on ages of children)
- Location (travel cost to the event)
- Type of event (There is a discount/reduced charge for training services and community services)

Dear Parents...

...we recognize the difficulties with short-term childcare...

Parents and carers alike know that there can be difficulties using short-term childcare services with..

- Initial “settling in” period
- Trusting the “unknown” service

Here are just a few reasons for you to be assured

- Our staff recruitment policy will ensure we hire qualified and experienced workers with recommendations.
- All staff will be garda vetted
- We are a Social Enterprise meaning “not for profit” therefore our primary motive is to provide a high quality service and not making money
- We believe our staff to be our best asset which leads to a good environment in which to work in turn providing a good environment for children

Bookings taken now.

Catkins are based in the midlands area, but can travel

Contact Sinead on 043 41511

Or email sinead@longfordwomenslink.org

Vacancy for Outreach Caseworker at Ruhama

About Ruhama

Established in 1989, Ruhama is a Dublin-based NGO which works with women involved in prostitution. Ruhama (Hebrew for renewed life) regards prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation as violence against women and violations of women’s human rights. We see prostitution and the social and cultural attitudes which sustain it as being deeply rooted in gender inequality and social marginalisation. Grounded

in a Christian perspective which emphasises the value and dignity of every human being, Ruhama works from a position of respect and uncritical acceptance of the women and seeks to actualise belief in their inner capacity to effect change in their own lives.

Vacancy title: Outreach Caseworker

Reports to: Service Manager

Role: To provide support to women involved in prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

Client Group: Women involved in indoor and street prostitution, including women trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Main Tasks

To provide:

- ◆ Outreach services to target group
- ◆ Inward referrals to Ruhama's development and case work team.
- ◆ Outward referrals and accompaniment to ensure women have access to appropriate services.
- ◆ Advocacy, by writing reports and making representation on behalf of the women to relevant authorities.
- ◆ Case work in accordance with Ruhama's model of practice.
- ◆ Outreach van duty (driver) one night per week plus one weekend night per month.
- ◆ Liaison with other service providers to ensure multi-disciplinary intervention.
- ◆ Shared responsibility with the other team members to ensure that the Outreach Van is welcoming, clean and fully supplied at all times and maintenance requirements are reported immediately to relevant staff.
- ◆ Work in accordance with Ruhama's strategic goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

- ◆ Network with key agencies in order to build alliances, share information and develop best practice (while ensuring that the women's anonymity is protected at all times).
- ◆ Contribute to policy development within the organization and support the organization in its efforts to influence public policy and awareness-raising. (Includes presentations to outside agencies)
- ◆ Assist in volunteer and other training programmes and attend volunteer meetings as required.
- ◆ Keep accurate and up to date records of work, including the organization's data base.
- ◆ Prepare monthly and quarterly organizational reports and respond to the reporting needs of funders and other agencies as necessary.
- ◆ Undertake other duties as requested by management

Ruhama is a small organization. Cooperation and flexibility are essential to ensure a consistent high quality service.

Person Specification

Education

Preferably third level qualification in Health or Social Sciences or equivalent professional qualifications.

Essential experience

Experience of working with socially disadvantaged groups / marginalized women / substance mis-users.

Essential Skills required

- Good interpersonal skills and ability to work as part of a team.
- Excellent Communication skills, both oral and written
- Good computer skills
- Comfortable with the outreach approach of "hanging around" in order to make contact with our target group and the ability to recognise when the opportunity is right for the women to make the connection with Ruhama.
- Understanding of client's vulnerability and able to respond
- Responsive to changing situation

Essential qualities

- Respect for the individual ensuring confidentiality and anonymity
- Non judgmental approach
- Flexibility and tolerance
- Willingness to work unsocial hours
- Full Driving Licence and own car

Desirable experience / knowledge

- Understanding of issues related to prostitution and trafficking
- Understanding of issues within the framework of VAW (violence against women)
- Understanding of refugee and asylum process
- Experience of the housing / resettlement of vulnerable / marginalised groups and issues involved
- Experience of community development approaches
- Overall understanding of how the system works

Application procedure

You can find out more about Ruhama's work at our website:

www.ruhama.ie If you would like to apply for this position, please send a cover letter, stating availability and up to date CV to admin@ruhama.ie If you have any queries regarding the role, please contact Mary Mangan, Acting Service Manager on servicemanager@ruhama.ie or telephone 01 836 0292. The deadline for receipt of applications is Friday 15th August and interviews will then be scheduled for the first week of September.

