



News Aid

Northern Ireland and Women's Aid Federation wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

December 1999

Issue 2



Visuals Against Violence Exhibition.



Women's Aid Celebrate 21st Anniversary with VISUALS AGAINST VIOLENCE EXHIBITION

Visuals Against Violence Exhibition was launched in November by Assembly Member Monica McWilliams at Belfast's Waterfront Hall. It was organised by Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation (NIWAF) to mark their 21st anniversary and the beginning of '16 days of activism against gender violence'. For the past eight years, activities organized around the world during the '16 days of activism' - November 25 - December 10 - have raised awareness of all forms of violence against women. Violence against women occurs in all aspects of women's lives. It encompasses abuses of women's civil, cultural,

economic, political and social rights.

Charlene Craig from Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation stressed the invaluable work that NIWAF has been doing since its formation in 1978. "In the last 21 years over 33,000 women & children have been accommodated in Women's Aid refuges in Northern Ireland and around 90,000 people have been given advice and support."

The poster exhibitions displayed words and images on the issue of violence against women from women's organisations throughout the world. It included the 'Banner Project' from Wisconsin, which represents a symbolic gathering of incest survivors and is made up of the handprint quilt sections of hundreds of survivors from all across the World.

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The views expressed in this newsletter should not necessarily be taken as Women's Aid policy.

If you would like to contribute to Newsaid, please let us know your views, ideas, comments or queries by email, fax or post to Charlene at NIWAF.



Putting Safety First



"Integrated domestic abuse intervention projects" (IDAIIP) are coming to the fore in several countries. The models of practice most often cited have been operating for over 15 years in the United States, Duluth, Minnesota and Quincy in Massachusetts they have proved to be very effective in reducing the high rate of domestic violence.

What are the prospects of our rapidly developing inter-agency work becoming such a model of good practice? The intervention projects are rooted in the judicial system and it is these agencies on the NI Forum on Domestic Violence, which have been asked to explore the possibilities.

It has to be said that a 'Duluth' or 'Quincy' model can not be just imported to another location. The essence of these projects is that they engaged local people working in all the relevant agencies in a common search for solutions. They grew out of 'landmark' cases which shocked the local population.

We, in Northern Ireland have had many shocking cases throughout the last 20 years but our press and public have been looking at equally shocking events in the political arena and given them the priority attention.

Nevertheless several agencies here have been quietly bringing in the sort of changes in law and practice which laid the foundation for reform in

the successful intervention projects in the United States. There are clear differences in the judicial systems in the US and UK, but our Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order gives the same opportunities to ensure that an effective use of the civil law can offer greater protection to those victims most at risk. Intervention programmes for perpetrators designed to prevent the escalation of their violent and controlling behaviour are also developing.

The shelter movement in the US has had a key role in such protective strategies, and here in Northern Ireland thousands of women recognise that the refuges have been central in enabling them to break away from the paralysing fear which is the result of repeated physical and/or emotional assault.

The Justice Sub-Group of the NI Domestic Violence Forum is undertaking a survey of attitudes and practice in key agencies with a view to piloting an integrated system. The idea is that all players would co-operate in a concerted effort to improve practice by putting the safety of the victim at the heart of the process. The first step is a small-scale survey of victims' experiences of the present system.

The short questionnaire to learn from their opinions is being distributed within key agencies including Women's Aid.

It seems like a good place to begin.

NIWAF appoints Equality Worker

"I am happy to tell you that I have recently begun working for NIWAF as the Equality Project Worker. The Equality post is an exciting new post, which is initially funded for two years and will build upon the previous work of the Ethnic Minority worker.

The primary aim of this post is *"to develop the promotion of equality, diversity and the rights of women and children from minority communities of interest who are at risk of domestic violence"*

Equality can be activated by a number of processes. For example, written policies, anti-discrimination training, establishing links with minority groups and trainers, examining ideas of equality (what it means to individuals) along with identifying and challenging inequalities.

While looking at equality it is also important to examine ideas around minority identity, for example, that each woman and child from a minority group owns their individual human identity and possess other multi-identities (e.g. mother, breadwinner, worker etc.). An identity is not just about being a black woman, disabled woman, an older woman etc. It is much wider than that and by identifying this wider issue we can begin to look at equality.

Next year, I hope to visit with you all at the refuges, aftercare centres and advice centres to hear your ideas about the project. Please get in touch with me anytime if you would like to find out more about the Equality Project."

Sandra Broghan- Equality Project Worker (NIWAF)

Exhibition cont.

At the launch, Angela Courtney from Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation said

"The exhibition reminds us that violence against women is a world wide problem, it is encouraging to see that there is also world wide movement against it. When taking action, we are full aware that when we act locally, but think globally, better solutions will be found and they will have a greater effect. This year we are joining with our sisters as part of the "European Campaign Against Violence Against Women" to highlight the 16 days of activism"

Unfortunately, attendance from local groups was very poor, which must be due to the heavy workload of staff and volunteers. However, the exhibition achieved its aim and was very successful overall. It received maximum publicity. Angela was interviewed for UTV Live and Charlene even did an interview for a young person's programme on BBC Choice (digital channel).

The visitors book was filled with encouraging comments and words of praise for Women's Aid. The exhibition was extended for a few days which meant that it was still on show when the Unionist Party had their conference. So hopefully, we might have made our mark to future government leaders!

The poster from Australia sums up the message that we are trying to make. It shows men, women and children from all walks of life and professions with the slogan

"We will not tolerate violence against women"



The Exhibition



Angela Courtney holding the Quilt from Wisconsin



From left: Angela Courtney (NIWAF), Monica McWilliams (Women's coalition), Charlene Craig (NIWAF)

LISBURN WOMEN'S AID LAUNCHES NEW SERVICE FOR WHEN HOME IS WHERE THE HURT IS

In November, Lisburn Women's Aid reached another crucial stage in the development of their services for women and children who have suffered domestic violence. At the celebratory event in The Irish Linen Centre marking the launch of refuge and support services, Lisburn Women's Aid shared their success and achievement with the local community and special guests.

Professor Monica McWilliams, Assembly Member for The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, was guest speaker at the launch.

This is a bittersweet moment of celebration for the committee, staff and volunteers, who now fully realise the true need for this service. In only five months, the refuge has already accommodated almost 70 women and children. Lisburn Women's Aid is proud to be able to support women and children, but regrets the pain and suffering experienced by so many.

The launch marks the end of three years of hard work for Lisburn Women's Aid. The refuge was jointly planned and developed with Ulidia Housing Association, whose representative addressed the guests from local organisations in Lisburn. In

addition, Angela Courtney from Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation and Colin McKay from Down Lisburn Health and Social Services Trust, lent their support, both to the event and to the work of the last three years.

Elaine Carson, the Chairperson of Lisburn Women's Aid, took the opportunity to thank all their supporters and funders. She said:

"While we are proud of our achievement to date, we know that we must continue our efforts to ensure the safety of abused women and children. We urge our voluntary and statutory partners to continue to support Women's Aid and to work towards safer homes and communities for everyone."



Angela Courtney and Wendy Austin at the launch of the churches document.

Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights sent these words of support to Lisburn Women's Aid...

"This is an occasion to remind ourselves that although women's equal dignity and human rights are affirmed in many national and international declarations, there is a long way to go before these rights are realised in practice. But that does not mean that we should not reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of basic human rights by all women.

Violence against women is an abhorrent thing. It deprives women of their basic rights and freedoms.

Governments should recognise the value of shelters, refuges and "hot-lines" that offer support and assist survivors of all forms of violence against women and also provide a focus for social services, such as counselling, public education and outreach services. And governments should do everything possible to bring the perpetrators of violence against women to justice.

Fighting for women's human rights is a positive struggle which recognises the quality of women's contribution to every aspect of the community. I am convinced that the best hope for realising the human rights of women lies in the efforts of women themselves.

Congratulations on the establishment of the Women's Aid group in Lisburn and best wishes to you in your important work." *Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Churches involved in Major initiative on domestic violence

Northern Ireland Women's Aid welcomes "Ending the Pain and Healing the Hurt", a publication launched in November. The booklet is a practical guide to responding to domestic violence aimed at faith communities in Ireland. Leaders are urged to educate their congregations about the needs of families and resources in the community and to learn more about responding appropriately themselves.

Guidance is given on the laws on domestic violence, help available for victims and perpetrators and preaching on domestic violence.

The four main churches were represented by:

1. Rt Rev Dr John Lockington, Moderator Presbyterian Council
2. Rt Rev James Moore, Bishop of Connor (Church of Ireland)
3. Dr Kenneth Wilson, President of the Methodist Church
4. Rev Michael McGinnity, Family Ministry Office, Diocese of Down & Connor (Roman Catholic).

Among others present were members of the Bahá'í faith, Baptists and Christian Fellowship churches.

TV presenter, Wendy Austin, ensured that many of the guests were able to contribute their ideas for tackling domestic violence, using the theme "Translating Hope into Action".

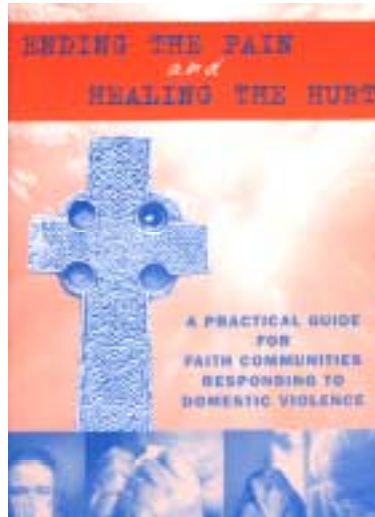
The initiative arose from the Regional Forum on Domestic Violence. Its Churches Sub Group has worked for over a year to agree strategies in response to the Forum's decision to work against domestic violence by involving all of the key players in the community.

Angela Courtney, Regional Management Co-ordinator of Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, who is a member of the Forum on Domestic Violence and chairs the Churches Sub Group, said:

"It is apparent that church communities could make a huge difference in increasing awareness and creating a more compassionate society. I have been tremendously encouraged by the commitment of those who have come forward to work on the issue. It is obvious that clergy and parish workers are well

aware of domestic violence in their communities, what has been lacking is guidance and strategies for responding. I hope that the launch of this booklet marks a significant turning point"

The document can be purchased from NIWAF at a cost of £2 plus P&P for individual copies and £1 each for bulk orders.



The deputy Lady Mayoress with Wendy Austin and representatives from the four main churches.

NEW Northern Ireland Government Departments

On Monday 29 November 1999 the largest political parties at the Northern Ireland Assembly nominated their political representatives to head up the new Government Departments.

On Thursday 2 December 1999 devolution saw the transfer of powers* to Northern Ireland.

There are now ten Government departments, replacing the previous six. The new departments are: Environment, Health and Social Services/Public Safety, Education,

Finance and Personnel, Enterprise/Trade and Investment, Regional Development, Social Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Higher Education/Training and Employment, Culture/Arts and Leisure. Each new department has a committee comprising 11 Assembly members whose role is to advise and assist each assigned Minister.

* Powers that remain the responsibility of Westminster include security, policing and criminal justice and tax-raising.

These developments bring a set of new challenges to the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. Contact details and committee members of the new departments are available from the NIWAF Library.

Splitting up! Need advice?

Gingerbread Northern Ireland has launched a new Advice Pack for lone parents. The pack contains ten information leaflets giving information on issues such as Child Support, Housing Benefits, Children and Relationship Breakdown. The pack is free to lone parents and are available from Gingerbread 01232 231417.

Ever been a victim of the COWBOY WORKMAN?

I have, he promised me faithfully that no job was to small and that he would be with me first thing Monday morning: that was 6 months ago and I am still waiting.

It is the age-old story, one that I am sure, if you have not personally experienced you know someone who has. The problem is that if many of these minor jobs go unattended they can lead to considerably more expense at a later stage, or worse still they could actually put lives at risk.

The Handihelp project is available in Belfast/Greater Belfast and in Newry and Mourne provides a practical

solution to this problem. Two fully qualified tradesmen have been employed by a partnership of three local charities, namely Help the Aged, Victim Support and the Fold Housing Trust. This technician will carry out minor household repairs and install security equipment for older people, lone parents and those affected by disability and other vulnerable adults in the community.

You simply purchase the materials, (or if you wish we can do that on your behalf) jobs will cost less than a £10 callout charge. So, if you want that annoying little job done and do not want to experience the exasperation caused by the Cowboy Workman, get in touch on either **Belfast (02890) 428314** or **Newry (02830) 257575** and one of our technicians will arrange to come out and assess your job.

NIWAF goes Global

NIWAF have finally gone online. You can visit our new website at :

www.niwaf.org

If you have anything you would like to add to the website or have any suggestions for improvements please contact Charlene on Tel: (028) 90 249041 Or email

niwaf@dnet.co.uk



New service for Antrim

Ballymena Women's Aid was formed in 1995, it opened its 32 bed refuge in 1998 to provide high quality accommodation to women and their children who had to flee their homes due to domestic violence. Since opening, 65 women and 102 children have sought refuge and support.

Ballymena Women's Aid is based in Ballymena but serves a wide geographical area of Co. Antrim. Antrim town is an area with a very high incidence of domestic violence. One third of the women who stayed in the refuge last year were women from Antrim, accordingly, Ballymena Women's Aid sought and received funding from the Antrim Borough Partnership for a development project to be based in Antrim town. They also received funds from the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust to employ a Development Worker. The Development Worker, Naiobh Adams took up post in early September and Ballymena Women's Aid has rented an office in Antrim as a base for the project.

The project has several aims:

- ◆ To offer drop-in/phone support to women in Antrim experiencing domestic violence, including holding "clinics" in rural areas.
- ◆ To offer aftercare to women and children leaving refuge to live in Antrim.
- ◆ To raise awareness of Women's Aid by offering training on domestic violence to statutory bodies and community groups in the area including church groups and the clergy.
- ◆ To begin preventative work in schools using training materials developed by NI WAF.

The office in Antrim officially opened on November 26th and it will open three mornings a week for drop-in. Appointments can be made for other times. If you want further information on Women's Aid work in Antrim please contact Naiobh on (01849) 460516

Christmas Appeal

**Don't suffer
Alone this Christmas
Help is at hand.....**

Silent Night, Violent Night.
All is cold after the fight.
Mother and child wait patiently
Until they know its safe to break
free.

There are no wise men.
There's no bright star.
But they are weary
They've travelled far.
They see a light, the refuge is
there.

Is there any room?
Will they turn us away?
She cries out in despair.

The door is opened.
She feels the warmth.
We are full but don't worry
We'll make room for you anyway.

Y.McC

These are the words of a survivor of domestic abuse.

Last year ten women weren't so lucky, they died as a result of domestic violence.

If you or a friend/family member are suffering domestic violence you can talk to someone at our 24 Hour Helpline (02890) 331818 in strictest confidence.



In September, NI WAF launched its Strategic Development Plan for 1999-2002 at Stormont. Copies of "A vision for the new century-eliminating domestic violence" are available from NI WAF.

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