



National Women's Council of Ireland  
Comhairle Náisiúnta na mBan in Éirinn

# WOMEN FOR CHANGE

A resource for women's groups  
& women working for social change  
and equality at local level

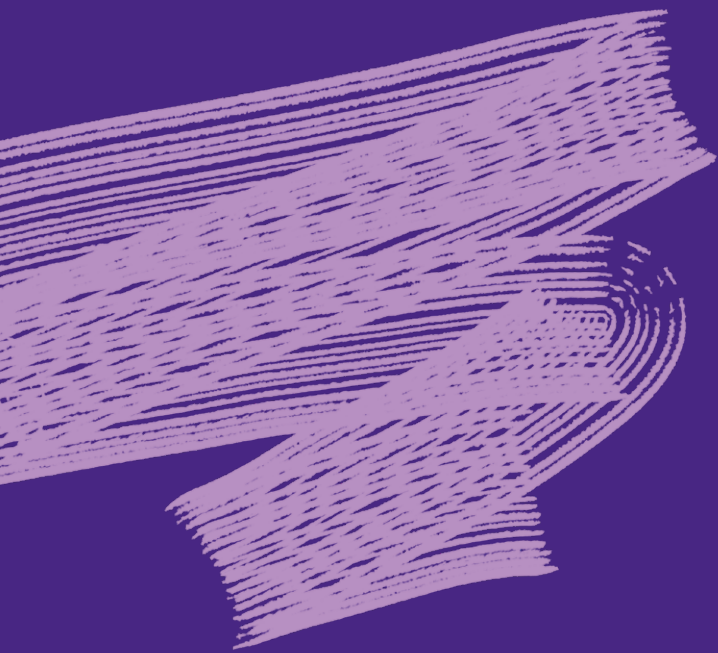
**September 2019**



# CONTENTS

<b>I</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
	Purpose of this Guide	1
	Context for Womens Inequality in Ireland	1
	Women for Change	2
<b>II</b>	<b>WORKING FOR CHANGE</b>	<b>6</b>
	Lobbying	6
	Policy	8
	Using Local Media and Social Media	17
	Government Commitments and Frameworks	21
<b>III</b>	<b>GROUP EXERCISES</b>	<b>24</b>
	Skills Bank and Group Matrix	24
	Exploring Feminism, Diversity and Inclusion	26
	Using Social Analysis to explore women's equality issues	27
	Campaign Planning	28
	Evaluation	29
<b>IV</b>	<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>31</b>
	Key Terms Explained	31
	Useful Contacts	32
	Acknowledgements	33

*“It’s great to have a space for women to come together to share their own experiences, their stories and their strategies for bringing about change.”*





# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of this Guide

This guide, we hope will act as a useful resource to all women's groups seeking to bring about positive change in women's lives and in the communities they live in. It outlines practical steps involved in moving from ideas to action and tools to bring your campaign and action forward. It is essential that women's organisations and organisations working to address women's equality develop opportunities to discuss the effects of national policy at a local level and whether the policy is making a direct difference to the lives of women. The guide explains the how of lobbying, influencing policy and includes useful tips, resources and exercises you can use in your own work.

## About the National Women's Council of Ireland

Established in 1973, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) is the leading national women's membership organisation in Ireland. NWCi seeks full equality between men and women and we draw our mandate from a membership of over 190 groups and organisations across a diversity of backgrounds, sectors and locations. We also have a growing, committed individual membership.

This work is kindly supported by the Department of Rural and Community Development through the Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) administered through Pobal.

## Context for Women's Equality in Ireland

Inequalities between men and women continue to be persistent and far reaching and pervasive. A continued undervaluing and marginalisation of women and women's groups is evident at local level. Women are frequently multiply disadvantaged by policies that do not recognise their different realities and lived experiences including unequal pay, responsibilities at work and home, and gender-based violence.

- Lone parent households (86.4% of lone parents are women) had a deprivation rate in 2017 of 44.5% and a consistent poverty rate of 20.7%.
- The gender pension gap is 26%.
- 70% of people employed part-time are women.
- Childcare costs in Ireland are the second highest in the OECD for couples and the highest in the OECD for lone parents.
- On over 3,981 occasions in 2016, women's domestic violence services were unable to accommodate women and their children because the refuge was full or there was no refuge in their area.
- The rate of female homelessness is 44% nationwide and 47% in Dublin – we have the highest rate of women's homelessness in Europe.
- Just 23% of councillors are women and in total only 8 women have served as CEOs of local authorities.

**Women are more likely to be poor, to parent alone, to be the main provider of unpaid care work, to be in precarious employment, to earn low wages and to be at risk of domestic or sexual violence.**

## About Women for Change

NWCI together with nine of our member organisations<sup>1</sup> were successful in receiving funding under Training Links<sup>2</sup> in June 2018. We formed a steering group to oversee and inform the project development. The project brought together a diversity of women who are currently involved or are interested in getting more involved in representation and participation in their local communities together, to access training, peer support and advocate for women's equality and social change. The project aims were:

- To provide women across the country with the necessary skills and analysis to have their voices heard, build their confidence and expertise in their project work and community work for the benefit of local communities
- To support NWCI policy development
- To develop and support leadership among women to be advocates for women's equality issues.

## The Rationale

Women have played and continue to play a central role in the development of communities in both rural and urban areas. The significant contribution that women make to local communities has traditionally been unrecognised and undervalued and has rarely been reflected in structures of representation. Despite some advances for some women in Irish society, there has been very slow progress in women's representation within decision making structures at local and regional level in Ireland. Under-representation and influence of women has and continues to be a negative and persistent feature of local decision making and structures. Real and effective participation means that women are closely involved in the processes that affect their lives be they economic, social, cultural or political. If women are not supported to participate in local decision making structures, then the diverse interests of women will not be represented. There are formalised routes to participation organized by the Government. However campaigning and advocacy are all parts of the participatory democratic process.

*“So far the course has been great. There's some good diversity in the group which is exactly what I was looking for.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> Community Work Ireland, National Collective of Community Based Womens Network, IRD Duhallow/ Duhallow Womens Forum, National Traveller Womens Forum, Longford Womens Link, Women4Women/ Southside Partnership, Cultur Migrant Project, West Clare Family Resource Centre, Carlow County Development Partnership

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wheel.ie/training/training-links-programme-2018-2019>

## Diversity of Women

Given women's differing experiences and interests, it is both impossible and undemocratic for a small minority of women to represent the needs of all women. There is a clear need for diversity of representation amongst women and men. Government policy needs to recognise that women come from different backgrounds and have differing needs and concerns. Decision-makers often regard women as a homogenous group causing differences between women to be lost, ignoring differences in class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, age, sexual orientation and abilities.

There are a number of serious consequences for a system that excludes the majority of women. Firstly, the assumption is made that women's interests are homogeneous, with the result that the needs of differing groups of women may be ignored. Secondly, a small number of women cannot possibly perform a representative function on behalf of such a broad range of women. Thirdly, there is no possibility that marginalised women will have the opportunity to represent their own needs and interests.

Real participation also implies a commitment to provide the supports necessary for participation to be meaningful. Women constantly refer to the same key barriers preventing them from participating equally to men, childcare and care supports, lack of accessible public transport, traditional male systems of organisation, a lack of statutory paid family friendly policies and a lack of formal education amongst poorer women. If women in general, experience structural barriers preventing them from becoming involved in all levels of decision making, then the only women who will be able to overcome those barriers, will be those who are economically, socially and culturally advantaged. Inevitably this will and has led to unequal outcomes for women.



Mayo Women for Change



Navan Women for Change

## The Process

We put out a call for expressions of interest among our own membership and through our communication channels, online and through our newsletter. We worked closely with the members in the steering group to support local engagement, facilitate the participation of women and to use their local knowledge.

Generally in each area, we invited women who are:

- involved in local communities
- want to shape a more equal community for women
- taking on leadership roles on an issue or campaign in their local area
- and who are representing their community or project on a decision making structure.

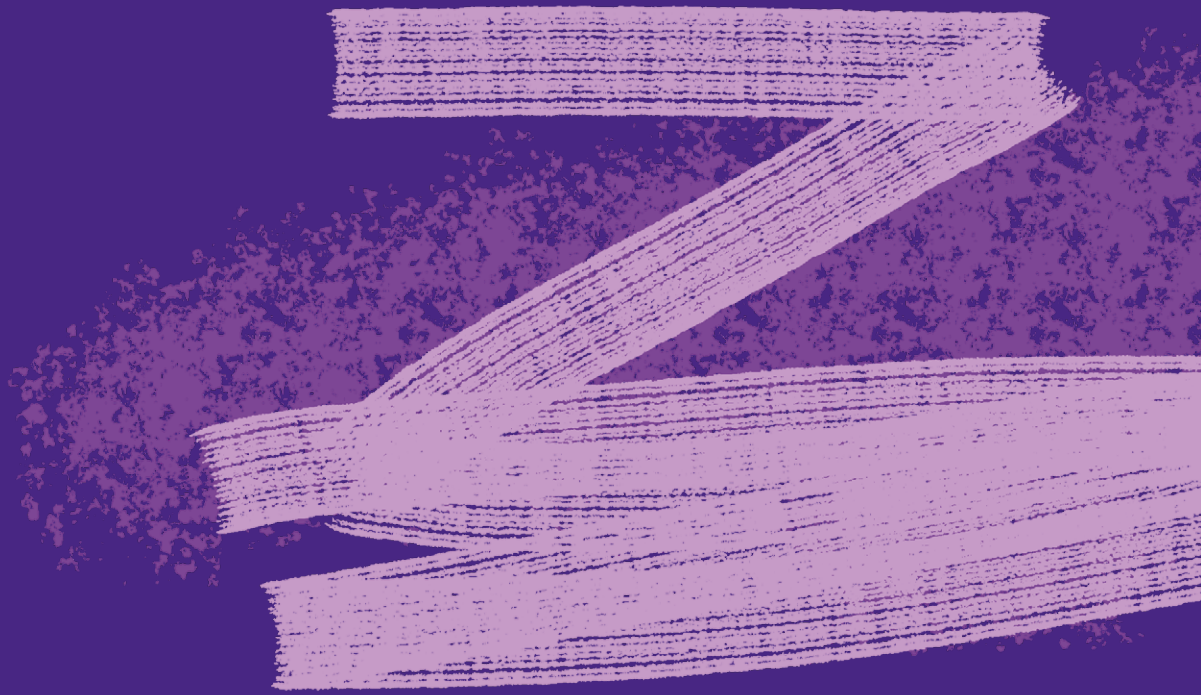
We invited interested women to come together to discuss what would they like to do together. The intention was to make it easy for women to take part. We offered financial support towards participation costs and the timing was chosen to facilitate greater participation. A schedule of training and capacity building sessions and workshops on a regional basis with women involved in an unpaid and paid capacity in representative roles at local level was developed. Over 150 women came together in North Cork, Limerick City, Ennis, Claremorris, Navan, Dublin City, Carlow and Roscommon. The project ran from June 2018 – September 2019 and sought to facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, and strategy towards making visible the often hidden concerns of women.

Topics covered included:

- Women's Equality
- Intercultural Leadership
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Media Training
- Effective Meetings
- Understanding Local Government
- Influencing Policy and Campaigning.

Ann Irwin was contracted to carry out an external evaluation of the project.

*“I’m looking forward to applying any skills I learn to helping the local community in Clare.”*



*“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**



# WORKING FOR CHANGE

## Lobbying

Lobbying is any direct pressure on decision-makers, with the aim of influencing change through organised action. There is no single, foolproof way to lobby policy makers. Success depends on many factors: the political environment, the people involved, the resources available and the issues concerned. Change will not happen for women without concrete demands to Government. You need to decide how you are going to lobby and how you can keep your issue on the agenda.

Two types of lobbying – direct and indirect

**Direct Lobbying:** gaining access to, pressuring and informing key decision-makers about an issue to achieve change.

Examples: *meeting with politicians and civil servants, writing submissions, speaking to committees, Dáil questions, press releases.*

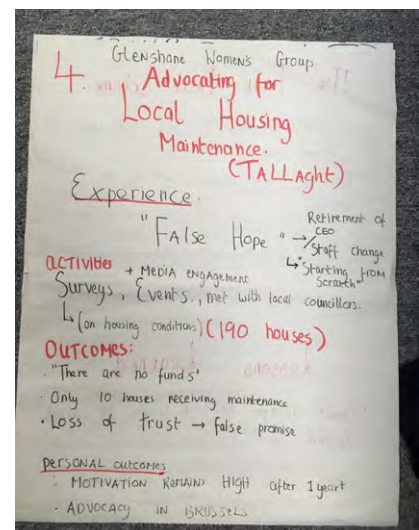
**Indirect Lobbying:** attempting to influence decision-makers through the participation of the general public in lobbying actions.

Examples: *letter writing campaigns/petitions, public protests, media activity, organising a vigil, organising an event or seminar.*

**REMEMBER:** You may need to declare your lobbying. Since 2015, organisations and individuals that lobby senior public officials have to register and report regularly on their lobbying activities. For more details, see [www.lobbying.ie](http://www.lobbying.ie).



Limerick Women for Change



NWCI – Women for Change

## Tools for Lobbying

Tools to bring about change	Sample Actions
<b>Build our own strength</b>	Organise awareness raising sessions on policy structures Organise training/workshops on how to lobby policy makers Skills audit (see appendix)
<b>Getting to know the system</b>	Skills development workshops for representatives on decision making structures Meetings with local political representatives
<b>Document your experiences / experiences of the groups you work with</b>	Developing case studies from your work
<b>Generate information on your work with to influence policy</b>	Carry out research Prepare submissions on your case
<b>Media Campaign</b>	Prepare a media strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Prepare 3 or 4 key messages – 3 or 4 simple points that you want to make – use all opportunities to make these points</li> <li>– Appoint a spokesperson/s who will give all interviews               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press releases</li> <li>• Press conferences</li> <li>• Photo opportunities</li> <li>• Proposing articles to local newspapers</li> <li>• Write letters to local newspapers presenting your case</li> <li>• Local radio interviews</li> <li>• Build relationships with journalists</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Disseminate information</b>	Organise seminars, launch publications, research findings, annual report

*“Don’t let the small things go”*

## Policy

### What is Policy?

Policy is a course of action resulting from decisions made by Government. It states the direction of particular aspects of life e.g. economic, social, and environmental. The making of policy decisions entails a process involving many groups in society; government ministers, civil servants, politicians, media, trade unions, employers and community and voluntary sector groups each with different levels of power to influence the decisions.

### Why do we need to engage and influence policy?

#### **Achieving change for women**

Influencing policy on equality for women is primarily about working to bring about change for women's lives, inequalities women face and the poverty and discrimination which many women experience. In all our work at local and national level there is an awareness and recognition of the links between the decisions made by government and the authorities working on its behalf and the position of women in society. Women's inequality in Irish society is directly related to the way in which resources are allocated. It is about who has the power and resources, who influences the decisions, who has the skills to lobby successfully and who does not. Eliminating inequality for women will require fundamental change in policy which can only occur if strong pressure is put on the political system at all levels.

#### **Recognising the potential of your work**

Informing the policy system about the reality of women's lives is a key part of effecting change. The experience and expertise of women's groups and organisations working with women is critical for policy makers trying to address the causes and effects of inequality and discrimination. Women's voices must be heard particularly those most on the margins of our society including Traveller and Roma women, migrant women, women seeking asylum and women with disabilities so that changes in policy will be effective and so that we can call the government to account. We must ensure that policy is informed by women and not developed in an isolated manner by officials with minimal understanding of the issues involved.



Carlow Women for Change

## How do we engage and influence policy

The first point in trying to effect change is getting your voice heard or making your agenda visible. Too often the policy debate in the media or at various levels of government does not reflect what your project is trying to achieve or is not your debate. Trying to set the agenda is in many cases the first challenge in influencing change.

### 1. Identify the issue and be clear about what you want to change

Begin by identifying the issue or situation and what you want to do about it.

Your strategy is your plan to win.

- What change do you want to achieve and what will it look like?
- Define the problem and the effects on women – research and evidence
- Identify the solution(s)
- Is it a local or national issue?
- Are you concerned with an existing policy or has a policy not been implemented?
- How can you achieve that change?
- How would you know that you have achieved that change?
- Select one specific area to make a distinct impact – Where do you want to be in 1/3/5 years?

### 2. Research your issue

Ensure that you have evidence or facts to build your case.

- What commitments have already been made in this area? E.g. CEDAW
- What is the law in this area?
- Make yourself aware of any reports/documents produced on the issue
- Use reliable sources and up to date statistics eg. Central Statistics Office
- Find out how much support there is for and against your case. Talk to national organisations that are a good source of information on policy.

### 3. Identify who holds the power

Ensure you are focusing on the people that can make the most difference

- Who has the power to make the decisions on your issue?
- Who can influence the people with the power?
- Where is the issue being dealt with, is it at local, regional, national, European level?
- What is the government position?

#### **4. Getting organised – building your community**

Although you can go it alone, most successful lobbying is the result of a group/team working together. Start by pulling together a coalition of people who feel as strongly about the issue as you do and consider how your issue has wider implications for other issues. There are likeminded people out there who want to put their energy into something.

- Have you included those directly affected by the problem and the change you want?
- Connect with people on the basis of values and emotion and engage through stories
- Have you thought about women, who are often excluded e.g. Traveller Women, poorer women, minority ethnic women, disabled women? How do we include diverse groups of women & not just say we do. Organise awareness raising sessions and invite women that are affected (refer to appendix)
- Different leaders will emerge when you use non-traditional ways of organising and when you collectivise what you have in common
- Decide on the best approach for your group to take in order to change and influence policy (joint actions with other local orgs, linking with national orgs working on same agenda, resources, time, capacity)
- Plan your strategy and tactics - identify the most effective opportunities to influence these structures (relevant meetings, local media campaigns, meetings with local politicians, Dáil questions, day of action, online campaigns, petitions, visiting a TD's office)
- Timing is important, opportunity might present itself with a new government or change of personnel in charge
- Pass on skills to share the learning and broaden your participation
- What resources do we have and what do we need?
- Celebrate your achievements, change can be slow and it is an uneven playing field

#### **5. Building public support – who are your friends/supporters?**

There may be other members of your community who could benefit from your proposals. Identify the key institutions/decision making structures you need to influence in order to change policy

- Have you contacted other local groups working on similar issues?
- Are there national/European organisations working on the same issue who could support your work?

*“Be part of change”*



## Preparing for meetings with policy makers or politicians

### Why do you want to be there?

- Change policy/practice/funding/priorities
- Influence decisions further up the chain
- Access officials
- Accountability
- We have a right to have our voices heard
- Principles and values of participatory democracy
- Opportunity to develop new skills
- Inclusive decision making
- We know the issues and the solutions

### Before the meeting:

1. Have a group meeting and agree on who attends
2. Find out which politicians or officials will be there
3. Decide what needs to be said, who will say each point and who is the person with the most knowledge/expertise on the issue. Don't underestimate the importance of your personal experience!
4. Research – aim to be better informed than the person you are meeting
5. Network – consider who you know that knows the person you'll meet. Ask them to mention and endorse you.
6. Appoint a spokesperson for the group to guide the meeting
7. Prepare a list of ways this person may help your campaign
8. Prepare a one-page briefing for the person you are meeting which will include your contact details.

*“I have always been involved in community projects but I want to concentrate more on activism going forward”*

### **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
5. Try to establish the party position on the issue
6. If there is an upcoming election, mention how many voters are affected
7. Discuss the level of media interest in your campaign, for example, if there have been any letters in local or national newspapers
8. If you don't already know, try to find out if the issue impacts on the decision-maker personally in any way
9. Look for clear decisions
10. Leave an 'umbrella' behind!

### **Getting the most out of meetings**

Knowledge of the procedure, functions, rules e.g. standing orders,

- Mastery of own issues
- Read documentation (critically)
- Get there early; greet, introduce self to others
- Don't sit in group: 'diamond' the meeting
- Be prepared to challenge bad behaviour, esp. at start
- Be prepared to vote against, require objections noted
- Allocate time for meetings
- Afterwards, follow-up and check things are being done and debrief.
- Send a follow up letter thanking them for their time, summarise what was discussed and what they committed to do
- Get to all meetings. Complain if they are changed and you can't go.

### **Checklist**

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| – Knowing what issues you want to get across, ability to define them, write and talk about them | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Knowing what the political system can do about them (or not)                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Knowing who is being asked to do what   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Knowing what the solution looks like  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| – Set up systems of implementation, check that it is done                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## How to write a letter to decision-makers

Letter writing is an effective way of communicating your issue with a decision maker. A well written letter can be used to gain recognition for the issue and the group and can be a great way of arguing your case.

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

*“The Women for Change workshop was a brilliant experience. I got a massive insight into how a successful campaign works, the steps to implement in order to achieve the desired outcome and of course the advice from the other attendees who have been game changers within their own industries was invaluable to me.”*

## How to draft a submission

- Identify the relevant authority – who will be reading this document?
- Check to see if the authority has provided their own guidelines for writing submissions
- State who you are and who you represent
- Identify the problem and be as concise as possible
- Base the submission on information from your lobbying document
- Provide credible evidence for your concerns, cite/reference current and accepted research
- Include only what is essential information
- Use graphs and charts where possible
- Give possible solutions, explain what could happen if no action is taken
- Don't forget to publicise the submission: email, mail out, local newspapers, tweet
- Attach a case study to highlight the effects of your issue.

## Submitting a Parliamentary Question (PQ)

The Government can be asked four types of questions by Oireachtas members – Leaders' questions; priority; oral; and written (generally called Parliamentary Questions). See more information about the different types of questions at: [www.oireachtasbrief.ie/about-the-oireachtas/parliamentary-questions/](http://www.oireachtasbrief.ie/about-the-oireachtas/parliamentary-questions/)

A limitless number of PQs can be submitted by TDs (Senators cannot submit PQs). The answers to PQs are not read out in the Dáil but are included on the Oireachtas daily record. PQ answers are drafted by civil servants and must be signed off by the relevant Minister.

PQs are a useful tool for advocates to find out about the implementation of policies, the cost of Government activities, the funding provided to different state services and other areas of government business. As such, they can provide information for campaigns and data for submissions.



Clare Women for Change

## How to submit a Parliamentary Question (PQ)

### 1. Search for similar PQs

If you want to ask a PQ to find out information about a particular topic, check whether your question, or something similar, has already been asked and whether the information you need has already been provided.

You can use search terms to look for any PQs or debates at:

- [www.kildarestreet.com](http://www.kildarestreet.com)
- [www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/)

### 2. Draft your PQ

If the information you need isn't available you will need to draft your own PQ.

There is a standard format for PQs. Each PQ is directed at the Minister responsible for the area. The PQ can combine a number of questions linked to the same topic and is always ended by the words 'and if s/he will make a statement on the matter'. For example:

*To ask the Minister for Health how much funding was provided to maternity services in the years 2010 – 2018; how much funding is forecasted for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Try to be as specific as you can in your question to ensure you receive a detailed response. The search step above can really help in formulating your question. The more questions asked about a particular issue the more it reflects the level of public concern.

### 3. Ask a TD to submit your PQ

Who is the best deputy to ask the question? Does s/he have an interest in this issue? Email your selected TD, sending them your draft PQ text and ask if they will submit it for you. Generally TDs are very happy to ask PQs for constituents and NGOs. It can be helpful to ask a TD you already have a relationship with, or who is already engaged on the issue your PQ refers to.

### 4. Receiving responses

Generally, the TD who has submitted your PQ will send you an email with the response they received. Alternatively, you can keep an eye on [KildareStreet.com](http://KildareStreet.com) or [Oireachtas.ie](http://Oireachtas.ie).

### 5. Follow-up

If the PQ response received does not provide the information required you can ask your selected TD to submit additional PQs.



## Members of the Oireachtas – how they can help your campaign

### **TDs can:**

- Ask questions in the Dáil, including oral or written parliamentary questions
- Veto or halt amendments/changes to a Government Bill
- Speak on or sign a motion
- 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
- Write to a state agency on behalf of your group.

### **Senators can:**

- Introduce amendments to Bills in the Seanad, which will then pass back to the Dáil
- Write to a state agency on behalf of your group
- Lend credibility and political weight through their support of your campaign
- Raise your issue with fellow party members.

### **Councillors can:**

- Get a motion passed at city/council level or at a party conference
- Raise the issue within their party
- Write to a state agency on behalf of your group

### **Role of Special Advisors**

Each Minister has at least one special adviser. These are often, but not always, employed from outside the public service. They can play a number of distinct roles including liaising with civil servants, representing the Minister, be influential in steering policy while others advise Ministers on the political aspects of government policy decisions or actions. Their names should be published on all government departments' websites.

### **Joint Oireachtas Committee**

[www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/committees/)

- To consider all policy, budgetary or administrative aspects of a relevant matter
- Invite a Minister or an office holder from a government department to appear on a relevant matter
- Write reports on relevant matters and table a motion to the Dáil based on report outcomes
- Invite relevant stakeholders to present to the members.

## Using Local Media

### How to write an effective press release

Writing a press release is an effective way to help you and your organisation gain publicity for the work you are involved in. Call your local paper and ask them for a contact to send in your press release and check the deadlines. The following are some tips but the most important thing is getting your message out there.

- Try to get your press release typed and email it to the newspaper
- Your headline should be short, interesting and to the point. Use action words, and clear, understandable language, and keep your headline simple and short to clearly focus people's attention on your topline message. Use strong language in the heading: 'NWCi demands/accuses/calls on etc. Try to place your organisation's name within the heading.
- The first paragraph of your release should cover the who, what, why, where, and how of your new launch, update, or development. Reporters don't have time to sift through details and background information -- they just need the facts that'll help them tell your story to someone else from a position of authority. There shouldn't be any new, crucial information covered after this section that the reader could potentially miss.
- If publicising an event, make sure to include details of time, place and who to contact for further information.
- Once you've set the scene, it's time to bring your details to life with a quote that reporters can use for context around your announcement and help paint a picture of your news. Use quotes from the people involved in your group to emphasise the points you are making and make it more interesting.
- Use direct and simple language throughout the press release. Do not use jargon, abbreviations or acronyms.
- The final paragraph should provide valuable background information including the contact details for the spokesperson.
- Keep your press release short and to the point – try to keep it to one page, if possible.
- Include notes to Editors if necessary to provide extra information.
- Follow up on your press release with a phone call to the journalist.
- See the press releases section on NWCi website – [https://www.nwci.ie/learn/news/category/press\\_releases](https://www.nwci.ie/learn/news/category/press_releases)

*“It’s just what I do, how could you not do it”*

## 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



Dublin Women for Change

## How to use social media for change

Social media is for everyone and you can use it to reach out to more people. It is a democratic tool, and can be harnessed by people to hold politicians to account, but also by voters to create a campaign for change, and build momentum around important issues. It has huge power to engage new audiences, to get your name out there, to grow an online network of supporters, of people to a website, a petition, an event, and in some cases, to reach more people than you would on traditional media. You need to move from telling people about something, to being part of a dialogue and moving toward informing people about the substance of what you're doing.

- You can share a fact about women's inequality
- You can post a photo of your meeting with a local representative
- Get signatures for a petition
- Share a local news story
- Share a link to a radio or television interview

### Facebook

- Is great for engaging people locally and nationally
- Don't use your personal page, but set up a company page
- You can get a Pages Manager app on your phone which allows you to keep an eye on your page on the go
- Facebook allows for more engagement than Twitter and replies are longer
- Facebook tends to be more local than Twitter
- Although each page is different, the best times to post are early morning, and in the evening.
- Photos work very well as content
- People like actions – sign up to an event, sign a petition, or share this fact.

### Twitter

- To start a conversation, ask a question. You can then favourite/retweet replies
- Hashtags are important on Twitter. That is what people search for. Use a relevant #
- Use images as often as possible
- Make sure to follow your supporters and retweet their articles or tweets
- State in your personal bio that retweets are not an endorsement and do not necessarily represent your personal views
- Link to your website(if you have one) as often as possible
- Try not to engage with trolls. Engaging them promotes further engagement
- Direct a genuine complaint from Twitter to email
- Tweeting in the morning and evening are good times to set the agenda
- If you are being harassed online report it and if the person is being abusive, block them immediately.

## How to 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.

- Consider asking a local representative or prominent politician to attend or speak at your event.
- Don't forget to advertise your event in advance.
- Write to local and national journalists and let them know about the event (see the section on 'how to write a press release').
- What kind of equipment will you need on the day? Banners, loudspeakers, microphones, chairs, tables etc.
- Ensure accessible venue and that you can support participation at the event
- Evaluate your event, record how you felt it went and what you could do differently next time

*“When I go to the shopping centre now,  
I am saying hello to everyone”*



North Cork Women for Change



## Government Commitments and Frameworks at National and International level

### National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020

The National Strategy for Women and Girls (NSWG) is the primary State policy document addressing key areas of concern for women and girls in Ireland as social and economic actors, carers, service-users and decision-makers. The NSWG should act as a key reference for all policy makers and departments. The vision of the strategy is:

*“An Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.”*

*“This is an all of Government Strategy which will ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into decision-making on a wide range of policies. Its implementation will improve the lives of women, be they old or young, rural or urban.”*

— former Tánaiste Francis Fitzgerald

### The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. In the concluding observations that arise as a consequence of Ireland’s examination under the Convention in early 2017, they recommended the following related to women in local life:

- Take concrete measures, including temporary special measures, to promote the participation of Traveller, Roma and migrant women in political and public life.

### Public Sector Duty

Public bodies need to take into account and make explicit in their communications and direction the legislative implications arising from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 which confers a positive duty to have regard to, in the performance of their functions, the need to ‘(a) eliminate discrimination, (b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and (c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services’. Public bodies are now required in their annual reports to report on related ‘achievements and developments’ pertaining to, for example, State obligations to prioritise the most marginalised and vulnerable in society and to ensure that women enjoy equality with men in political and public life. This is referenced also in the National Strategy for Women and Girls in action 6.1:

*“All Public Bodies will assess and identify the human rights of women and girls and the gender equality issues that are relevant to their functions and address these in their strategic planning, policies and practices and annual reports.”*

[ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/](http://ihrec.ie/our-work/public-sector-duty/)

## Charter for equality between men and women in local life

In order to promote gender equality at the local and regional level, the Council for European Municipalities and Regions launched the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life in 2006. The Charter is both a political document and a practical instrument. It encourages local and regional governments to make a public commitment to equality and to implement the principles listed in the Charter. The Charter proposes concrete methods of how equality of women and men can be pursued in different fields; political participation, employment, public services, urban planning, etc. Today, over 1600 local and regional governments in 32 European countries have signed the Charter. No local authorities in Ireland have signed up to this charter.

<http://www.charter-equality.eu/>



Dublin Women for Change

*“Women’s voices have  
to be at the table.”*



# GROUP EXERCISES

## Skills Bank Exercise<sup>3</sup>

This is a simple but effective exercise to maximize the strengths of the group and to assist in good team building. Taking time to identify strengths before tasks are assigned allows people to choose the areas best suited to their skills. This table should be referred to at future meetings when tasks are being assigned.

**Objective:** To identify skills and strengths in the group

**Time required:** 20 minutes

**Materials:** Flipchart, table drawn on flipchart sheet (see below), coloured stickers

### The Activity:

- Hand out coloured stickers to all group participants.
- Draw the table below out on flipchart with the names of the group participants along the top
- Listed in the table below are some of the skills needed to carry out a successful policy-influencing campaign. Write these in and ask group to call out other skills that would be useful in carrying out your strategy.
- Ask group members to think about their skills for a couple of minutes and then place coloured stickers on the skills they are strongest in.

Skills	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3	Name 4	Name 5 etc
Networking					
Administration					
Media Skills					
Chairing a Meeting					
Writing Reports					
Organisational Skills					
Writing Letters					
Lobbying					
Computer Skills					
People Skills					
Presentations					
Research					
Fundraising					

---

<sup>3</sup> NWCI Roadmap for change: A handbook for women's groups working together for equality



## Sample Group Matrix

Getting group members to fill out this grid on a large sheet (or 4 sheets of flip chart paper stuck together) is a great way of breaking the ice, having fun, getting to know each other and building the group dynamic.

Name/ portrait	Describe yourself (using words or pictures)	Reason you are involved with this group	Something you bring to this group	Hope/ expectation for this group/ project	Concern for this group/ project
Mary	Friendly Loyal Enjoys life	To help improve services for women locally	Ideas Experience Friendship Fun	For our aims to be brought to satisfactory conclusion	To remain together will be hard and require dedication
Kathy	Conscientious Helpful Good -humoured	To improve/ solve womens' issues in this community	Previous and current community experience	That we will identify solutions as well as problems	Our input will be filed away in some bureaucrat's bottom drawer

## Exploring Feminism<sup>4</sup>

Feminism can be described as the support of women's rights based on recognition that women and men are equal but not equally valued. The word feminism conjures up many different feelings and images. This activity will enable you to begin to explore these.

**Aim:** To explore the group's experiences and images of feminism.

**Step 1** – Choose two colours of sticky paper. On your own write down quickly things that come to mind; on one colour what attracts you to feminism and on the other colour what puts you off it. Use one piece of paper for each thought.

**Step 2** – In groups of 3 discuss what things you wrote down that were similar or different from each other. Think about where these ideas have come from e.g. the media, talking to other women etc.

**Step 3** – Draw the diagram over the page on a flipchart sheet and ask everyone to place their pieces of paper at the different levels shown. When you have done this you will be able to see the collective picture of the group's experiences of feminism.

**Note:** Be aware of where the negative and positive images and messages come from. Is it personal experience or wider society? What are the implications of this?

<sup>4</sup> Getting Started and keeping going: A resource pack for Local Womens Groups Downtown Womens Centre and Womens Resource and Development Agency (1995)



## Group Exercise – Exploring Diversity and Inclusion<sup>5</sup>

**Time required:** 1 ½ hour

**Materials:** Flipchart paper and pens/ markers

Write the words ‘*Different Women*’ on a large sheet of paper and ask the group to name the different kinds of women they can think of who live in your area or community e.g. older women, younger women, women from minority ethnic groups, Traveller women, women with a disability, lone parents, etc. You may find some of the headings below useful to get the discussion going or to use as a checklist at the end.

Next, write down the group’s core problem or the summary statement of your group’s core issue on flipchart paper and place where everyone can see it. Divide the group into smaller groups of 3-4 people, give each group a sheet of paper and pens and ask them to fill in the following table.

How might these women be affected differently by the issue we’re addressing?	Why might it be difficult for them to come forward and join the group?
What might they bring to the group?	How might they challenge the group?

Ask each small group to feedback the information and ideas that arise. Lead a discussion on the value of embracing diversity and the importance of representing the wider community.

- **How could we reach out to include more women in our community?** Write down all suggestions.
- **Where would we make contact?** Are there networks or agencies around that might guide us? Local partnership offices,
- **Is there practical support available in the area to help us involve other women in our work** (e.g. funding and advice, language support, childcare, transport, wheelchair accessibility, diversity training)?

---

<sup>5</sup> Getting Started and keeping going: A resource pack for Local Womens Groups Downtown Womens Centre and Womens Resource and Development Agency (1995)

## Task Sheet – Using the Social Analysis Spiral to understand women's equality<sup>6</sup>

The exercise aims to assist discussion and analysis which deepens understanding of women's inequality in different areas. It also aims to identify blocks to women's leadership at each level of the Spiral and also to identify some specific actions which would enable women's leadership

**Step One** – Draw a large spiral on the sheet: Name the levels- personal, social, cultural, political and economic: Leave space on each size of the Spiral to note Blocks and Enablers

**Step Two** – Write the issue being analysed on top of the sheet eg. Leadership

**Step Three** – Discuss each level and identify Blocks and Enablers at each level: note these on the sheet (see below for some possible questions to guide discussion; you do not have to address any or all of these, they are offered as prompts only).

**Note Time Use:** use the time to consider all levels and also to consider Blocks and Enablers. It's important to keep time for the latter as the purpose of the Exercise is to support the Movement for Change.

At the **personal level**, consider:

- What may block women at a personal level from taking on leadership roles?
- Why might this be the case?

At the **cultural level**, consider:

- What beliefs exist in Irish society that could block women's leadership?
- How are these generated and spread?
- Is the 'political culture' woman friendly?

At the **social level**, consider:

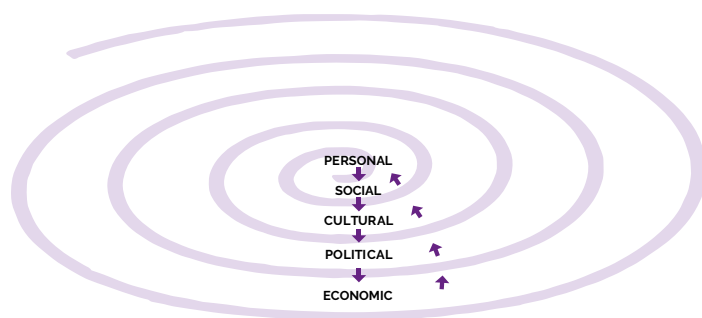
- What role might different social institutions play in blocking women's leadership? for example, the family, education system, political parties; social support systems?

At the **political level**, consider:

- What role do government policies play in blocking or enabling women's participation in leadership? Which ones are most influential?
- Are there sufficient structures and resources in place in implement these policies?

At the **economic level**, consider:

- What are the economic blocks to women's participation in leadership?



<sup>6</sup> Maureen Bassett October 2018

## Sample Campaign Exercise

You are a group of women who have identified a need in your area. You have decided to try to build support and develop an organised campaign on this issue. Fill in the following grid to bring your issue from an idea to a strong campaign.

### Campaign Idea:

Stages in the development of the campaign and questions you should ask yourselves.	Answers
<b>1. Information</b>	
a) Who makes the decisions in this area?	
b) Where are these decisions taken?	
c) What Government policies or commitments can we draw on?	
d) What other information is needed?	
<b>2. Organisation</b>	
a) How do we build community interest and with who?	
b) How do we involve those affected?	
c) How do we establish a campaign group – who should be on it?	
d) Who are our allies/who might oppose us?	
e) Where and how do we get our resources?	
f) Do we need more research – how should we proceed with this?	
<b>3. Developing our message</b> (detailed campaign demands and policy changes based on information, research and consultation)	
a) What is our key message?	
b) What are our key demands?	
c) What are the arguments for and against our demands?	
<b>4. Mobilisation</b>	
a) What are the key actions we will undertake to get our message out there and push for change? e.g. protest, petitions, policy submissions, Dáil questions, media work etc.	

## Evaluating participation at meetings using the Evaluation Wheel<sup>7</sup>

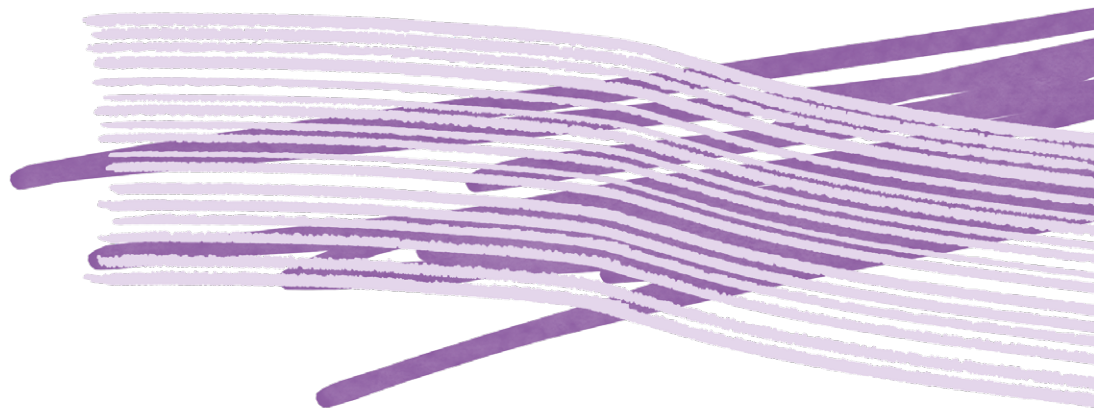
The evaluation wheel is a simple and useful way of letting people give their views on how a meeting has gone. It can be filled in anonymously, but the end result is visually clear and easily-understood.

To use the wheel to evaluate community participation at a meeting, set up a flip-chart sheet on a stand or a wall. Draw a circle on it, and divide the circle into four sectors. Write questions you want people to answer on the sheet, each beside a particular sector, for example:

- How much influence did you feel you had in deciding the agenda, i.e. what was discussed?
- Did you feel you were listened to?
- How much power did you feel you had in decisions made at the meeting?
- Did everyone use clear language?

Then ask each person who has attended the meeting to answer each question, by drawing a line in the particular sector, starting from the centre of the circle and drawing outwards as far as they want towards the edge of the circle: the longer the line they draw, then the more positive their answer.

When everyone is finished, the wheel can be turned for everyone to see it. The completed wheel can also be put on display at the start of the next meeting, so that everyone can see what improvements may be needed in how that meeting is run. You can have more sectors, or fewer sectors, and you can use any questions you like, for any purpose. The wheel could also be used to quickly evaluate a whole process, rather than just a single meeting.



---

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy of Inner City Organisations Network/North West Inner City Network Developing a Good Practice Guide to Community Participation (2008)

*“It is hard for women to put their heads above the parapet. It is great to have the opportunity to learn how to effectively lead and participate in structures which impact upon our lives.”*



# RESOURCES

## Key Terms Explained

**Campaign:** Organised actions by individuals and political parties to influence decision making – for example, public meetings, media coverage and so on

**CEDAW:** The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979.

**Feminism:** Feminism is the view that women are inherently equal to men and deserve equal rights and opportunities. Feminism is a way of viewing institutions and systems which questions the power that they hold in society. In this way the feminist movement works at creating more opportunities for women in public life, challenging stereotypes, fighting for women's rights and creating conditions to respect and celebrate the unique contribution of women and girls.

**Joint Oireachtas Committee:** A committee made up of members of both the Dáil and the Seanad to discuss and vote on particular matters.

**Lobby:** An organised attempt by individuals or groups to influence decision makers – for example, by writing letters, making proposals or meeting decision makers

**Participatory Democracy:** A democracy in which people may participate directly in decision-making process as well as or instead of indirectly through the election of representatives.

**Patriarchy:** Patriarchy is the control by men of a disproportionately large share of power in society. This is not to say that all men want to dominate all women but rather that all the systems of power have long been structured to protect the needs of men. Patriarchy can be seen as generally accepted ideas about the nature and value of women, their roles and the possibilities open to them. These ideas are often based on restrictive biological assumptions people have about women such as; women are better carers and therefore are more naturally placed in the home. A patriarchal system does not always benefit all men either and it can be argued that a more gender equal society would benefit all people.

**Parliamentary questions (PQs):** Questions that TDs ask the Government – orally or in writing – about any issue for which the Government is responsible. PQs are recorded in the official Report of Parliamentary Debates in Dáil Éireann and on the website of the houses of the Oireachtas.

**Senator:** A member of the Senate or Seanad Éireann in Ireland

**Submission:** A written or verbal set of suggestions or arguments to a decision making authority such as a Government department, a committee or a court.

## Useful resources & websites

**Uplift: People Powered Change** – [www.uplift.ie](http://www.uplift.ie)

**National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017 – 2020**

[www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Women\\_and\\_Girls\\_2017\\_-\\_2020.pdf/Files/National\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Women\\_and\\_Girls\\_2017\\_-\\_2020.pdf](http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf/Files/National_Strategy_for_Women_and_Girls_2017_-_2020.pdf)

**Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Consultation Guidelines**

(November 2016) – <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/consultation-guidelines/>

**Central Statistics Office**

[www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2016](http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2016)

[www.genderequality.ie](http://www.genderequality.ie)

**TASC Toolkit to Open Government**

[www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc\\_2016\\_policy\\_making\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc_2016_policy_making_guide_final.pdf)

[www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc\\_2016\\_local\\_government\\_guide\\_final.pdf](http://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc_2016_local_government_guide_final.pdf)

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>

## Useful Contacts

**Find your local TD:**

[www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/tds/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/tds/)

**Find a senator:**

[www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/senators/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/senators/)

**Find your local councillor:**

[www.thejournal.ie/who-is-my-local-councillor-4650649-May2019/](http://www.thejournal.ie/who-is-my-local-councillor-4650649-May2019/)

**Who does what in Government:**

<https://whodoeswhat.gov.ie/>

## Acknowledgements

This work was kindly supported by the Training Links Fund. We would like to thank all the women that participated in the workshops all over the country, who shared their experiences, their frustrations with the system and their passions for social change. Thank you to our member groups, for their energy and huge efforts in being local champions through promoting, recruiting and supporting the engagement of women. This project would not have been possible without your advice and support. Thank you to the trainers and facilitators involved in the project including Deirdre Massey, Maureen Bassett, Maria Tecce, Sinead Doody, Zoryana Pshyk, Rachel Mullen and Colette O'Brien.

Resources that have been used to compile this booklet include:

- NWCI Roadmap for Change: A handbook for women's groups working together for equality
- Working for Change: Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland Brian Harvey, Combat Poverty Agency: (2008)
- NWCI Guide to effective lobbying for women's group in Ireland (2005)
- NWCI Through the Looking Glass: A guide to empowering young people to become advocates for Gender Equality (2014)
- NALA: A plain English Guide to Political Terms (2015)
- Community Participation Project. Doherty, Ger (2008) Good practice guide to community participation. Dublin: Inner City Organisations Network/North West Inner City Network.







National Women's Council of Ireland  
100 North King Street,  
Smithfield, Dublin 7

[www.nwci.ie](http://www.nwci.ie)  
[reception@nwci.ie](mailto:reception@nwci.ie)  
Tel: 01 6790 100

Follow us:

 @NWCI

 @NationalWomensCouncilofIreland

 @womens\_council\_ireland



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

TRAINING LINKS  
2018 - 2019  
.....

