

Women Delivering Change



Women's Regional
Consortium

Annual Report 2024

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Our Key Areas of Work

The Consortium is the established link and strategic partner between government and statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas, including all groups, centres and organisations delivering essential frontline services, advice and support. The Consortium ensures that there is a continuous two-way flow of information between government and the sector. It also ensures that organisations/centres and groups are made aware of consultations, government planning and policy implementation. In turn, the Consortium ascertains the views, needs and aspirations of women in disadvantaged and rural areas and takes these views forward to influence policy development and future government planning, which ultimately results in the empowerment of local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities.

We organise our work across five key areas;

Advocacy and Leadership

Policy

Research

Service Support

Engagement



Working together in partnership to empower local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities

The established link and strategic partner between government and statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas

Lead Partner Report

I am delighted to again write the Lead Partner report for March 2023 – March 2024. The previous year has been a very difficult and hard year, particularly for women in Northern Ireland and I cannot remember a time when all the Consortium Members were more needed; the tireless work that all the partners have done is to be highly commended; many women across the province have been brought into contact with at least one Consortium Member.



The information that has been disseminated across a wide range of topics and campaigns has been truly amazing from the work done at the Cliff Edge Coalition, Universal Credit, to Mainstreaming Gender Budgeting. The work is wide both in its reach but also in its ability to influence Government and Government Policy.

The work of FWIN and NIRWN reaching out into rural areas is again very much needed and appreciated. Several years ago, 7 organisations came together to work for the betterment of women in Northern Ireland and the evidence shows that that work is impactful, inclusive, and still badly needed. From the ROSA's speaking circles in the Northwest to NIRWN's work with CFNI on women and homelessness focusing on impacts and solutions for rural women; the reach has been great.

The scope of work is so vast that I really can only pick out snippets of what our partner organisations have accomplished. The Community Campaigners Course operated by WRDA, empowered women with the skills to be their own lobbyist. This course was extremely successful and built up the skills and abilities of women to move forward and create strong and critical voices when identifying gaps in policy and services.

The Consortium Partners have been particularly conscious of ensuring a free flow of information between the Women's Sector and Government through their consultation work and policy implementation. WSN and WRDA have both also had a very busy year and submitted 43 responses to Consultations and Calls for Evidence in areas such as the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy to the Women and Equality Committee, through to the Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure Support Consultation highlighting the Consortium's worries around the appointment of organisations by Departments taking away the security of women's organisations who will be forced to compete with each other.

The wide-range of the Consortium's research is to be commended, covering a broad range of areas that affect women's lives. Women's Centre Derry continues to play a vital role in the Consortium and has played a crucial part in offering access to education for hundreds of women.

The work of Women's TEC continues to shine a light onto women wishing to or working in the traditional skills industry which will be more widespread now as their work expands further across the province.

To summarise, the Consortium has risen to the challenges over the last year and the work they have carried out to bring the voices of women to all sections of society. I would like to thank all the Partners and the staff of Department for Communities who continue to believe in the strength and dedication of all the members to offer to women in Northern Ireland a valuable and much needed service.

NORMA SHEARER, MBE TWN Chief Executive

The Partners

The Women's Regional Consortium is a coalition of seven women's organisations working together to empower local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities. Our members are:

Training for Women Network (Lead Partner)

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network

Women's Resource and Development Agency

Women's Support Network

Women'sTec

Foyle Women's Information Network

Women's Centre Derry

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Advocacy and Leadership

The Consortium is the established link and strategic partner between government and statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas. In this capacity we advocate for the changes women want, represent women on various fora, and provide leadership to the sector.

Campaigns

The Consortium is involved in several campaigns supporting and providing leadership on issues including poverty, benefits reform, and functioning political institutions.

Cliff Edge

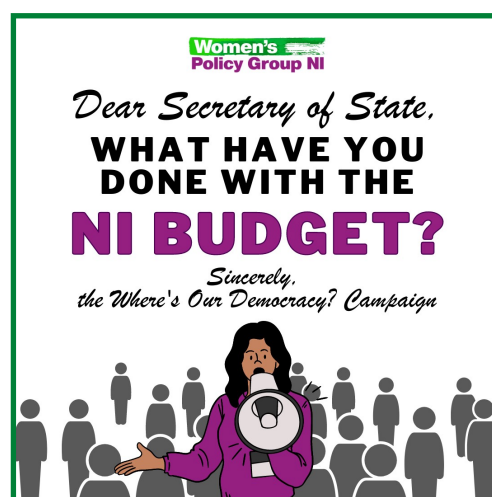
The Consortium is part of the Cliff Edge Coalition which is working to strengthen the welfare mitigations package for Northern Ireland. As a member of the working group for Cliff Edge WSN spoke at the relaunch of the Coalition's key asks specifically around the need to resolve the five-week wait in Universal Credit.

Guarantee our Essentials

The Consortium is part of a campaign from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Trussell Trust calling for an Essentials Guarantee within Universal Credit. The Essentials Guarantee would embed in the social security system a principle that at a minimum Universal Credit should protect people from going without essentials.

Where's Our Democracy?

The Consortium is involved in this campaign as WRDA provides the secretariat for the Women's Policy Group. 'Where's Our Democracy?' is a campaign delivered by the Women's Policy Group focused on improving the quality of democracy in Northern Ireland by restoring the spirit of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement and achieving stable, functioning government in the long term.



(left) Siobhán pictured with Jonny Currie, Trussell Trust at the launch of the Guarantee Our Essentials Billboard in Belfast. (right) Social media graphic for the WOD? Campaign.

Advocacy and Leadership

Mainstreaming Gender Budgeting

Through sharing the views of women on the ground, we aim to encourage gender-sensitive, rather than gender-neutral discussions. A key aspect of this work in the past year has been our push for the mainstreaming of Gender Budgeting. This work has been lead by the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group who have made the most of a year packed with opportunities to promote gender economic equality in Northern Ireland on local, national, and international platforms. Conferences/summits/network meetings with the OECD, the Fiscal Council, and the European Gender Budgeting Network have provided spaces for us to raise the issues specific to the Northern Ireland policy context, advocate for key recommendations like gender budgeting, and engage with peers at the civil society level, the official level, and the political level. We have also engaged with a number of officials across Departments on on-going strategies and consultations in the lead-up to the return of Stormont.

NIWBG conducted three pilot gender budgeting training sessions between May and June 2023 in Derry~Londonderry with Women's Centre Derry, Belfast with WRDA, and Cookstown with NIRWN. Women Centre Derry attended the 4-week Gender Budgeting workshop in May 2023 and gave a presentation on funding cuts in NI towards the Women's Sector and discussed the services provided in Women Centre Derry. The study will inform the work of Ulster University and partner organisation the NI Women's Budget Group in their programme of work to provide guidance and training to those interested in gender budgeting. The training programme has been informed by international research on similar initiatives, as well as local research on the budgetary and policy context in Northern Ireland. Conducting research on the effectiveness and impact of this pilot training course supports the process of developing new training that meets the needs of stakeholders who are either advocating for or responsible for implementing gender budgeting measures.

The Consortium has sought to learn from best practice on mainstreaming gender budgeting in other national contexts. NIRWN met with Marta Birna Baldursdóttir, sérfræðingur who is Head of Division/Specialist; Department of Fiscal Affairs; Iceland re: Gender budgeting and Gender Bonds.

We have continued partnerships with fellow Women's Sector organisations such as putting together and launching the Where's Our Democracy? campaign's 'A Common Sense Budget for Northern Ireland' after the Autumn Budget Statement.

At A Glance

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Advocacy and Leadership

Through the Women's Budget Group the Consortium has strengthened relationships with sister organisations on an East-West and North-South basis. Through the 4 Nations network, we organised an online 4 Nations conference in Spring of 2023 that focused on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on women across the UK and organised an internal 4 Nations assembly in the Autumn of 2023, which looked at budget processes across the UK. We also held two online sessions de-briefing the Chancellor's Autumn Statement with a 4 Nations perspective, and another session with colleagues from the South comparing the financial situation across the island of Ireland following the Republic of Ireland's Budget announcement.

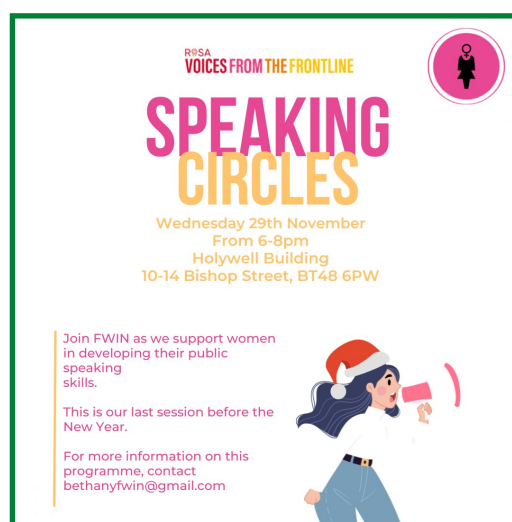
Pizza & Politics Programme

Through funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) has been hosting local "Pizza and Politics" Sessions for women across the Derry & Strabane District Council Area. This project gives women the chance to speak about local issues and meet their female representatives face to face. So far, our team has hosted sessions in 4 out of the 7 District Electoral Area's in the Council Region. We have brought women together with their councilors in Ballyarnett, the Moor, Strabane and the Waterside. FWIN works in partnership with local women's groups for delivery of these sessions.



ROSA's Speaking Circles

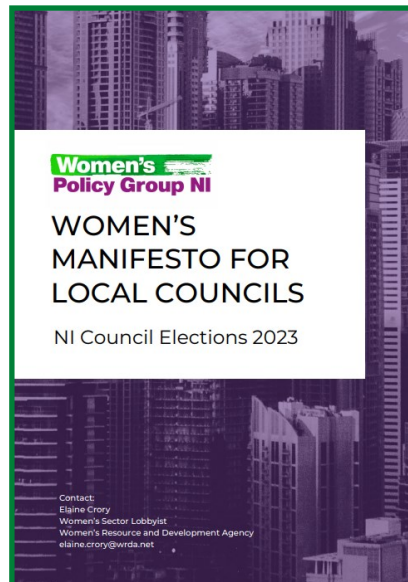
Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) is delighted to have been 1 of 2 Northern Irish recipients of ROSA's Voices from the Frontline fund. Our Speaking Circles programme is based on the lived-experience of women. FWIN found that many of the women who wanted to engage with the programme were stressed about public speaking and so the programme offers a safe space to women each month, where they can build their public speaking skills and confidence levels. In line with their Strategic Plan and in support of the Consortium's objectives, FWIN has particularly opened this programme to women under 40, women with disabilities, women from Minority Ethnic Backgrounds and women from the LGBTQ+ community.



Advocacy and Leadership

Political Advocacy

The Women's Policy Group published a Women's Manifesto for the local council elections in May 2023. The document was written by the Women's Sector Lobbyist who is based in WRDA with input from Consortium Partners WSN, NIRWN, and NIWBG (based in WomensTec) as well as projects involving multiple Consortium Partners such as Raise Your Voice. The manifesto covered how local councils could support women during a rapidly worsening Cost of Living Crisis and support the Women's Sector to make gender equality a reality in NI. The manifesto was launched at a hustings event where women had the chance to question local representatives of parties standing for election.



In February 2024 the Women's Sector Lobbyist based at WRDA met with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls. The Women's Policy Group also provided the UN Special Rapporteur with a summary report to inform her visit.



The Women's Policy Group NI was honoured with the Belfast Pride Award 2023 for Working in Partnership. The Award recognised the work that the WPG does in working alongside LGBTQI+ organisations and communities. Credit for moving WRDA along this path belongs also to past Lobbyists and Directors, as well as to our current Director and staff. WRDA are proud to have a strong trans-inclusive position – on paper since 2019, but in practice

since long before that – and to operate inclusively in all aspects of our work.

In 2023, the FWIN team met with both Sinead McLaughlin and Ciara Ferguson to discuss the issues impacting women in the North-West. Both meetings discussed childcare, opportunities for employment and women's specific healthcare needs at length. We also discussed housing, mental health, climate-change and the need for funding stability in the Women's Sector.

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Advocacy and Leadership



Rural

- NIRWN met with the British-Irish Secretariat on Women Peace & Security
- NIRWN provided representation on the DfC Policy Review Panels for Advice & Debt and People & Place
- NIRWN provided representation to TEO on their EVAWG Strategy development co design.
- NIRWN has been working with CFNI on Women and Homelessness with a focus on impacts and solutions for rural women
- NIRWN facilitated an opportunity for rural women to input into [Women on Brexit Research](#) by Newcastle university for the Equality Commission NI
- NIRWN met with National Committee on American Foreign Policy, their president and CEO Susan Elliott and Erin, Director, Program Development and Special Projects on Women Peace & Security
- NIRWN met with Marta Birna Baldursdóttir, sérfræðingur / Head of Division/Specialist; Department of Fiscal Affairs; Iceland re: Gender budgeting and Gender Bonds



Advocacy and Leadership

The Community Campaigners Course



The Community Campaigners Course, developed and delivered by Consortium Partner WRDA, empowers women with the skills to be their own lobbyist. The aim of the course was to help more women have their voices heard and become more active in their communities as well as equipping women with the skills to advocate for the changes they want to see in their communities.



The sessions cover critical thinking, communication skills, strategic planning and how to write a campaign strategy. In line with WRDA's commitment to providing education with a feminist ethos that meets women's needs participants did not need prior education or training, just an interest in developing their campaigning skills for the good of the community.

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Policy

The Consortium ensures that there is a continuous two-way flow of information between government and the sector. We ensure that organisations, centres, and groups are made aware of consultations, government planning and policy implementation. We also provide a route for women to participate in this process.

The work of the Consortium aims to connect grassroots women with decision makers and ensure the views of women are taken into account when decisions are being made that impact on women's lives. As part of this work WSN submitted 14 responses to consultations and calls for evidence during the year as follows:

- ⇒ **Domestic & Sexual Abuse Strategy 2023-2030** – the Consortium raised concerns about the lack of detailed actions in the draft Strategy and a lack of detail around how the Departments would tackle the gendered nature of Domestic and Sexual Abuse.
- ⇒ **Work & Pensions Committee Inquiry into Benefit Levels in the UK** - The Consortium's response called for a benefits system which is more closely based on what it costs to afford a basic standard of living. The response also highlighted the success of the Northern Ireland mitigations package and the potential to strengthen it further.
- ⇒ **Budget 2023-24 Equality Impact Assessment (Department for Communities)** – the Consortium's response raised a range of concerns around gender neutrality, cuts to Discretionary Support and to support for Universal Credit which will impact more on women.
- ⇒ **Department for Communities Equality Impact Assessment on Discretionary Support** – the Consortium pointed out there will be greater adverse impacts on women if the cuts to Discretionary Support proposed go ahead as women are more likely to be in receipt of these grants.
- ⇒ **Free and Discounted Fares on Public Transport (Concessionary Fares)** – the Consortium raised concerns that some of the proposals will have significant adverse impacts for women and particularly for rural women, disabled women and women with caring responsibilities. It included our opposition to any proposals that cut provision for those on the lowest incomes particularly during a Cost-of-Living Crisis.
- ⇒ **Provision of Free Period Products** – the Consortium's response welcomed the provision of free period products and stressed the need for as full a range of products to be available as possible including reusable options.

Policy

- ⇒ **Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women & Girls and Foundational Action Plan** – the Consortium commended the TEO for their work on the Framework and also stressed that without the appropriate funding it will be impossible to achieve the vision of the Framework.
- ⇒ **Women & Equalities Committee Inquiry into the Impact of the Rising Cost of Living on Women** – the Consortium highlighted the findings of its research into the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on women in NI with many struggling to live dignified, healthy lives and meet their most basic needs
- ⇒ **Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE) Consultation** - the Consortium's response called for comprehensive RSE standardised across all schools taking into account the full range of relationships to aid the prevention of violence and abuse.
- ⇒ **Voluntary & Community Sector Infrastructure Support** - the Consortium's raised concerns about organisations selected by the Department who will form the Regional Infrastructure Delivery Partnership, whose funding will be secure whereas all other organisations will have to compete for funding.
- ⇒ **Re-introduction of Hospital Parking Charges (Revenue Raising)** - the Consortium outlined that women are more likely to work in the health service, to be carers and to be in receipt of social security benefits and in poverty so would be more likely to be impacted by these proposals. With many women struggling to afford the essentials they would be unable to pay any additional charges.
- ⇒ **Financial Context for Revenue Raising** – the Consortium's response stated its opposition to revenue raising given that many women are struggling to pay for the essentials and can little afford to pay additional charges of any kind.
- ⇒ **Domestic Rating Measures (Revenue Raising)** – the Consortium supported the removal of the Maximum Capital Value Cap so that who have the broadest shoulders should pay more towards their rates.
- ⇒ **Water and Sewerage Charges (Revenue Raising)** – the Consortium's response stated its opposition to the introduction of water and sewerage charges with many women struggling to afford their essential bills without these additional charges.

At A Glance

**Ensuring
policy makers
look at policy
through a
rural lens**

**43
Consultation
Responses**

**Connecting
grassroots
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Policy

WRDA and the Women's Policy Group submitted 29 responses to consultations and calls for evidence during the year as follows:

- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department of Infrastructure Consultation on Water & Sewerage Charges – March 2024
- ⇒ WRDA Response to Belfast City Council's consultation on draft city centre Bye-laws 'for the good governance of Belfast city centre and for the prevention and suppression of nuisances in Belfast city centre – March 2024
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department of Finance Consultation on Revenue Raising Measures – Domestic Rating Measures – February 2024
- ⇒ WPG NI Response Local Government Staffing Commission (LGSC) Trans Equality Policy – February 2024
- ⇒ WRDA Response to the Department for Communities (DfC) Consultation on Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Support – February 2024
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department of Finance Consultation on Revenue Raising Measures – January 2024
- ⇒ Women's Policy Group NI Response to Re-introduction of Hospital Parking Charges – January 2024
- ⇒ Submission by Northern Ireland civil society in response to the baseline report of the United Kingdom to the Istanbul Convention on tackling violence against women and girls – December 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Department of Education Consultation on Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) – November 2023
- ⇒ WRDA Response to Statutory Guidance On The Reduction And Management Of Restrictive Practices In Educational Settings In Northern Ireland – October 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to TEO EVAWG Draft Strategic Framework – October 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Westminster Women & Equalities Committee Inquiry into the Escalation of VAWG -September 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to TEO Period Products Consultation – September 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Concessionary Fares – August 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to The Department for Communities EQIA on Changes to the Discretionary Support Scheme – August 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to The Department for Education Budget EQIA – August 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to The Department for the Economy's Spending Plans for 2023–2024 Equality Impact Assessment – June 2023
- ⇒ WRDA Response to The Executive Office (TEO) Consultation on the Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 – June 2023

Policy

- ⇒ WRDA response to Climate Change – June 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department of Health's Spending Plans for 2023–2024 Equality Impact Assessment – June 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Department for Infrastructure's Spending Plans for 2023–2024 Equality Impact Assessment – June 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department for Communities' Spending Plans for 2023–2024 Equality Impact Assessment – June 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to The Executive Office's Spending Plans for 2023–2024 Equality Impact Assessment – June 2023
- ⇒ Women's Policy Group NI Response to OHCHR Call for Evidence on Challenges faced by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) working in conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected settings – May 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to the Department of Justice (DoJ)/ Department of Health (DoH) Draft Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy – May 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Domestic Abuse: Prohibitions for Cross-examination in Family Proceedings – April 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to TEO Ending VAWG: Experiences and Attitudes of 16-year-olds in Northern Ireland report – Readership Survey – April 2023
- ⇒ WPG NI Response to Department for the Economy Consultation on Circular Economy Strategy – March 2023

Rural

- ⇒ NIRWN hosted a focus group in Fermanagh for the Consumer Council on Night Time Travel safety
- ⇒ NIRWN hosted a rural focus group for the TEO on the End Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy
- ⇒ NIRWN supported Civic Initiatives to host two rural engagement events to hear the policy concerns and recommendations of rural women.
- ⇒ NIRWN has been on the steering Group for 'Nothing About Us Without Us' advocating for a Women's Health Strategy NI which was proposed as a motion in the first week of Assembly return and NIRWN brought rural women along to sit in the gallery and meet with political parties afterward.
- ⇒ NIRWN provided a presentation at the Changing Values in NI - Insights from the World Values Survey online event. NIRWN provided input on findings from a rural and gender perspective.

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Research

The Consortium conducts wide-ranging research into areas of relevance to women in disadvantaged and rural areas. The Consortium ascertains the views, needs, and aspirations of women in disadvantaged and rural areas and takes these views forward to influence policy development and future government planning, which ultimately results in the empowerment of local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities.

The Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Women in Northern Ireland

In June 2023 the Consortium in partnership with Ulster University launched a research paper on the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Women in NI. This followed a series of focus group discussions in Women's Centres and groups across NI to gather the experiences of 250 women on the impact of the Crisis on their lives and families.

The findings of the research paint a stark picture of women's lives with many experiencing hunger, cold, debt, anxiety and concerns about the outlook for themselves and their children. Many are having to make torturous decisions around feeding themselves and their families with many unable to live dignified, healthy lives.

The research demonstrated the disproportionate harm that the Cost of Living Crisis is having on women and children and called for investment in Discretionary Support and in Women's Centres who help address financial vulnerability and poverty. The research also called for the reversal of cuts to schemes that can help those on the lowest incomes including the Holiday Hunger Scheme and increased help for school uniform costs.

WSN on behalf of the Consortium is continuing to lobby for the recommendations from the research with Government departments, MLAs and other organisations. The research is also included in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) programme alongside Women's Platform and the NI Women's Budget Group.



Research

Women, Unpaid Care and Employment

In February 2024 the Consortium in partnership with Carers NI launched a research paper on Women, Unpaid Care and Employment. This followed a series of focus group discussions in Women's Centres and carers groups across NI and data from the Carers NI State of Caring Survey to gather experiences on the barriers to work for women with unpaid caring roles.

The findings of the research showed that one in three women who provide unpaid care have had to give up work due to the pressure of caring, one in four have had to reduce their hours and one in six have taken a less qualified job or turned down a promotion to fit around caring responsibilities. Focus group research clearly showed that women were "juggling" their caring role and employment often at the expense of their own career, finances and health and wellbeing.

The research called for greater support from both employers and Government for unpaid carers including more recognition and support from employers in the workplace as well as



“

Mum was sick one day and I asked for time off to take her to the GP. My boss just said, 'you'll have to take an annual leave day'. That was it... From management down, they rarely asked about what I was dealing with or what was going on in my world.”



carers NI



Women's Regional Consortium

the need to enshrine carers rights in legislation to ensure consistency across all employers. This would include legislation to introduce paid Carer's Leave from work separate to annual leave and a day one right to request flexible working for all unpaid carers. We would also like to see changes made to Carer's Allowance to improve the financial wellbeing of unpaid carers who are more likely to be women.

In partnership with Carers NI, WSN on behalf of the Consortium will continue to lobby for the recommendations from the research with Government departments, MLAs and the NI Assembly.

Rayna from Women's Centre Derry has spoken with women carers and gathered case studies to assist with research on how much caring roles impact on families and the lack of support and services that are available to them. This research is being done by the WSN Policy worker and it isn't always easy getting women together due to having caring responsibilities. Rayna and Catherine also attended the launch of the Career or Care report prepared for the Carer Poverty Commission NI by Carers NI and the Women's Regional Consortium on 27/02/2024.

At A Glance

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**Partnering
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**9 major
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Research

Research Hub

WRDA established a Research Hub in 2023 to ensure that WRDA's work is informed by women's lived experiences. The primary research produced by WRDA seeks to shine a light on gender inequalities in our society and understand what actions are required to tackle these inequalities. This year our research hub has produced seven pieces of research.

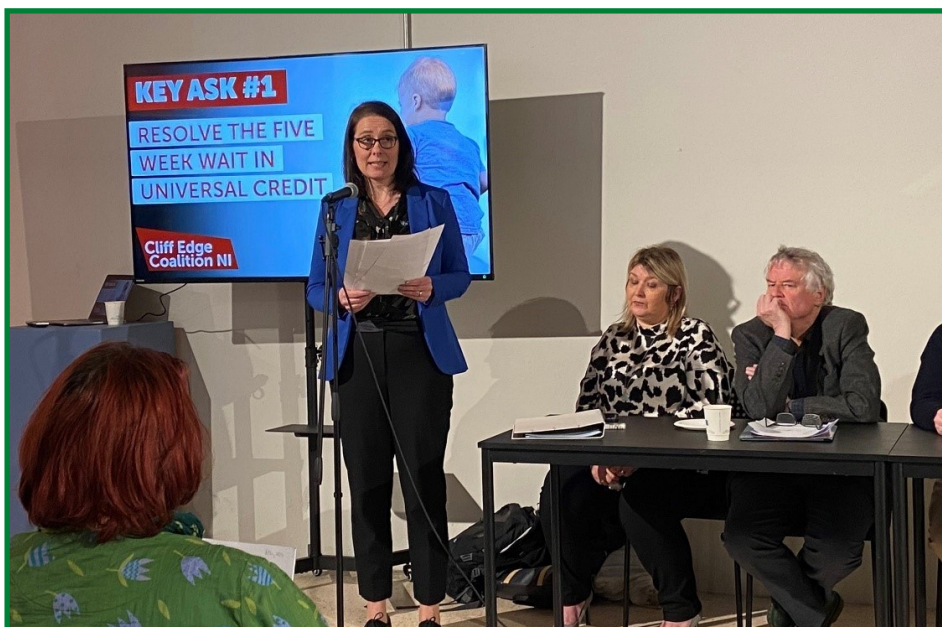
- ⇒ Key Research Findings: Health Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Chapter Two; The impact of the cost of living crisis on women's health – (February 2024)
- ⇒ Health Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Chapter Two; The impact of the cost of living crisis on women's health (February 2024)
- ⇒ After Violence: Attitudes and Reporting Violence Against Women and Girls WPG NI PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS (December 2023)
- ⇒ STUDENT PLACEMENT ORIGINAL RESEARCH – Conscientious objection to abortion amongst health care workers in Northern Ireland: Scoping Exercise (September 2023)
- ⇒ WPG Primary Research: 'After Violence: Attitudes and Reporting VAWG' Key Findings Report (September 2023)
- ⇒ Summary of Health Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Chapter One; The Impact of the Maternal Advocacy and Support Project (MAS)
- ⇒ Health Inequalities in Northern Ireland: Chapter One; The Impact of the Maternal Advocacy and Support Project (MAS) (February 2023)



Research

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Service Support & Engagement

The Consortium has links with hundreds of organisations across Northern Ireland, including networks, women's groups and community organisations. Through our membership networks we provide support, signposting and guidance to aid the strategic development and delivery of services for women in disadvantaged and rural areas. We also promote the work and services of local women's organisations, centres and groups. When surveyed in November 2023 83% of Consortium members rated the services they receive from the WRC as excellent or good. This demonstrates the quality of work done by the Consortium partners.

The Consortium aims to empower local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities. Engagement with individual women and organisations relating to their needs through our social media, information distribution, events, and individual outreach is a key aspect of achieving this aim.

2023 Christmas Appeal

This Christmas period, Foyle Women's Information Network continued our Christmas Appeal to help women and families facing the Cost of Living Crisis. Here, people make referrals or self-referrals to our team, providing the age and gender identity of the child who needs a gift. We then help to supply new gifts for these children and young people, as they all deserve a gift on Christmas morning. We were overwhelmed by the support and generosity of individuals within our community to help us fund this need. FWIN received a generous donation of £1,000 from a local business, which fueled our ability to spread our reach to even more young people within the area. Through the philanthropic nature of those who donated, we were able to reach and support 395 children in this appeal and we appreciate the support given by all for the project.

Women's Education

Women's Centre Derry offers blended learning to enable access to education for all women including women with caring responsibilities and ill health. Women's Centre Derry also provides Free childcare places for women with children under the age of 4 to engage in education and training.



Service Support & Engagement

In the year 23/24 Women's Centre Derry provided 12,301 course places to over 928 Women. Women's Centre Derry provided a range of services for example:

- ⇒ Education and Training
- ⇒ Employment support
- ⇒ Mental health and wellbeing programmes
- ⇒ Child development programmes
- ⇒ BME advocacy for children
- ⇒ English support classes for BME women
- ⇒ Mother and baby programmes
- ⇒ Wellbeing for refugees and asylum-seeking women counselling services

Events

When surveyed in November 2023 91% of Consortium members stated they had attended at least one Consortium event or activity in the past year.

Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) provide a range of workshops, panels, arts classes, conferences and events for women across the year. While some of our projects focus more on advocacy, leadership and representation, we believe it is important to provide for a range of needs and interests. Our crochet and craft classes have continued weekly throughout 2023, offering women an intergenerational space to learn a skill, relax and meet other women in the city. In our classes, women often crochet items of clothing or create decorations for themselves and loved ones. These programmes teach practical skills but also encourage women to take time for themselves.

We have continued to host our Annual Conferences, which in 2023 was funded by ROSA. We used their funding title for inspiration and "Voices from The Frontlines" was our conference theme. Over 100 women, community representatives and politicians joined us.



At A Glance

83% of Consortium members rated the services they receive from the WRC as excellent or good

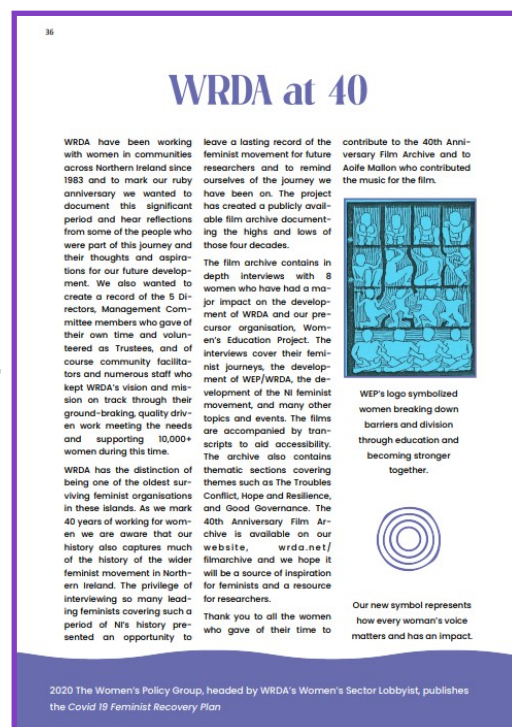
82.5% of Consortium members rated the level of information provided by the WRC as excellent or good

Service Support & Engagement

Events continued

Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN) marks its 30th birthday in 2024. We will be celebrating with a special event on International Women's Day week. At this event we are excited to look back over the past 30 years in the sector, and look forward to the next 30.

WRDA celebrated 40 years of working for women in November 2023. To mark our Ruby Anniversary we created an archive to record the development of WRDA and the wider feminist movement during that time. The film archive contains in depth interviews with 8 women who have had a major impact on the development of WRDA and our precursor organisation, Women's Education Project. The interviews cover their feminist journeys, the development of WEP/WRDA, the development of the NI feminist movement, and many other topics and events. The films are accompanied by transcripts to aid accessibility. The archive also contains thematic sections covering themes such as The Troubles Conflict, Hope and Resilience, and Good Governance. The 40th Anniversary Film Archive is available on our website, wrda.net/filmarchive and we hope it will be a source of inspiration for feminists and a resource for researchers.



The Cost of Living Crisis has been at the forefront of the consortiums work this year and its impact on women and families. Women's Centre Derry attended and spoke on the panel of the Eradication of Poverty event organised by NIAPN in the Guildhall on the 17th Oct 2023. This event was organised to show how families are struggling to survive and afford the very basics and what support the Women's Centres within the North-West are providing.

Women's Centre Derry attends meetings with the Equality Commission, Cliff edge Coalition, National Women's Council, Local Politicians & MLA's and various other engagement agencies to ensure that the needs of women are being met. Women Centre Derry also attended and spoke at the Ulster University & WSN Women's Lived Experiences event in Belfast 20th June 2023. Women Centre Derry compiled 2 case studies from 2 women in the North-West for the report and gave a detailed and factual account on how much the Cost of Living crisis was impacting on their lives and how much Women's Centre Derry has been supporting them through it.

Service Support & Engagement

Rural

It was a bumper year for rural engagement as NIRWN's individual membership increased by 27% from Jan 23-Jan 24. A keystone of the Consortium's engagement with rural women are the events NIRWN put on to celebrate International Day of Rural Women. In 2023 NIRWN hosted International Day of Rural Women Networking Conference in October for over 100 members.

NIRWN has provided a variety of opportunities throughout the year for women to network across the region and across their different groups. One example is our 'Women Lets Walk' series held in various locations regionally across the DAERA Forests and open to all women. We have many members who are not part of a local group but have expressed an interest in meeting other women and some who still feel anxious post covid meeting in enclosed spaces, so we designed this series of walks for them.



NIRWN has provided over 200 rural women with bespoke training opportunities and has provided direct in person engagement support regionally to rural womens' groups from areas as far apart as; Lisnaskea, Saval, Rasharkin, Glenariffe and Limavady. Many more women were signposted to service support via email and telephone. The bespoke training is provided in response to Membership need. This year a few examples of this are our January programming; two sessions focused on developing positive mindset and making small, manageable plans. This was in direct response to membership expressing that they struggled with this



time of year, feeling low post Christmas. In responses to members' expressing difficulty accessing timely, accurate menopause support and information NIRWN secured small amounts of PHA Clear funding to run our 'Menopause & Me' training across three rural health trust areas both in person and online.

At A Glance

83% of Consortium members rated the services they receive from the WRC as excellent or good

82.5% of Consortium members rated the level of information provided by the WRC as excellent or good

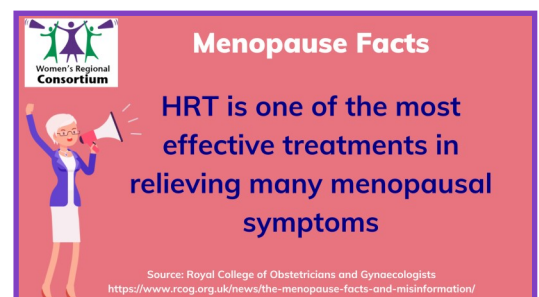
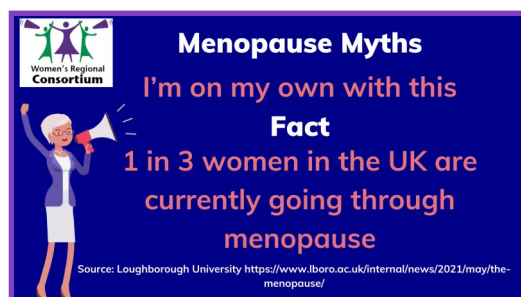
Service Support & Engagement



Social Media and Communications

When surveyed in November 2023 82.5% of Consortium members rated the level of information provided by the WRC as excellent or good. This indicates the WRC is continuing to provide useful information. The core of information provided by the WRC is disseminated via email updates and social media by the WRDA Communications and Membership Worker. The WRC publishes a general Ezine every month which covers the work of all seven Partners with a focus on upcoming events, training and funding news. A separate monthly Lobbying, Policy and Research Bulletin is also issued to our membership. This update focusses on consultation responses, lobbying campaigns and primary research produced by WRC Partners.

The Consortium also publishes a quarterly magazine taking a more in depth look at issues that matter to women in NI. Each edition of the WRC Quarterly Zine focuses on one of the Consortium's six key themes. This year we have published zines focusing on Childcare and Caring, Health and Wellbeing, and Education, Training and Work.



Service Support & Engagement

Social Media and Communications continued

The Consortium's social media channels are used to raise awareness of the work of the partners and so operate as a booster for their social media presence. The Consortium X account has 1,955 followers and has published over 1000 tweets. We posted to Facebook over 500 times. The website is updated monthly and has a large resources section, 304 new pieces of content have been added in 2023.



1000+

Tweets

1955

Followers



500+

Posts



16 Zines

& Email

Updates



304

Content

Updates

Over the next twelve months the Consortium will continue to offer a wide range of reliable information across all our channels.

WRDA distributes a monthly ezine and bi-monthly newsletter to over 1,500 women and organisations. WRDA's social media accounts include Facebook, X, Instagram, and the oldest community based E-group in Ireland, WomensLink. Through our wide range of channels we reach 7,346 women and organisations.

FWIN's weekly e-bulletins are issued to 1,000 women across the region and our bi-monthly newsletters are issued to 150 women via post. FWIN's social media accounts reach 5,000 women across Facebook, X and Instagram.

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Women Delivering Change

Notes

Notes

Working together in partnership to empower local women in disadvantaged and rurally isolated communities

The established link and strategic partner between government and statutory agencies and women in disadvantaged and rural areas

Women Delivering Change



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