

## Minister Ritchie Announces a Further Year of Emergency Childcare Funding

On the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2009, Margaret Ritchie, MLA and DSD Minister announced a further year of emergency funding to support the childcare provision of 13 Women's Centres across Northern Ireland. Childcare provision in the women's centres is an essential service provided to women attending training and programmes in the centres. The announcement was made during a visit to one of the women's centres -The Learning Lodge in Magherafelt.

Dr Margaret Ward, WCRP Chair, said: "I congratulate the Minister and her officials for the strong support they continue to demonstrate towards women and children in disadvantaged areas. This funding will enable the childcare provision to continue for a further twelve months. We would ask the Executive to agree a coherent approach to childcare and we urge all Ministers to resolve this as a matter of urgency."

Childcare provision in the Women's Centres is affordable, flexible and of a high standard and is offered to women returning to education. In 2007 - 2008, the Women's Centres provided 4,234 childcare places weekly to more than 1,000 children. The DSD emergency fund will guarantee more than half of those places for a further year.

The WCRP Childcare Subgroup Chair, Margaret Logue, added: "Lack of affordable and high quality childcare provision is often the major barrier to women returning to education and employment. Government Departments investing in childcare invest in the future of our communities."



*Minister Margaret Ritchie, MLA with Councillor Kate McEldowney, Moira McLaughlin, Learning Lodge Magherafelt and WCRP Directors*

The WCRP is urging all Government Departments to work towards a Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland which will value the existing provision in the women's organisations and focus on the benefits that this service offers to local communities.

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2009** - The WCRP Policy Subgroup will launch the Briefing Paper, "Working in the Community: The Contribution of Women's Centres to their Local Communities." This event will be hosted by the Equality Commission NI.

**9<sup>th</sup> June 2009** – This is the date of the next WCRP Network meeting. The meeting will be organised in collaboration with the Foyle Women's Information Network in the North West.

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## STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

On the 27<sup>th</sup> January, the WCRP organised a workshop on stress management for managers and staff working in the women's centres.

We met in Toome and reflected on self-care and how important this is for all workers who are Leaders and Carers in the women's centres frontline services. Theresa Watson, Manager of Chrysalis Women's Centre, said "Pressures in our daily jobs come to us from many directions – the incessant reporting to the funders, the consequential managerial decisions on staffing and resources we need to take, the work that most of us still do directly with women attending the centre." Theresa has been involved in the work of Chrysalis from its inception and recognises that stress and fatigue are increasing at an alarming rate among women working in the frontline service. She added: "In the women's centres, we are mostly "hands-on" managers directing a varied team of staff and volunteers. The image of the manager "sitting behind the desk" does not fit unless you come to the centres after working hours when we have a real chance to sit and catch up with the paper work!"



Managers and staff from the Women's Centres enjoying the Stress Management Workshop in Toome

The workshop was designed to explore the causes and the effects of stress and examine the concepts of "compassion fatigue" and "burnout". The participants had also the opportunity to learn self help techniques like tai chi, acupuncture, emotional freedom and breath work. The programme was delivered by Ann Brady and Paula Carron who work with Capacitar. Ann said "Capacitar means "to empower." Our vision is to heal ourselves and to heal our world. Using a hands-on popular education approach, we teach simple wellness practices that lead to healing, wholeness and peace in the individual and in the world. Capacitar is committed to communities affected by violence, poverty and trauma, uniting people across borders in solidarity, understanding and reconciliation".

One common experience among the participants was that to "say no" to the many requests and pressures of our working and family lives is often difficult and painful. One useful tip was presented - when you are overwhelmed by many demands on your time, think this: "If you cannot say no, what is the quality of your yes?" It is a powerful question, don't you think?

## MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES ATTENDED

## WCRP OUT AND ABOUT ...

NICVA's **Dialogue on Democracy Conference** on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009. Main speakers were Margaret Ritchie MLA, Minister for Social Development, Geoff Mulgan, Chair of the Carnegie Enquiry into the Future of Civil Society and Peter King, Special Advisor to First Minister Peter Robinson MP MLA.



NICVA's seminar "**A White Paper on the Relationship between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northern Ireland**" on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2009. Main speakers were Frances McCandless, Director of Policy in NICVA and Phil Jarrod, Deputy Chief Executive of the WCVA – the Wales Council for Voluntary Action.

The launch of "**State of the Sector V**" in NICVA on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The State of the Sector V provides high level statistics on the various types of resources available to the sector and the relations between voluntary and community organisations, government, funders and the general public.

If you want more information on the above events please contact Tiziana O'Hara in WCRP via email [info@wcrp.org.uk](mailto:info@wcrp.org.uk) and/or phone 90230212. You can also access information on the events at the NICVA website [www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)

## HANNA'S HOUSE SEMINAR

The first of four Hanna's House seminars took place in Derry 11th February 2009. The event was held in the historical Guildhall and well over 100 women attended.



The session began with a few words from Margaret Ward outlining and explaining the vision of Hanna's House. We were told of Hanna and her family and all that they fought for and achieved during their lifetimes.

Angela Hegarty offered us opportunities to stop and think and consider throughout the day and supported the event without flaw. A keynote speech was provided by Myrtle Hill Senior Lecturer of Women and Gender Studies, Queens University, Belfast. Her talk was a very personal account of her gradual involvement in education after a life at home bringing up children.

Other speakers, Nahid Rafiee, Rita Wild, Ursula Mc Kenna and Ann Friel relayed how their experiences had brought them to feminism, how their lives have been shaped by it and how they continue to fight for it on a daily basis. Each was unique varying from the traveller community to an Iranian settling in Derry, offering very differing pictures of cultural attitudes and Irish societal experiences. The second and final keynote speaker was Bernadette McAliskey, never failing to get your interest with her anecdotes, as she looked back over her years of struggling for social justice and equality. We look forward to the next seminar, which will be held in Galway.

For further information on Hanna's House Seminars contact **Shirley Graham, Tel: 00353851476548**

**IPOD Young Women's Group from Derry Women's Centre "A Piece of me, a piece of us" Patchwork and Embroidery Quilt is currently on display at the Tower Museum as part of International Women's Day celebrations in Derry.**

This quilt was designed and created by a group of women from Derry/Londonderry who are participants in the IPOD (Identify, Plan Organise and Deliver) Project at The Women's Centre in Derry.

### For more information contact:

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## NORTH WEST CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The North West celebrated International Women's Day in style on Friday 6th March '09 with their celebration of Derry City Council's Women of the Year Awards. Organised by Derry City Council and FWIN, one of the WCRP partners in the North West.

Nominations were celebrated and a winner was announced in each category: Women's Community Development, Rural Women's Development, Community Relations and Health to mention only a few out of the 11 categories.

The independent judging panel certainly had a few tough decisions to make based on the nominations before them. Emotions were high when the dedication of one woman involved in local health care for the past 40 years was acknowledged. Celine Duffy, a nurse at Altnagelvin Hospital, was awarded the coveted title of the Women of The Year 2009 for her contribution to Health at the ceremony.

Paying tribute to Celine, the Mayor, Cllr Gerard Diver, said she truly deserved the accolade for the important role she has played over the years in the nursing profession. The Mayor thanked everyone involved in the event and paid tribute to all nominees. "Everyone is a winner tonight. Women across this city continue to play a pivotal role in our society and the Women of the Year Awards event is the perfect way of acknowledging the role of women in our society."



l-r Catherine Cooke FWIN, Irene Wilson, winner, Una McGillion, Derry City Council and Olga Bradshaw, The Sentinel.

*Photo taken by Keith Moore. Courtesy of Londonderry Sentinel*

An enjoyable entertaining evening attended by around 300 women. All that remains is to look forward to next years event

For further details on the event log on to [www.derrycity.gov.uk/woman](http://www.derrycity.gov.uk/woman)

## WOMEN'S CENTRES

WCRP Partnership Organisations throughout Northern Ireland

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## NETWORK MEETING

On the 24<sup>th</sup> February, the WCRP held the 9<sup>th</sup> Network meeting. Atlas Women's Centre hosted the event and the newly appointed manager Gay Sherry Bingham welcomed the WCRP to Lisburn.



l-r Linda Stuart, Elaine Farr, Dorothy Sherry, Gay Sherry-Bingham, Helen Watson and Gillian Burnett

Atlas stands for Adult Training Learning And Support. Their premises are described on their website as "a bit like Dr Who's Tardis". Gillian and Helen are the friendly faces downstairs in the "Front of House". They provide information on courses and facilities. Our visit included Atlas social economy initiative "The Hub" café. Gay said "The Hub is the place where you can enjoy some of Dorothy's lovely home cooking. It is the place where everyone not only has a bit of "craic" and catches up on the gossip but also hosts Rosie's famous cookery demonstrations".

The February network meeting included a discussion on Feminism. The discussion was facilitated by independent consultant, Marie Quiery and aimed to explore what feminism means to us today, individually and as a partnership; what has changed down the years in our understanding and practice of a feminist approach to our work; what relevance it may have to us personally, to women today, to our users and the women's organisations we work with; and discuss our strengths and limitations as feminists.

For information on network meetings, please contact [info@wcrp.org.uk](mailto:info@wcrp.org.uk)

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