

A guide to
Effective Lobbying
for Women's groups
in Ireland

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Women's empowerment and their full participation... including participation in the decision-making process and access to power are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace: BPFA 1995:13

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE LOBBYING WOMEN'S GROUPS IN IRELAND

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The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peaceful life for all.

Aung San Suu Kyi
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate leader of
MyanMar's democracy movement

Background

In late 2005, the National Women's Council of Ireland undertook a project to enhance the lobbying capacity of women's groups throughout Ireland. It began by conducting a number of regional training seminars for women's groups with the participation of local politicians.

The development of this handbook has arisen directly from the information obtained at these seminars and was devised bearing in mind the concerns and needs of the participants.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the work of Darra Power-Mooney (MSocSc) in compiling the materials for this handbook and in co-ordinating the regional lobbying training seminars, which formed the basis for this publication. We would also like to express gratitude to the NWCI staff members, in particular, Orla O' Connor (Head of Policy) and Rachel Doyle (Head of Outreach) for their work on this handbook and on the training.

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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to assist women's groups develop an achievable strategy for change. It is intended as a guide to effective lobbying of decision-makers in Ireland and is designed to build the capacity of women's groups across the country to engage with decision-makers and the policy-making process.

The layout of this handbook is set out in stages to support your group in moving from issues to action. Each section contains tips, examples and case studies so as to assist in the development of a lobbying campaign;

STAGE 1

What is Lobbying?

STAGE 2

Understanding how policy is made

STAGE 3

Getting Started on your Lobbying Campaign

STAGE 4

Developing your Campaign

STAGE 5

Lobbying the Right people, the Right Way

STAGE 6

Developing your Media Strategy





STAGE 1

Lobbying and the potential for women's groups

“

We must remember the past, define
the future, and challenge the present,
wherever and however we can.

Jane O'Reilly, Writer

STAGE 1

Describes lobbying and the potential that exists for women's groups to achieve change through participation in the decision-making process.

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying can be described as any direct pressure on decision-makers, with the aim of influencing change through organised action.

Lobbying generally falls into two categories: direct and indirect.

Direct Lobbying involves gaining access to, pressuring and informing key decision-makers about an issue to achieve change, for example face-to-face meetings with TDs.

Indirect lobbying involves attempting to influence decision-makers through the participation of the general public in lobbying action for example letter writing campaigns. This can sometimes be referred to as grassroots lobbying.

Lobbying Activity can take many forms

Direct

- Meeting with politicians and civil servants
- Writing submissions
- Speaking to committees

Indirect

- Letter writing campaigns
- Public protests
- Media activity

Recognising the Potential of your Work

Lobbying by women's groups is an essential tool in ensuring that women's issues are raised at both a local and national level. Eliminating women's inequality requires fundamental change in policy, which occurs only when strong pressure is put on the political system. Informing decision-makers is a key part of effecting change. Lobbying enables the knowledge and experience of groups working with women, become a resource for policy makers when deciding on policy change or on the design of new programmes.

“ Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead, Cultural Anthropologist



“

Legislation is slow to produce and slow to dispose of and there are many points in the process where a good lobbyists' intervention can make all the difference.

Liz McManus Labour T.D.

STAGE 2

Understanding How Policy is Made

STAGE 2

Describes how policy is made and the different groups involved in the policy making process. Understanding at which level decisions are made will enable your group to lobby effectively.

What is Policy?

Policy is a course of action resulting from decisions made by Government.

All policy is interconnected, reflecting a society's social, political, and economic values and beliefs. Policy in Ireland can be made at a local and national level and can be influenced by both European and international policy decisions.

Social Policies are decisions made by Government concerning the redistribution of wealth and mainly relate to economic and social protection during various stages of people's lives, including unemployment, ill health, maternity, child rearing, widowhood, disability and old age.

Who influences Policy?

The development of policy in Ireland requires the involvement of many different stakeholders in society. There are a number of ways policy can be influenced in Ireland: For example:

- A Programme for Government that is agreed upon by a new government and sets out the Goals and objectives of Government for the term of office
- A Legislative Programme: that is published at the start of every Dáil session.
- European Union decisions that are to be adopted into Irish policy
- Consultation and collective decision-making with different stakeholders

The Government may also consult with stakeholders to inform & influence policy.

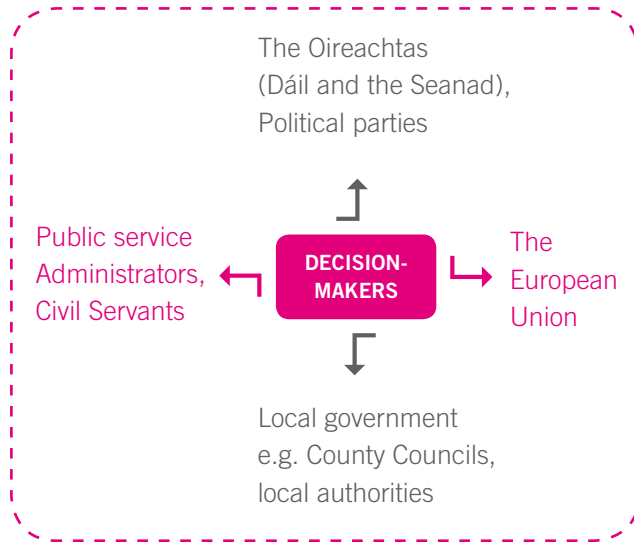
Diagram showing some of the people involved in shaping and influencing policy:



Who Decides Policy?

The drafting and implementing of policies is the responsibility of key decision-makers for example: TDs, Senators, members of political parties, civil servants, the judiciary and those involved in the negotiation and consultation process¹.

Below is a diagram showing the key decision-makers in the policy process:



Policy and Legislation

“ Legislation is slow to produce and slow to dispose of and there are many points in the process where a good lobbyists’ intervention can make all the difference.

Liz McManus Labour T.D.



1 For a further explanation of the political system in Ireland see: Harvey, B. (2002) A guide to influencing policy in Ireland. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.



Your thoughts...

A large rectangular area defined by a dotted line, intended for handwritten notes or thoughts.

STAGE 3

Getting started on your lobbying campaign

“

No matter how righteous the cause there is always a case for looking at the wider effects of political decisions that may be made in response to a case being made.

Liz McManus, Labour Party T.D.

STAGE 3

Describes the steps involved in initiating your campaign. From identifying your issue, to building and gaining support, these steps will enable your group to become clearer on the issues involved, and agree on a common direction for your campaign.

Identifying your issue

The first step in starting a lobbying campaign is identifying the key issues you wish to lobby on: this will allow you to clearly state the aims of your campaign. A useful way to identify the issues involved is to:

- Establish what the problem is
- Find out who has responsibility in the area
- Establish if it is a local or national issue
- Determine who will it affect and why

Defining the scope of the issue will help your group decide the size and form of your campaign. These questions may help you determine the scope of your lobbying campaign:

- What do you want to change or achieve from lobbying?
- What will that changed state look like?
- How will you know when you have achieved it?
- Depending on resources, how large a campaign do you think you can run and for how long?

NWCI CASE STUDY



Identifying Issues and stating aims

The NWCI *Social Welfare Reform and Brown Envelope Campaign*. This campaign began in 2003 with the aim of reforming the Irish social welfare system in relation to women.

The issues important to the campaign were to:

- Make women more financially independent.
- Increase women's access to pensions.
- Enable a greater work life balance and a sharing of care-work in families.
- Make it easier for women to work in all forms of paid employment and allow people working in family businesses to make social insurance contributions.
- Recognise care-work as a job, so that women can build up a social insurance record and qualify for a full contributory pension.

Building Your Case

Building your case requires gathering relevant background and current information about your issue. Showing clear evidence of the need for change and the negative implications of not addressing the issue will assist to convince policy makers of your arguments. Convincing people that your campaign deserves their support requires knowing the issue better than they do!

(i)Gathering information

The first step to building your case is to gather information relevant to your campaign. Assembling information creates a deeper understanding and knowledge of the issues involved in a campaign.

Tip!
See the 'useful resources' and information links section at the back of this handbook!!



Here is a list of some ways to get information and keep up-to-date:

- Organise awareness raising sessions and invite women affected by the issue, particularly women who are most excluded e.g. Traveller women, Migrant Women, women with disabilities
- Read newspapers to keep up to date with what's happening with regard to the issue
- Talk to national organisations which can be a good source of information on policy issues
- Make yourself/group aware of any reports/ documents produced on the issue
- Use your local libraries – they provide free access to the internet

Gather information until you are sure about:

- The facts of the issue – use reliable sources and up to date statistics e.g. the census data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).
- The wider implications of your issue – does your issue impact on other policies e.g. if you were lobbying for more childcare places in your area, think about how the lack of places would impact on other issues such as women's participation in local decision making structures.
- What is the Government's position on the issue? How will this affect your campaign? For example, is the Government refusing to act because of a political reason or an economic one?

(ii) Establishing the Policy Context

Although not essential, it may help your campaign to find out if there are national or international policies that influence your issue. For example: are there human rights agreements, EU law that back up your case? You could do this by discussing your issue with a national organisation, your MEP or a European lobbying organisation such as the European Women's Lobby (EWL). Knowing that your issue has a foundation in international standards or policy will help strengthen the lobbying position.



THINK

- What is the law in this area?
- Does the EU have a directive, position on this issue? eg: The Equal Treatment for Men and Women Directive
- Has Ireland signed any United Nations conventions on this issue e.g. CEDAW or the Beijing Platform for Action?

If decisions have already been made on the issue of concern to you, ask yourself what is wrong with the existing policy.



THINK

- Has it not been implemented as you expected?
- Has it neglected to address a particular area or the needs of a certain section of the community?
- Are the resources insufficient?
- Has it not been implemented fully?
- Would full implementation address your issue?





Creating a Lobbying Document

A lobbying document is a short description of your group and your main objectives. This document can be used at various stages of your campaign from informing decision-makers to gaining support from other groups. Information you have gathered on your issue can be used here.

Things to include:

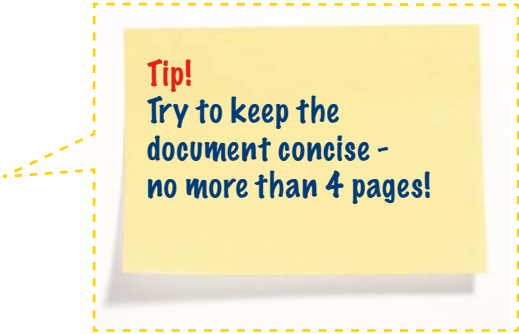
- Who you are and who you represent
- What the problem is
- Who this issue affects
- What needs to be done to solve the problem or improve the situation
- Recommendations for change; that is the course of action you want and the people who need to act.

Style:

- Keep the message short and simple
- Use clear language, aim to educate and inform
- Give your campaign a title – keep it short and have it reflect the purpose of your campaign, for example: The NWCI's 'Social Welfare Reform Campaign'

Before distributing your lobbying document, draw up a mailing list of the people who need to read it, for example:

- Local and national politicians
- Key civil servants and advisors
- Media: local and national journalists
- Allies: local, national or international organisations working on similar issues



Tip!
Try to keep the document concise - no more than 4 pages!



My main advice would be, to be determined and focused on achieving your goal. Don't give up at the first or second "no", use all opportunities to highlight your issue and use the different strengths and contacts of the individuals in your group in a coordinated plan of action.

Jan O'Sullivan, Labour T.D.

STAGE 4

Developing your Campaign

STAGE 4

Involves planning your campaign strategy. This section of the handbook is broken down into 3 steps to help your group decide on the type of campaign you wish to run: → Planning your Lobbying Strategy → Your Campaign Charter → Gaining Support.

Planning your Lobbying Strategy

Now that you have researched your issue and have started to build your case, the next step in developing your campaign is to decide on a lobbying strategy. **A lobbying strategy is a step-by-step guide of how you wish to conduct your campaign and sets out a list of tasks to achieve your goals.**

Here are a number of points to consider when developing your strategy:

- What is the current political climate? What is the political background to this issue? Is the issue currently on the political agenda?
- What groups should we try to get involved in the campaign?
- What will be the role of the media in the campaign? Do we want local or national coverage?
- How will we work to highlight the issue and gain support?
- What contacts do we have already?
- What resources do we have? What resources will we need?
- Who are the key decision-makers regarding your issue?
- Will we lobby local councillors, TDs, MEPs ...?

NWCI SOCIAL WELFARE REFORM CAMPAIGN LOBBYING STRATEGY



1. Outreach and Focus Group Work
2. NWCI member input
3. Meetings with national organisations to gain support and build links
4. Meetings with political parties
5. Media strategy
6. Parliamentary questions
7. Submissions
8. Meetings with decision-makers

Your Campaign Charter

Overleaf is a sample Campaign Charter Document, which when completed will help your group to create its campaign strategy by defining a number of important objectives, roles and responsibilities, actions and issues.



Campaign Charter Document - Campaign Overview

Group Title:		Lobbying Campaign Title:		Timeframe:	
Campaign Issue:					
State below the campaign's link with your group's work:					
Campaign Objectives: What do you hope to achieve?	Long Term	Medium Term		Short term	
Roles and Responsibilities:	Task	Skill Required		Person	
Supporting Organisations					
Campaign Strategy			Campaign Actions		
Strategic Objectives i.e. inform key decision-makers:			Direct Lobbying		Indirect Lobbying
Key Decision-Makers:					
Media Strategy Ways you are planning to raise awareness for your campaign:	Lists of Journalists		Contact details:		
	Local	National			
Success Criteria: List of milestones and dates	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3		Week 4
Constraints: What could prevent your group from achieving its aims?					





Gaining Support

Developing relationships within the community and with different organisations can help to strengthen your campaign. Building alliances and harnessing community support has many benefits for a lobbying campaign, this includes; gaining greater credibility with decision-makers, attracting media attention, exchanging information and establishing a mandate for your group.

(i) Building alliances

Networking allows women's groups to benefit from each other's experience.

Networking or making contact with local, regional and national organisations enables the exchange of ideas and information and could even reduce the amount of work your group needs to do. Working with other groups facilitates the possible formation of a solution for your issue.

Begin by:

1. Finding out which organisations locally or nationally may already be working on this issue or a similar one and may support it
2. Identifying areas of interest in your campaign for other local groups
3. Finding out if there are members of the public who would speak out for your campaign

4. Looking to other areas of Ireland or other countries to see if there is a lobbying campaign similar to that of your groups – find out how they succeeded or where they failed

And remember to:

- Maintain contact with other groups and keep them up to date with your progress!
- Publicly acknowledge any support organisations have given to you.

(ii) Harnessing community support

A campaign that has the support of members of the public can have a greater chance of impacting on decision-makers. Encouraging those in your community to offer their support can give your campaign momentum and help your issue secure publicity.

Here is a list of other ways to get people involved:

Ask people to:

- sign petitions or distribute campaign leaflets,
- write to their local TDs and ministers (see the Tools and Resources section at the end of this handbook)
- to speak to their local politicians at their clinics, on behalf of your campaign
- attend a public meeting or awareness raising session where you discuss the issue and its impact on people.

Tip!

Don't just ask people to help, show them ways to get involved! For example: if you want people to write to their TDs on your behalf provide them with a draft letter they can use to write their own!!

Tip!

Try to get a politician who supports your campaign to attend the public meeting!

CASE STUDY

Building Alliances

The NWCI held a number of meetings with national organisations with the purpose of informing them about the *Social Welfare Reform Campaign*, forming alliances and gathering information and support through their membership. Examples of these organisations were: Age Action, Comhairle, Irish Country Woman's Association (ICA), Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE), National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks (NCCWN), Older Women's Network (OWN), One Family, One Parent and Exchange Network (OPEN), Senior Citizens Parliament.





Your thoughts...

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STAGE 5

Who to Lobby

“

The question isn't who is going to let me;
it's who is going to stop me.

Ayn Rand, visionary writer & philosopher.

STAGE 5

The quickest route into the political process and getting your issue on the political agenda is through lobbying the appropriate people. This section aims to help your group decide who are the people to lobby on your issue and how can they assist you in achieving your goals.

An effective lobbying campaign relies on targeting the relevant people and lobbying at the appropriate level. Before deciding who to lobby it helps to determine where the decisions relating to your issue are made:

THINK

- Does a Government department, a county/town/city council, a designated board or an appointed committee make decisions in this area?
- What is the policy domain? e.g. is it a health, equality or social welfare issue?



A good way of determining who can help is to find out what are the responsibilities of decision-makers.

Local Government

Local Authorities and Councillors:
county, city, town

Local Government in Ireland has both an operational and representational role in your area. Local Authorities in Ireland are local branches of the Irish Government responsible for the provision of a wide range of public services in your area: (i) Housing, (ii) Planning, (iii) Roads, Water Supply and Sewerage, (iv) Development Incentives and Controls, (v) Agriculture, (vi) Education, (vii) Health and Welfare, (viii) Environmental Protection including rivers, lakes, air and noise, (ix) Recreation Facilities and Amenities

Councillors: members of local authorities –
County, city, or town.

How can they help? The role of a Councillor is to represent and respond to the concerns and needs of local communities. Councillors then vote on local issues and are involved in the creation of byelaws.

When to lobby a Councillor: When your issue relates to public services in your area, including the social, economic, environmental, recreational, cultural, community or general development of your area. *For example: the Council may pass resolutions at Council meetings to change charges and rates or decide to build a playground or other local amenities.*

Political Parties

Political parties have advisors, spokespersons and party whips who can all play a role in putting your issue on the agenda. Spokespersons are appointed on major policy issues e.g. health, transport and finance. They help devise party policies and shadow the Government Minister who has responsibility in the area.

Tip!

It can also be important to lobby the junior coalition party in a Government



Political advisors also play an important role in policy formation by providing expert advice to Ministers. Advisors can be useful to a lobbying campaign as they have regular access to Ministers.

Each political party also has a ‘party whip’, who has the responsibility of ensuring that all members vote with the party. They also represent the party line when the party meets in advance of Dáil sittings. A good lobbying technique is to directly lobby a party whip or their colleagues so that your issue can be brought up at these meetings. If successful, this will place your issue on their agenda.

TDs can help a lobbying campaign in a number of ways. They can:

1. Ask questions in the Dáil, including oral & written parliamentary questions (PQs)
2. Introduce a Private Members Bill
3. Veto or halt amendments/changes to a Government Bill
4. Speak on or sign a motion
5. Refer your letter to the relevant Minister: the Minister will then reply to the TD stating the Government’s position on the issue and personally sign the letter
6. Write to a state agency on behalf of your group

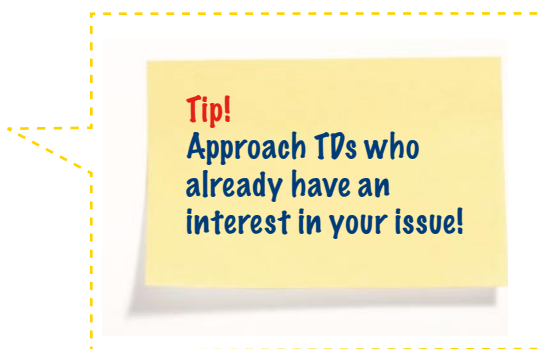
Members of the Seanad

Senators can:

1. Senators can also introduce amendments to Bills in the Seanad, which will then pass back to the Dáil
2. Write to a state agency on behalf of your group
3. Lend credibility and political weight through their support of your campaign
4. Raise your issue with fellow party members

Parliamentary Committees

TDs and Senators have the ability to present topics for debate to a Parliamentary Committee on your behalf or perhaps arrange an opportunity for your group to make a presentation directly to the Committee². Most Committees meet in public session and are televised. These sessions are open to both the media and members of the public.



Who to Lobby in the EU?

The European Union (EU) has played and continues to play a significant role in Irish social policy. The development of policies in the EU involves bargaining among member states, officials and non-governmental actors. The main institutions of the EU, are the Parliament, the Council and the Commission:

European Parliament

If your group wishes to lobby the European Parliament, the easiest way to do so is to contact your local Member of the European Parliament. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by individual member states every five years. Ireland has thirteen MEP seats in the Parliament. Although directly elected by member states, MEPs do not represent national interests. There are seven political groups. The largest of these are the centre-right European People’s Party, followed by the Socialists, the Liberals and the Greens. Presently thirteen Irish MEPs from four constituencies³ sit on various committees of the Parliament; every MEP sits on at least one of the major committees.

² The Oireachtas has power to form committees for specific purposes. There are four types of committee: Standing, Select Joint and Special.

³ Dublin (4 seats), East (3 seats), North West (3 seats), South (3 seats).



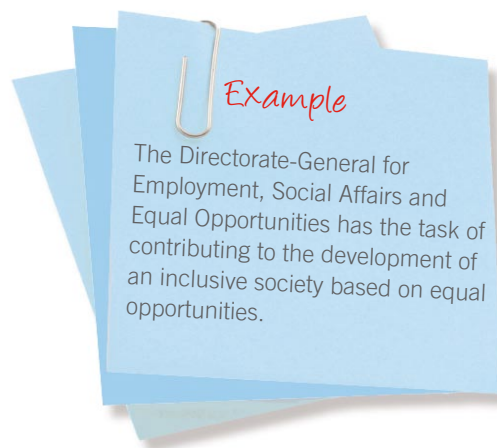


MEPs can:

- Vote on the EU Budget
- Table a Resolution
- Question Legislation
- Make Press Statements
- Influence their political party and their EU political group
- Have power of veto over many EU external agreements with non-EU countries

Other influential people in the EU Parliament:

- **Rapporteurs** – Rapporteurs are MEPs appointed to prepare, discuss and draft an initial presentation to the European Parliament for proposed legislation.
- **Committee Chairs** – There are 20 parliamentary committees which consist of between 25 and 78 MEPs. The role of committee chairs is to coordinate the work of the committees. Committees meet once or twice a month in Brussels and their debates are held in public. The European Parliament Committees conduct much of the work on individual proposals affording them a high profile in the wider decision making process.



European Commission

- Directorates and officials are the bodies to lobby in the Commission. Directorates monitor and evaluate Community directives and regulations and advise governments how to keep domestic policy in line with these regulations.
- Advisors: It is important to try and approach advisors before trying to directly contact high-ranking officials
- Officials in Commissioners' cabinets.

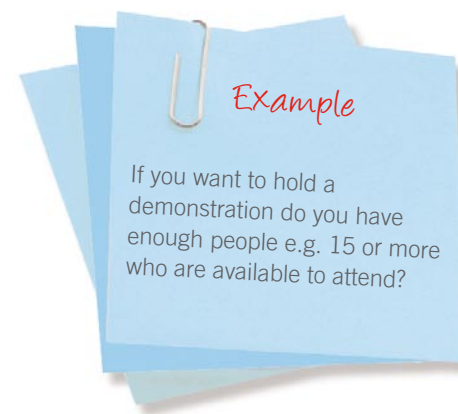
European Council

The Council is made up of the ministers of member states. For example, the "Justice and Home Affairs" group is made up of justice and home affairs ministers. It is through the European Council that member state governments have final say over legislation proposed by the Commission. A high proportion of Council decisions are made by the Committee of Permanent Representatives

(Coreper), which oversees and coordinates the work of some 250 committees and working parties made up of civil servants from the member states.

Campaign Actions

Establishing who to lobby makes it easier to decide what type of campaign you wish to pursue. Lobbying in Ireland does not require large sums of money, for example meeting politicians in clinics, email, letter writing and petitions are all inexpensive ways to campaign. Lobbying however does require people's time. When deciding on which methods you want to use, be sure to take into account the scale of your campaign!

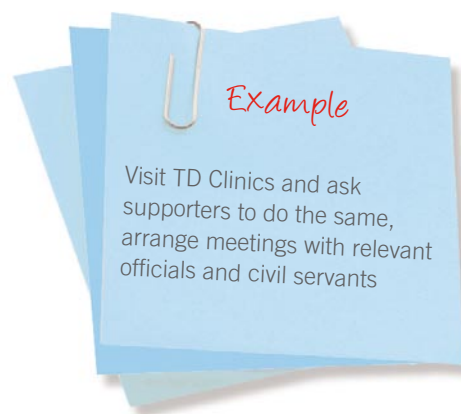


The following is a list of often-used direct lobbying campaign methods; further information and tips on these actions can be found in the Tools and Resources section of this handbook.

Direct Lobbying Actions

- **Submit parliamentary questions:** Parliamentary questions are asked by Dáil Deputies, addressed to a Minister and relate to public or administrative matters. The purpose of parliamentary questions is to find out the position of the Government or the current status of the issue. These questions can be oral or written. Each day, five oral questions are given priority. TDs also submit written questions seeking a written answer. There is no limit to the amount of written questions that a TD can ask the Government. A parliamentary question can be used to raise public awareness about an issue.

→ **Meet with politicians:** According to a recent survey of 150 high level officials within the EU, the best way to communicate information is through personal contact, that is - face-to-face meetings.



- **Write Submissions:** Submissions can be both verbal and written. In most cases, when a consultation process has begun the relevant Government department or body will formally request submissions usually in national newspapers. Examples of times when submissions have been requested are: for the National Anti-Poverty Strategy and the Budget. An example of a submission is the Combat Poverty Agency's Submission 'Towards Equality for Women: Targeted Actions to Tackle Poverty. Submission on the National Plan for Women 2001-2005'.
(See the Tools and Resources section of this handbook for tips on writing a submission).

Indirect lobbying actions:

- **Organise an event:** There are many benefits to holding a well-organised event. An event can gain media attention for your campaign, it can inform the public about your issue and if there is a large turnout it can apply pressure to decision-makers, demonstrating that your campaign deserves their attention.



- **Start a petition:** This is a very easy way of showing decision-makers how much support you have in the community!
- **Write lobbying letters to decision-makers:** Letter writing is a very effective way of communicating your issue with a decision-maker. A well written letter can be used to gain recognition for yourself and your group, and can be an excellent way of arguing your case.





CASE STUDY

Women's Aid '16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women'

Women's Aid holds '16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women' campaign every year, beginning on International Day Against Violence Against Women 25th November and ending on International Human Rights Day, 10th December. In 2005, Women's Aid held The Clothesline Protest outside Government buildings in an attempt to raise issues and seek policy changes in the area. Women's Aid also held an email awareness campaign targeting politicians, the media and trade unions aimed at highlighting their campaign.



Maintaining motivation, energy and interest! Sustainable Activism

To sustain the momentum of your campaign there are a number of steps you may possibly take:

- Set up short-term goals
- Develop achievable aims, be realistic about what you can change bearing in mind time and money
- Invite people from successful campaigns to speak to your group
- Celebrate small victories



One person with a belief is equal to a force of ninety-nine who have only interests.

John Stuart Mill, Philosopher.

STAGE 6

Developing a Media Strategy



During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women.

United Nations Beijing Platform for Action 1995

STAGE 6

The media has a very important role to play in the lobbying process and a successful lobbying campaign is often dependent on the media for awareness raising and information dissemination. This section aims to assist your group in developing its own media strategy. It also gives tips on ways to attract media attention such as writing press releases, holding press conferences and carrying out interviews.

Women and the Media

“ During the past decade, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women

United Nations Beijing Platform for Action 1995

What is the ‘Media’?

The word ‘media’ refers to methods of mass communication reaching large audiences. Modern media includes television, local and national newspapers, local, community and national radio, magazines and the Internet. The role of the media in society is to distribute information, inform citizens and record events.

Why is the media so important to a lobbying campaign?

The media has the power to sway public opinion and rouse support for a particular campaign and can be a useful way to judge public opinion by reporting on opinion polls and letters pages. It is also important to remember that the Government formally monitor the media to gauge public reaction to decisions.

In addition, the media can provide a forum for debate, which can create pressure on decision-makers and even force action. This can be done in a number of ways

For example:

- Letters pages
- Television debates
- Radio phone-in shows

Devising a Media Strategy

In order to attract media attention you must do or say something newsworthy. News is anything that people are interested in. Devising a media strategy should help your group develop ways of attracting the media and prepare your campaign for any publicity you may receive. Below are a number of ways to help your group manage the media:

- Identify your audience – whom do you want to reach?
- Prepare 3 key messages, which can be repeated throughout interviews and press releases. These messages can be drawn from your lobbying document
- Develop case studies: Real life examples can make your issue relevant to many people in different sectors of society
- Appoint a spokesperson, who is knowledgeable about the issue
- Identify and brief local journalists on your campaign – give your contact details
- Propose articles to local journalists
- Write letters to letters pages of both local and national newspapers
- Try to arrange appearances on local radio
- Consider setting up a website and invite comments from the public



TIMING - Be aware of deadlines: Check with each paper what their deadline is for receiving press releases. Each paper will be different, so be sure to check.

Contacting the Media

When you have an idea of who your target audience is it becomes clearer what type of media you should contact! Select the type of media based on its readership/ listenership or past history of covering similar stories. Timing is also important; you will receive greater attention if your issue is topical or can be related to something already in the news.

If you find that there is little media attention for your group, be inventive. For example:

- Stage a debate in your area with speakers for and against your issue, the more well known the people involved the greater your chance of media coverage

- Release a letter to journalists that has been sent to your group from decision-makers which shows support for your group
- Hold an event e.g. a public meeting in your area!

First impressions are important; when calling a journalist remember to:

- Ask if they have time to speak with you
- State who you are and who you represent
- Explain the objectives of your campaign
- Ask them if you can send on a press release and get correct contact details.
- Do they require further information?

Attracting the Media

There are many ways to attract media attention for your group including writing a press release, holding a press conference, writing letters to editors and radio and television interviews. Below are some examples and tips on getting attention for your campaign:

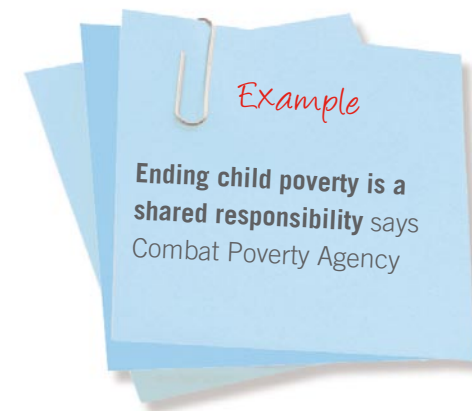
1. Writing a Press Release

The purpose of a press release is to get media attention when announcing or responding to a newsworthy event. The media use press releases in a number of ways:

- as a source of information where the facts and background provide a basis for the story
- as a basis for an interview with someone from your group
- as a direct quote for an article

Things to remember when writing a press release:

- Begin with a strong headline, one sentence with no more than 10 words that will grab the reader's attention and summarise the information



- Try to include the title of your group in the banner headline!
- Information in the release must be in descending order of importance, that is the most important information first
- The press release must follow the general rule of including: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?





- The body of the release should contain some important facts or background to the issue. Keep this short and only write what is interesting and most important to your campaign
- Editor's notes- these appear at the end of a press release to give background information about your campaign or your group

Format of a press release:

- A press release should be no more than a page and a half, don't panic if it goes to 2 pages but it should never go to 3!
- Use clear and simple language, avoid jargon and use the active voice, for example write 'We find the current situation unacceptable' rather than 'The current situation is unacceptable'
- Use quotes throughout the release. This will make it more interesting to read and helps you to get important points across.



- It is recommended that a press release be typed using 1.5 spacing and a minimum 12 font size with a clear typeface, for example: Arial 12 pt
- The heading should be 14 font size and in bold (See Tools and Resources Section for a sample Press release)

Things to remember when sending a press release

- When emailing a press release remember to send the information in the body of the email and not as an attachment (attachments are not always opened!)
- Be careful of logos and clip art when sending an email – logos can sometimes appear as an attachment may cause your document to be rejected
- Phone around to see if people have received the press release.

2. Press Conferences

A press conference can be an excellent way of attracting the media to, and raising awareness of your lobbying campaign. Holding a press conference invites the media to listen to your group's message, ask questions and circulate the information. During a press conference, one or more speakers make a statement and then take questions from journalists.

A successful press conferences relies on the attendance of journalists and photographers. Here are a number of tips to help secure their attendance:

- Send out a press notice – a press notice alerts journalists to something coming up and may be sent as 'A Date for your Diary'. The notice should be sent out one week in advance and include the time, date, venue and your contact details
- Schedule the conference according to what time of day is most likely to suit journalists – where possible mid morning and early to mid week is usually best!
- Hold the conference in a central location or one that is easily accessible
- Ring around journalists the morning of the conference as a reminder
- Provide a press pack for journalists. The 'press pack' should include the press release sent out and any additional background information on the issues, on speakers attending and any other relevant information
- Keep the conference short and allow time for questions
- Make a note of those who attended by way of a 'sign-in sheet' for journalists and follow up with further information and future communications

3. Letters to the Editor

A letter to an editor of a national, local or regional paper can serve many important functions for your campaign; for instance a published letter can stimulate a debate and inform the wider public around the issues central to your campaign. Here are a number of suggestions to consider when drafting a letter to an editor:

- Keep the letter as brief as possible
- Make sure that all information is up to date and accurate
- Make a strong argument around how your issue impacts on the wider society
- State what changes you wish to see occur
- Where possible use examples to illustrate your argument
- Remember that papers differ as do their audiences so bear this in mind when drafting your letter
- Mention groups or well-known people who are supporting your campaign

And remember:

- Editors will often edit your letter!

4. Radio and Television Interviews

Radio and television interviews are a great opportunity for your group to deliver its message to a wide audience. It is important to note that an interview is usually edited down to between 10 and 30 seconds when pre-recorded, so be brief and practice getting your point across in this space of time.

When the call comes for an interview...

Ask

- What is the date and time of the interview?
- Where will it be held?
- Will there be a panel? If so, Who will be on it?
- Will it be live or pre-recorded?
- Do they have your correct name and title?
- Who is the interviewer?

Before an interview

- Practice your responses with a member of your group
- Draft a list of the three key positive points or messages that you would like the public to know
- Perhaps have an event planned so you can advertise it

Tips!

- **If you are unprepared, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for some time and call back later.**
- **If you are asked to partake in a radio or television interview do not be afraid to ask for sample questions**
- **Make sure your name and position are correct**
- **In a taped interview, remember you can ask to rephrase your answer if you are unhappy with it.**
- **Answer in short sentences and stick to the point**
- **Try not to get drawn off your point**
- **If you are unsure of something say so – do not feel pressurised into giving an answer.**
- **Try to speak in a conversational tone**
- **Avoid over-answering and using jargon**
- **Never say 'No Comment'**
- **And be positive!!**

Tips for television interviews

Television is a visual method of communication and therefore appearance is important.

Remember:

- **Wear a solid colour – avoid black, stripes or patterns!**
- **Speak to the journalist and not the camera**





Compiling a Campaign Media Resource

Your group should consider creating a media resource accessible to all members of your group. Information on your media strategy could be compiled and be readily available to people involved in your campaign.

Below are a number of suggestions of information to include in your media folder:

- a folder containing all the contact information of local and national news desks, Government press offices, political parties' press offices, local councillors and TDs.
- a record of which journalists you have spoken to and their contact details
- a list of all the questions likely to be asked with answers
- cuttings from any interview or media coverage your group has had
- a short page outlining the history of your organisation and the background to your campaign
- supportive material: useful statistics, relevant research, facts and comparative studies
- Areas of interest for various journalists

Do's and Don'ts

Do –

- Build relationships with journalists and keep them informed of events
- Be aware of poor journalism and inaccurate reporting. Your message could be misrepresented to provide a more sensational topic, this could do damage to your campaign
- Be available throughout the day
- Return calls or you may miss your chance
- Remember – 'Everything is on the Record' - never assume otherwise
- Remember demonstrations are commonplace and are not always considered newsworthy

Don't –

- Agree to participate in an interview if you are unprepared
- Assume the media will just turn up – there is a lot of competition for the spot light so make sure you let journalists know Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?

“

For what is done or learned by one class of women becomes, by virtue of their common womanhood, the property of all women.

Elizabeth Blackwell, physician. First woman to receive an MD from an American College.

Tools and Resources

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The section is full of tools to help you start campaigning! From letter writing tips to ideas on holding an event, this part of the handbook aims to give easy examples of ways you can begin to lobby!

How to write a letter to decision-makers?

Below are a number of points to remember when writing to a politician:

1. Be brief, clear and to the point. Letters should be no longer than one page
2. In the first paragraph state who you are, the name of your group, who you represent
3. State the issue and what you are lobbying for, supported by one or two statistics
4. State what you want the person to do
5. If meeting a TD, explain the local impact of the issue
6. Offer the person further information on the issue
7. Ask for a reply. If you do not receive a reply, draft a follow up letter enclosing your original letter
8. If you receive a standard letter, and are dissatisfied, draft a follow up letter, stating again your objectives, and your willingness to continue lobbying
9. If you have networked with other groups, ask them to send a similar letter to the representative in support of your campaign or ask other groups and allies to sign your letter for added impact

See sample letter overleaf.

Tip!

Build on a politician's work by sending a supporting letter if they are already working on the issue!



Sample Lobbying Letter

Name: Minister Brian Cowen T.D.
Address: Dept of Finance,
Government Buildings
Upr Merrion St.
Dublin 2

Dear Minister Cowen,

I am writing to express my concern about the Irish Governments' continued lack of recognition of women in the Irish social welfare and employment structures.

Women have contributed substantially to the creation of Ireland's wealth by juggling paid employment with unpaid care work; yet organisational structures and the structure of the social welfare system have not changed to accommodate women. This is not sustainable for society or desirable for women and their families.

The feminisation of poverty continues to rise, with 50% of women aged 65 years and older at risk of poverty compared to 36% of men. 95% of all qualified adults are women and the social welfare system reinforces women's dependence on men for income. **The problems in the system affect everyone in unpaid care work, part-time and atypical workers, lone parents and qualified adults; the majority of whom are women.**

Every person has the right to economic independence through employment or social welfare and this needs to be realised in your term of office.

I am calling on you Minister Cowen to work with the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D. and the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Michéal Martin T.D. to make the following changes happen:

Recognition of Women's Care Work
Recognising the Labour Market Reality of Women's Atypical Employment
Pensions: Provision for Older Women without Individual Pension Rights

Looking forward to receiving your response on these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Signed _____

Date _____

How to draft a submission

A well-researched and costed submission can have a high impact on policy-makers. Below are the steps your group will need to take in order to make an effective submission:

1. Identify the relevant authority – who will be reading this document?
2. Check to see if the authority has provided their own guidelines for writing submissions
3. State who you are and who you represent and how long you have been in existence
4. Identify the problem and be as concise as possible
5. Base the submission on information from your lobbying document
6. Provide credible evidence for your concerns, cite/reference current and accepted research be sure to include only what people need to know as opposed to nice to know
7. Use graphs and charts where possible
8. Provide possible solutions, explain what could happen if they are not adopted
9. Don't forget to publicise the submission; email, mail out, local newspapers
10. Attach a case study to highlight the effects of your issue





How to Present a Submission

The Oireachtas or local authority committees may ask your group to present a submission to them. The information to be included is the same as in a written submission; however the style is different. Submissions are for a readership whereas presentations are for a listenership. Here are a few tips for presenting your submission:

1. Bring a one page summary of your submission for the members of the committee
2. Find out who is on the committee
3. Use short sentences
4. Keep the language simple, avoid jargon
5. Use examples
6. Practice your presentation in front of your group and ask them to consider questions you might be asked
7. Speak slowly and clearly

How to get the most from meeting with decision-makers

If you are involved in local community groups or projects you should consider inviting your local representative to visit your group. Alternatively you can write a formal letter requesting an appointment. Below are a number of points to consider when meeting with decision-makers:

Things to do before the meeting:

1. Have a group meeting and agree on a delegation. Decide what needs to be said, who will say each point and who is the person with the most expertise on the issue
2. Research - aim to be better informed than the person you are meeting
3. Appoint a spokesperson, who will speak for the group and guide the meeting
4. Prepare a list of ways this person may help your campaign
5. Prepare an information pack for the person you are meeting which will include your contact details

In the Meeting:

1. Explain the current situation and why you requested the meeting
2. Explain how you would like this person to help your campaign
3. Discuss how the issue will impact on their constituency
4. Mention if your group has support from other interest groups at a local or national level
5. Try to establish the party position on the issue
6. If there is an upcoming election, mention how many voters are affected by this issue
7. Discuss the level of media interest in your campaign for example; has there been any letters in local or national newspaper?
8. Does the issue impact on the decision-maker personally in any way?

9. Be direct and respond with reasoned argument
10. Listen. You may receive advice as to your next step!
11. Send a thank you note to your representative regardless of the outcome of the meeting, and write down the key points you spoke on
12. Send on further information

CASE STUDY

During the course of the *Social Welfare Reform Campaign*, the NWCI held many meetings with decision-makers. The campaign focused around a specific target – the Government and specifically the Minister for Finance Brian Cowen TD. Other decision-makers targeted were the Minister for Social & Family Affairs. Seamus Brennan and advisors within the Department.



How to draft a parliamentary question

A Parliamentary question is usually topical and serves to introduce or further a debate that the public are interested in. Parliamentary questions give a Minister an opportunity to respond publicly on an issue s/he is responsible for. Parliamentary questions can be oral or written.

Oral Questions

Oral questions are posed to the Minister during 'Question Time'. Ministers answer these questions about every 5 weeks during a Dáil session.

A written record is maintained of both the question and the answer in the Official Report of Parliamentary Debates and more recently on the Houses of the Oireachtas website, within 24 hours.

- Oral questions asked by Dáil deputies have to be addressed to the relevant Government Minister who is held accountable for all actions within her/his department.
- Five questions can be nominated for priority each Dáil day.
- Oral questions must be submitted four days in advance.

Written

These questions are answered by a written reply and they are published in the same manner as the oral questions. Any number of written questions can be asked; the more questions asked about a particular issue the more it reflects the level of public concern.

In order to submit a written or oral question, contact the office of your local TD.

Tip!
Try to keep your question to a small number of words as it increases the likelihood of it being asked and possibly even answered.



SAMPLE PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

Parliamentary Question for written answer to Minister for Finance Mr. Brian Cowen TD, from the NWCI, asked by Joe Higgins, Independent T.D.

'To ask the Minister for Finance if in the upcoming Finance Bill he will make provisions for childminding relief to be linked to social insurance in order that all childminders will be covered under Class S and that all of their income will be included for social insurance purposes'.





How to organise an event

A successful event can also re-ignite motivation within your group and can possibly attract volunteers. The best course of action is to plan your event in stages.

1. Consider asking a local representative or prominent politician to attend or speak at your event.
2. Don't forget to advertise your event in advance.
3. Write to local and national journalists and let them know about the event (see the section on 'how to write a press release').
4. What kind of equipment will you need on the day? banners, loudspeakers, microphones, chairs, tables etc

Types of Events:

- Marches: A march is a good way to gain publicity for your campaign and allows a large number of supporters to participate.
- Exhibitions: An exhibition of visual material for example photographs, paintings, drawings by children or films can illustrate your message in a way that is accessible to large numbers of people.
- Setting up tables: Setting up a table in your area can give passers-by an opportunity to sign a petition, join your campaign or learn about your issue and the work of your group. Have leaflets and information at hand to distribute.

Event checklist:

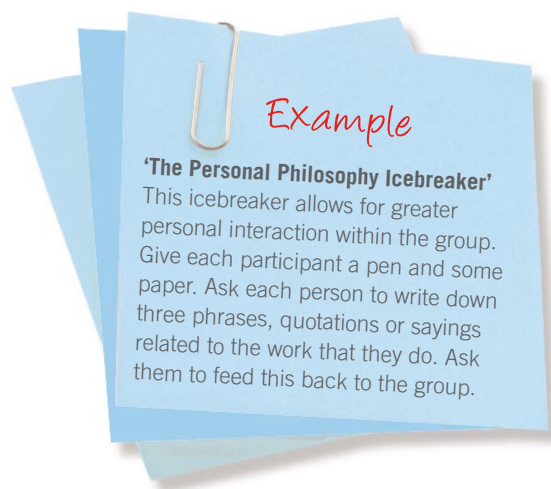
An event checklist is an essential tool for organising your event. Ask each person with a specific task to draw up their own checklist and appoint a coordinator to oversee these lists. Here is an example of a basic checklist:

Sample Checklist

Activity	Person Responsible	Deadline
Book Venue		
Check Disability Access		
Arrange Speakers		
Mail out of invitations to supporters/members		
Press Notice Out ('Date for your Diary' for Journalists)		
Advertise Event		
Press release		
Media Calls		
Organise information stand		
Book photographer		
Running Order of Event		
Media information pack		
Registration of attendees on the day – sign-in sheet		
Meet & Greet speakers & attendees		
Registration		

How to Hold Meetings

By its very nature lobbying and campaigning will require many meetings with many people, not just decision-makers but meetings within your organisation and meetings with other groups or members of the community. Overleaf are a number of tips to consider when deciding to hold a meeting. A good way to start any meeting is with an 'icebreaker'. An icebreaker is an activity designed to remove tension from the room, relax and allow participants to get to know each other.



In order to help your group get the most out of staff meetings or community meetings there are a number of steps you should consider:

1. Have an agenda, which will guide the meeting and let topics follow in a natural order
2. Appoint a chairperson to keep the meeting in order and stick to the agenda
3. Designate a note taker
4. Try to manage the meeting by keeping it short, sticking to the agenda and only allowing a certain amount of time for discussion
5. Suggest an informal discussion after the meeting to allow people express their opinions or ask them to email or write to you in the future
6. Begin a meeting stating what decisions were made arising out of the last meeting – to prove that they are not a waste of time
7. End the meeting by reminding everyone present what decisions have been taken & agreements made. If specific actions have been agreed, clarify who is responsible for carrying them out & by when



Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

16 July 2004

IRELAND GETS RICHER, AS WOMEN LOSE OUT

"The results of the UN Human Development Report is further evidence of the Government's lack of action and commitment to women's rights in Ireland," stated Orla O'Connor, Head of Policy at the National Women's Council of Ireland after the launch of the UN Human Development Report. The NWCi has called on the Government to change its priorities and focus on women, particularly women living in poverty in Ireland.

Despite the fact that Ireland is placed 10th in the 'Human Development Index', which measures quality of life, our country remains one of the most unequal societies of all western nations. The report has shown that this is particularly true for women, who have clearly been left behind.

The 'Gender Related Index', which compares men and women, in a number of key areas, including 'Estimated Earned Income', places Ireland 14th (UK is 9th). The Report highlights that women are earning significantly less than men in Ireland (40% less). The NWCi feels that it is no coincidence therefore, that Ireland drops to 16th place on the 'Human and Income Poverty Index', which looks at people living below the poverty line. Orla O'Connor, Head of Policy at the NWCi stated: "In Ireland, the majority of people living below the poverty line are women. The fact is that women have been at greater risk of poverty than men, since the 1990s. Sadly, this situation is not changing, despite Ireland's unprecedented growth rates."

The NWCi also highlighted the 'Gender Empowerment Measure' in the Report, which places Ireland 16th. The measure relates to women's representation, and women in decision-making positions, in comparison to men. "The result of the Gender Empowerment Measure comes as no surprise to the NWCi" stated Ms O'Connor.

"51% of our population are women, but only 13.3% of those elected to the Dáil are women. At this rate, it would take 370 years for the percentage in the Dáil to reach 50%" she continued. The NWCi has long been calling on all political parties to introduce measures to increase the number of women in decision-making positions in Ireland.

"The UN Report highlights the serious implications of inequality for many women in Ireland today. It is about time the Government changed its priorities and focused on women, and in particular on marginalised women living in poverty" concluded Ms O'Connor.

Contact:

NWCi Communications Officer, 01 878 7248



APPENDIX 1

The Legislative Process

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

1. A Minister will make a proposal to the Cabinet and if agreed upon, the text of the Bill will be drawn up.
2. The Bill is then sent to TDs and Senators for discussion.
3. The Bill is then presented to the Dáil or Seanad by the Minister for discussion. If consultation proceeded the drafting of a Bill, then the Minister will then discuss the outcome of this process.
4. The Opposition parties then comment on the Bill.
5. The next stage is the Committee Stage. The Committee is usually made up of select members of the Seanad or Dáil or it could be all members of the Dáil. It is here that amendments are proposed.
6. The Report Stage- this involves further discussion and voting on amendments.
7. The Bill is then sent to the Seanad for further discussion.
8. When both the Dáil and the Seanad pass the Bill, it is then sent to the President, where s/he can either sign the Bill into law or refer it to the Supreme Court to test its Constitutionality.
9. If the Bill is passed then it becomes an Act.





**USEFUL
RESOURCES**

USEFUL RESOURCES

This useful resources section aims to provide women's groups with a list of website address, contact details and recommended reading to assist in developing your lobbying campaign and gathering practical information.

The Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

Name	Telephone and Fax Number	Website/ Email Address
Houses of the Oireachtas, Leinster House, Dublin 2, Ireland	(01) 618 3000	info@oireachtas.ie
Dáil Éireann	1890 337 889	www.irlgov.ie
Seanad Éireann	1890 732 623	info@oireachtas.ie
Members of the Oireachtas	(01) 618 + extension number	firstname.surname@oireachtas.ie

Press Offices of the Government and Political Parties

Political Party	Tel (01)	Fax (01)	e-mail
Government Press Office	678 9118	676 3302	press.office@taoiseach.gov.ie
Fianna Fáil	618 3297	618 4164	press@media.fiannafail.ie
Fine Gael	618 3379	618 4144	fgmedia@indigo.ie
The Labour Party	618 3462	618 4151	press@labour.ie
Progressive Democrats	618 3615	679 4162	soshea@oireachtas.ie
The Green Party	618 4088	618 4190	steve.rawson@oireachtas.ie
Sinn Féin	618 4276	618 4210	sfpress@eircom.net
Socialist Party	677 2592	677 2592	info@socialistparty.net
The Workers' Party	874 0716	874 8702	wpi@indigo.ie



Media Resource:

Irish Media Contacts Directory (2005) published by Media Information Services P.O. Box 8250, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland.
To order a copy of the Irish Media Contacts Directory, telephone (01) 284 5892.

Government Advisory Bodies and Agencies

Name	Function	Website Address
OASIS: Online Access to Services, Information and Support	OASIS is a Government website, it provides information on a variety of topics including your rights, the Government of Ireland and other public services.	www.oasis.gov.ie
NESC: National Economic and Social Council	NESC advises the Government on economic and social development. The Council is made up of nominees from the social partners as well as representatives from Government departments.	www.nesc.ie
NESF: National Economic and Social Forum	NESF monitors and evaluates the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving equality and social inclusion	www.nesf.ie
Equality Authority	The Equality Authority is the statutory agency working towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, disability, race, religion, marital status, family status, sexual orientation and membership of the Traveller community.	www.equality.ie
Comhairle	Comhairle is the national support agency responsible for the provision of information, advice and advocacy on social services. Comhairle provides citizens information, social policy and research information.	www.comhairle.ie
NCCRI: National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism	An independent body focusing on racism and interculturalism bringing together government and non-government organisations.	www.nccri.ie
NDA: National Disability Authority	The NDA is the statutory agency which advises the Government on disability policy. It also undertakes research on disability in Ireland and monitors the implementation of codes and standards aimed at promoting equality for people with disabilities.	www.nda.ie
CSO: Central Statistics Office	Specialist national statistical agency responsible for co-ordinating official statistics of other public authorities and for developing the statistical potential of administrative records	www.cso.ie
CPA: Combat Poverty Agency	Combat Poverty is the sole national statutory organisation in Ireland dedicated to advising on ways to prevent and eliminate poverty and social exclusion.	www.cpa.ie





Information on Europe

Name	Website / Address	Information Provided	Useful for
Europa	www.europa.eu.int	The official European Union website offering comprehensive details about the institutions and policies of the EU.	Information about the structures and people in the EU.
European Women's Lobby (EWL)	www.womenlobby.org Tel +32 2 217 90 20 Fax: +32 2 219 84 51 Email: ewl@womenlobby.org	A non-governmental organisation that brings together over 4000 women's organisations across Europe.	Information and resources for women's groups across Europe and information on equality policy developments.
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18 Ireland Tel: (01) 2043100 Fax: (01) 2826456/ (01) 2824209	The Foundation is a European Union body, providing information, advice and expertise – on living and working conditions, industrial relations and managing change in Europe.	The Information Centre provides staff, researchers and visitors access to the Foundation's own and external information sources. European Policy documents and extensive research facility.
"Definitive guide to lobbying the European Institutions"	www.euractiv.com	2005 edition of the Burson-Marsteller guide to lobbying in Europe	Explanation of the way lobbying is conducted in Brussels.
European Anti-Poverty Network	Ireland www.eapn.ie or www.eapn.org	This is the Irish branch of the European anti-poverty network, whose aim is to put poverty on the national and European Agenda and to link groups fighting for the eradication of poverty.	Resources and information guides on a wide variety of topics including a free media skills manual.

Your thoughts...



Your thoughts...

A large rectangular area defined by a dotted border, intended for handwritten notes or thoughts.

www.nwci.ie

The National Women's Council of Ireland
9 Marlborough Court
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

t: 01 8787248
f: 01 8787301

info@nwci.ie

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