



Women's Aid - Working to end violence in the

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News Aid

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News Aid

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The **NEW** Quarterly Newsletter from the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation



Mo Mowlam launches Friends of Women's Aid

The Secretary of State, Dr Mo Mowlam launched a new fundraising initiative by Northern Ireland Women's Aid, in Belfast last month. Speaking at the launch, Dr Mowlam said

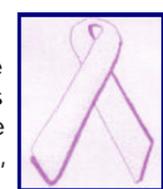
“ Women's Aid cannot operate, or indeed survive, without the support of their local communities and volunteers. This new leaflet will, I hope generate the support needed to carry on and extend the invaluable work of Women's Aid.”

The Secretary of State acknowledged that as the serious consequences of domestic violence become more widely recognised, the demand for services provided by Women's Aid has escalated.

'Friends of Women's Aid', aims to raise much needed funds to help provide vital support services for women and children in crisis and to maintain the 24-hour domestic violence Helpline. The launch was well attended by members from voluntary, community and statutory agencies throughout the Province.

'Friends Women's Aid' is a practical way of making a commitment to the work of ensuring that help is available when it is required and also supporting preventative educational work, which is the key to long term solutions. *continued on page 4*

“Real men don't abuse women!”



The Northern Ireland Committee launched the Campaign of Action Against Violence Against Women on April 12th this year at Cornmarket, Belfast. The Lady Mayoress was presented with the first white ribbon in support of the campaign. Speaking at the launch, Joan Smith from the Equal opportunities Commission urged everyone to raise awareness of the high level of violent deaths and injuries to women throughout the province.

The aim of the Northern Ireland campaign is to join efforts with those throughout Europe from voluntary, public and private sector organisations to increase the level of public understanding against such violence and its impact on society.

DURING THE LAST YEAR 10 WOMEN HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR PARTNERS, hundreds have been terrorised and intimidated. Women throughout Europe are calling on men to become involved in the search for solutions. The message of the campaign is “Real men don't abuse women-wear the ribbon to show support.” *continued on page 4*

In this issue...

- ◆ New law new hope for victims
- ◆ The battle of the sexes
- ◆ Stress busters
- ◆ And lots of other bits



New law new hope for victims

The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998 which comes into effect this year, changes the domestic violence law quite significantly. Here are some of the answers to the most common questions about the new law;
Who does the new law protect?

- A spouse or cohabitee
- "associated persons" - other family members (e.g. an elderly person whose adult son is being violent could get a protection order)
- People who are parents or have parental responsibility for the same child
- Former spouses or cohabitees
- "People who are living in the same household other than as a lodger and tenant"

What can a court do for them?

- It can issue a non-molestation order which prohibits the other party from molesting the applicant or associated person
- It can issue an occupation order. This is available to a spouse, cohabitant, former spouse or former cohabitant or to another family member who has property rights in the house.

How do you apply for one of these orders?

The courts will help a personal applicant. A solicitor can provide legal advice and the applicant may qualify for legal aid.

What if there are children in the family?

Where one parent has been violent to the other, a non-molestation order is in place and they have separated, the possibility of future violence is one which the court will have to consider when making a contact order on behalf of a violent parent. Until now, the court had the power to allow Social Services to remove a physically or sexually abused child from the house, under this new law the court can order the abuser to leave the house.

If someone chooses to leave their home does it affect their rights?

If someone leaves the home to escape the violence of their partner it will NOT affect their property rights in the house in subsequent divorce proceedings.

A full copy of the new law is available from NIWAF library



The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform would like to invite members and non-members to an information evening on

THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY OBSERVATORY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.

Speaker: Angela Courtney (NIWAF)
UK Member of the Observatory
The information night will be on
Wednesday 2 June 1999

at 7.30 pm

in N.I.W.E.P Offices
52 Elmwood Avenue
Belfast BT9 6AZ

Anyone wishing to attend please contact NIWEP at
01232 682296 or
email Niwep@onyxnet.co.uk



The Young Person's Development Project



Internally we have just completed the first pilot run of "Protective Behaviours for Children under Stress", a six week accredited course. Well done to all participants! You were a great group to start with.

Valerie McKenzie, a student from Jordanstown has recently completed a 13 week placement with NIWAF. The main focus of Valerie's work was to deliver a series of workshops using the 'No Fear' pack with young men's groups. The project was a great success. Well done Val and good luck for the future!

This song has been kindly donated by a local songwriter. We hope to use it sometime this year in a media campaign. If you have any thoughts or comments, please send them to Newsaid.

Left his fiddle at the door

He was the heart and soul of every party,
Every woman's fantasy and dream come true.
And when Jenny won his hand
She was the envy of the land,
Wed to a charmin' lover through and through.

But, soon the honeymoon was over,
All too soon her blushes turned to tears.
All too soon his pillow talk
Was made up of taunt and mock,
Till the love she bore was stripped away by fear.

Chorus

And he'd play his game just like the perfect angel,
Mister Public friends and neighbours all adored.
But when he'd head back home he'd assume a different role,
Mister Private left his fiddle at the door.

Jenny played the role of lovin' housewife,
Bore his children and the burden of her shame.
Standin' smilin' by his side
I could see she'd rather cry,
But no one knew her secret pain. Cause.....

By Malachy Duffin

Good Luck Lisburn Women's Aid!



Lisburn Women's Aid is going through an extremely exciting and energising period. Something like flying through the air by the seat of your pants....with no parachute!!

We are expecting the handover of our beautiful, new, purpose-built refuge from Ulidia Housing Association by the end of April. Funders willing, we anticipate opening our doors to abused women and children some time in May.

Between now and then we have our work cut out: Our stalwart management committee has been labouring for about two years to give birth to our 'baby', and have successfully opened an Information and Support Centre on Bachelors Walk (no pun intended!) in September '98. In December, Clara was hired as Team Leader, and came on board in January.

We have been working feverishly on fundraising, selecting equipment for the refuge (from beds to teaspoons), networking our area, visiting other refuges and preparing for volunteer recruitment and training which we hope will double our womanpower.



Hope is hearing the melody of the future
Faith is dancing to it TODAY!



Our personal thanks go out to all who have helped bring us this far, and in particular to Cecilia, Roberta and Eithne who have sweated blood along with us (and continue to do so). Please keep us in your thought as we get ready for the final push which will result in the safe delivery of our refuge into the world. Like most mothers, we are still trying to think of a suitable name!

Lisburn Women's Aid

Up and Coming.....

Funding has been secured to produce a training video addressing the issue of children and domestic violence. Anyone interested in becoming part of a steering group to guide the project through to completion should contact Sandra at the regional office. It is hoped that the first meeting will take place in June.

Various individuals and organisations have highlighted the need for an activity pack for children to raise awareness of feelings and behaviours at primary school age. To address this need, Sandra is currently working on a children's pack which is based around the themes of protective behaviours.

Stars in our midst- A group of 16 young people from the Foyle and Fermanagh Drama Project are heading out to Boston this month to perform a piece of drama as part of the Peace Prize event and to meet the cast of Red Tide (a domestic violence interactive play for young people). We wish them well and look forward to a full report on their return.

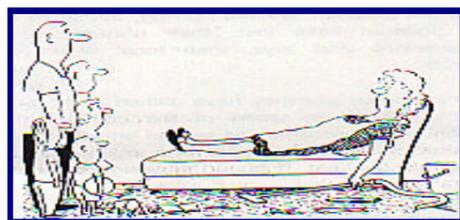
For more info on any of the above projects, contact Sandra Corrigan-Young Person's Development Worker at NIWAF.

GET Active in the Community Awards!

These award offers grants of up to £250 to community and voluntary groups to develop new initiatives to promote physical activity in the community. Projects or initiatives should be designed to help overcome the barriers to exercising. This means giving consideration to making activities sociable and fun and providing transport or childminding facilities if necessary. Activities could include, for example, a walking group which meets regularly, swimming outings to a local leisure center or dancing lessons. (This could possible be used for children or women in the refuge). For further information about this initiative please telephone Douglas King or Wade Gibson at Disability Action on 01232 491011.

European Campaign cont.

The programme of events to be held throughout the year has not yet been finalised but there will be a schools poster competition and exhibition of international posters held in the summertime. The committee has also planned a series of editorials for the Belfast Telegraph which will highlight many of the issues facing women in today's society. For more information about the Campaign contact Charlene at NIWAF.



"There's nothing wrong - I always take a break every two years."



Dates for the diary

- ◆ **Understanding and Dealing with Sexual Abuse** - Council for the Homeless two day training course - Belfast 20 & 21 April. Tel: Council For the Homeless 01232 246440
- ◆ **Introduction to Counseling** - a two day training course with NICVA - Belfast 19 & 26 May.
- ◆ **Staff Recruitment & Selection** - a two day training course with NICVA - Belfast 27th & 28th May. Tel: NICVA 01232 321 224
- ◆ **"Courage to Speak - Dare to listen" An interagency approach to surviving sexual abuse** - Derry 1 June. Tel: Karen Meehan, Derry Well Woman 01504 860086
- ◆ **Housing and Relationship Breakdown**-a two day training course with Housing Rights Service - Belfast 7th & 8th June; Derry 18 & 21 June; Omagh 24 & 25 June Tel 245640 for details.
- ◆ **Let the Family Speak** -Conference in June, organised by Barnardos with the EHSSB, Childcare N.I and the Ulster Hospital and Community Trust. It will provide a radical alternative to the intervention of professionals in dealing with family problems and it offers a new approach that is totally in line with Children (NI) Order. Contact Barnardos for more information.
- ◆ **Into the mainstream: contemporary perspectives on domestic violence** - International Seminar organised by The British Council and the Office of Law reform- Belfast 12-17 September 1999.Tel: The British Council 01865 316636

The battle of the sexes?

In the wake of the foundation of AMEN¹, we are increasingly being asked to comment on male victims of domestic violence. NIWAF has always maintained that domestic violence is a community problem, which needs to be addressed by many agencies if solutions are to be found.

We need to be very clear about the cultural values which have underpinned the subordination of women and violence against them through many centuries. Exercise of coercive power, control and domination in intimate relationships between men and women have only recently been challenged by social and political institutions. Although, in Medieval times there were community sanctions applied to male victims of domestic violence. This minority of men who were 'letting the side down', by allowing themselves to be downtrodden were shamed and named, tied on a donkey facing backwards and paraded through the town as a lesson to other men to fulfill their assigned social role.

The founders of Women's Aid more than twenty years ago witnessed the terrible plight of women and children who suffered in silence and lived in fear of violence and emotional abuse in their own homes. Thousands of women have used our extensive network of refuges and support centres since the 1970s. The developments have been needs-led.

The majority of research in the UK, Canada, USA, Europe and elsewhere indicates that 90-95% of domestic violence victims are female and yes there may be under reporting in a 'macho' culture which mocks men who do not conform to sex role stereotyping.

While Women's Aid does not invite male callers, a few do contact our 24-hour Helpline. All callers are given an appropriate response: one which is confidential, respectful and hopefully, helpful. Male victims are referred to Victim Support for further advice. NIWAF has provided consultancy to a Northern Ireland based group that intends to establish a service for male callers. The Northern Ireland Regional Forum on Domestic Violence has initiated a research study on the needs of male victims of domestic violence.

In some quarters, much energy is spent and wasted by engaging in confrontation on this issue by presenting domestic violence as having been hijacked by women for their own ends, while ignoring male victims. The recently enacted Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order is, like all legislation is gender neutral. The Northern Ireland Policy on Domestic Violence launched in 1995 is similarly gender neutral. Practitioners in social work, healthcare agencies and the criminal justice system

have only slowly uncovered what many women have hidden because of the 'victim blaming', which until recently has been the most common response to abused women.

As men and women, we have all been raised within a patriarchal culture of one sort or another. When aspects of society seem to be matriarchal, this is not necessarily better rather it mirrors the male created and dominated power structures, where having control of and holding power over others are held as important values. Violence against women has been institutionalised in most societies.

As we move into the new millennium many social movements (including Women's Aid) are aware that these are the attitudes which we need to leave behind. New structures and relationships are necessary and they are now being created. What will help us all survive, grow and prosper is a society based on sharing of power and resources, equality of dignity, respect and opportunity of all and compassion for those in fear and danger.

We will build such a society by fostering these values and attitudes in the home. The vision of ending domestic violence will be realised when enough of us work towards this end in every way possible among all groups and sections of society. The "sex war" has been like all wars, destructive of humanity. There is no justification for using victims of domestic violence as a way of extending hostilities.

¹-AMEN for male victims of domestic abuse (Co.Meath)



Cecilia's Stress Busters....



Stress isn't new, in primitive times it was primarily designed to ensure survival when faced with danger. the response-to trigger the release of the body's full energy potential to deal with the perceived or real threat. For women and children affected by domestic violence that threat is still all too real. However, for many others nowadays the threats are best described as high pressure anxieties and challenges which are as likely to be emotional as physical. Stress isn't necessarily a bad thing, as long as the pressure and anxiety levels can be kept under control.

Nevertheless, we all have a stress threshold, a point when the challenges become too much to cope with. It is then when there are too many challenges or they persist for too long that health and fitness can become affected. There are key steps which help to reduce stress;

- (a) **learn to identify your own stress threshold and the signs that tell you when its too high**
- (b) **take time to stop and recognise what's causing the stress and the areas we can do something about, those we need to let go of and those we can share with others to get support**
- (c) **develop a way to make stress work for you-**

- B**e aware of how much you can influence change in your life
- E**at food which you know makes you feel better
- N**o-learn to say it more often to others demands
- E**xercise is excellent for reducing the effects of stress
- F**ind the holistic approach that suits you, reflexology, dance, talking etc
- I**dentify areas which your employer and others can influence through policies, procedures and responses
- T**ime for yourself can mean you are better able to cope

An author on stress wrote

"It is the ability and willingness of an individual to decide how to deal with stress which moves the person from powerlessness to managing"

Moving from powerlessness to managing is the challenge for us all!

Are you a rabbit?

The Chinese New Year began on the 16th February. 1999 is the year of the rabbit. People born in the year of the rabbit are of compliant nature, they relish making friends and get on with everyone. Rabbits themselves are friendly, being sociable in manners and social graces which wins them many friends. They rarely say anything out of turn or unpleasant as they do not wish to offend anyone. As well as being very particular about food they are also stylish dressers. If you are female, you are a meticulous person who will attend to all details; ambiance is everything. Female rabbits are sensitive, sentimental and emotional creatures and are popular and respected. In terms of fate, rabbits have a smooth course in life and they gradually embark upon finding harmony and tranquility in their lives.

Other 'rabbit' years: 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987.

Celebrity 'rabbits': Marie Curie, Albert Einstein & Napoleon

Roll Up! Roll Up!

CALLING all frustrated authors, poets, critics, cartoonists and commentators..... Climb up on your soapbox and reach for your fifteen minutes of fame! We need your input: cartoons, letters, articles, poems, opinions (as if you have any!), book reviews etc...etc...



We are supposed to be a co-operative, more or less so CO-OPERATE (please). Send Contributions for the next issue of Newsaid before the 11th July

Friends of Women's Aid cont.

The launch of 'Friends of Women's Aid' coincides with NIWAF's 21st anniversary and the 1999 European Campaign Against Violence Against Women"

Joan Smith, from the Equal Opportunities Commission and Professor Monica McWilliams from the Women's Coalition also endorsed the new initiative. Monica, a friend and supporter of Women's Aid for many years said

"I know from my own research that Women's Aid has played an enormous part, not only in offering women and children refuge when they most need it, but in supporting them emotionally and psychologically during and after this time."

It is also hoped that 'Friends of Women's Aid' will encourage volunteers to form fundraising committees that will organise events and awareness raising campaigns. Contact NIWAF for further information



Star Volunteers

Women's Aid is able to exist only because of the labours of countless volunteers. We would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of each one here and now, and in order to highlight their work, we invite your nomination for a STAR volunteer for each following issues of Newsaid: someone whose exploits of courage or steady devotion have earned your eternal gratitude and admiration, etc. etc...Include a photo if you can, and use about 100 words to express your thoughts and feelings. ANYBODY involved with Women's Aid is eligible to nominate a volunteer: women, other volunteers or paid

Did you know.....

- ◆ Women got full voting rights in Russia 28 years before women in Ireland did!
- ◆ The Home Office are planning for a domestic violence component to be included in the **Crime Reduction Programme**. This will entail the commitment of £6 million over three years from April 1999. It is currently proposed to begin work by commissioning separate brief and speedy reviews of what is known about different aspects of domestic violence e.g a review of the costs; dealing with perpetrators, Health Services etc. For more information contact the Home Office Tel: 0171 2733800
- ◆ **The Domestic Violence Data Source** (dvds) is an information co-ordinating system which aims to provide up to date material about domestic violence in the UK. The dvds will monitor, collate and co-ordinate information from the following areas: medical, legal, social and other relevant research; support services; voluntary and statutory agencies; legal initiatives and available expertise and skills bases. An advisory group made up of women from all over the UK working in the field of domestic violence assisted in the development of dvds (Charlene from NIWAF is in the group). dvds is internet based and can be found at this address: <http://www.domesticviolencedata.org>

