

## A Response To: Policing & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) Draft Equality Scheme

Issued by: Omagh PCSP

October 2012

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The Women's Support Network (WSN) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation issued by the Omagh Policing & Community Safety Partnership.

1.2 The Women's Support Network (WSN), established in 1989, is a regional organisation that works across all areas of Northern Ireland. It includes in its membership community based women's centres, groups and organisations, with a concentration in disadvantaged areas. WSN is a charitable and feminist organisation, which adopts a community development approach. We provide a range of support and services to 63 community based women's centres, projects and infrastructure groups and 26 associate members drawn from across the community and voluntary sector who support women, families and communities. (see Appendix 1).

1.3 Our members provide a wide range of women-centred front line services across Northern Ireland, including:

- Specialist Advice
- Childcare and Family Support
- Counselling, Support and Advocacy
- Complementary Therapies
- Training & Education
- Health & Wellbeing Programmes
- Personal Development & Employment Support
- Volunteering, Leadership & Empowerment

1.4 WSN aims to achieve social, political and economic justice through the promotion of the autonomous organisation of women. The Network aims to strengthen the collective voice of women's groups and to promote and develop networking opportunities, to enable collective action and to impact upon policy and decision making processes. WSN provides an accessible, feminist, relevant and high quality support service and resource for its member groups. The Network is also an important information resource on issues relevant

to community based women's organisations and for other infrastructure groups, nationally and internationally.

1.5 Over the past 30+ years, the community based women's sector has developed a range of front-line services such as childcare, support, advice, and education & training services in response to the needs they identified at a grass roots level. Women's groups continue to meet the particular needs of women and their children living in areas considered to be some of most affected by the conflict, and recognised as some of the most disadvantaged areas across Northern Ireland today.

1.6 Network members are actively engaged with their local communities, cross-community initiatives and regional structures throughout Northern Ireland.

## 2. Comments

2.1 The Women's Support Network, as an organisation representing community based women's centres, projects and infrastructure groups drawn from across the Northern Irish community and voluntary sector, welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Omagh Policing & Community Safety Partnership Equality Scheme.

2.2 The WSN wishes to begin by raising the issue of screening. Though the proposed questions being applied to your policies, as part of the screening process, are quite comprehensive, the WSN feels that it would be beneficial and would ultimately provide more clarity and better insight if two other questions were to also be included in this section, namely;

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower uptake by any specified group?

- Is there any evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the given policy?

2.3 The consultation states that, following the completion of the screening process, the screening template will be made available on the PCSP website. The WSN suggests that, when this is done, it would be helpful to inform consultees that the screening forms are actually available, whether by email or by post. It is a concern that, some consultees, though the template has been put on to the website, may not be aware of this for a long period of time. When they eventually do become aware, the policy may be implemented or further developed, so that alternative measures would be more difficult to apply. It would, therefore, be important for civil society to be informed sooner for policies for which ‘no’ or ‘minor’ impact was discovered, but for which they may have specialist knowledge of otherwise unforeseen equality impacts. Thus, we would recommend that PCSP include a statement, at paragraph 4.13, that consultees will be informed of screening templates when they are completed and posted on the website.

2.4 In relation to the issue of staff training and understanding of s75, WSN is concerned that necessary detail referring, specifically, to how staff will be trained is sadly lacking. The consultation paper refers to a number of training arrangements including providing staff with a ‘summary of this equality scheme’ and that ‘training will be provided to ensure staffs are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups’. The WSN calls for greater transparency in terms of what exactly will be incorporated into these training programmes for staff.

2.5 With regard to monitoring and evaluation, the WSN would like further information on how, the extent to which all staff/participants in the training programme have acquired the necessary skills to achieve the objectives outlined in the document, will be successfully

and meaningfully evaluated, so that the PSCP can ensure that all staff members and participant have the appropriate understanding of equality and section 75.

2.6 The WSN commends the PCSP's acknowledgement that some groups in the community will not have the same access to information as others. However, though the consultation makes reference to people with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities, it does not allude to the reality that for historical reasons, some sections of the community may feel reluctant or at least less inclined to engage in exchanges with the PCSP. Furthermore, it is suggested that 'in disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate. However, due regard is not given to the fact that many newspapers are predominantly read by one section of the community.

2.7 The WSN would suggest that after the publication of the PCSP's equality scheme, those consultees, without email, should be sent an actual copy of the equality scheme as, the absence of an email suggests they may not have easy access to the internet and thus, the PCSP's website and yet, should be allowed the opportunity to read the scheme.

2.8 The WSN would also like assurance that, after a thorough review of the equality scheme is undertaken, in line with Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, consultees will, once again, be informed that the report of this review will be made public on the PCSP's website.

### **3. Conclusion**

3.1 The WSN acknowledges the Omagh PCSP's efforts in producing a comprehensive draft equality scheme. However, we have made a few suggestions on how this could be improved. If you have any queries please feel free to get in touch.

**For further information, contact:**

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## MEMBERSHIP 2012

	<u>Member Group</u>
1	All Ireland Mother's Union
2	An Munia Tober (Travellers)
3	Antrim & Ballymena Women's Aid
4	Ardmonagh Women's Group
5	Ardoyne Women's Group
6	ATLAS Women's Centre
7	Al Nisa Women's Group
8	Ballybeen Women's Centre
9	Ballymurphy Women's Group
10	Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid
11	Belvoir Women's Improvement Group
12	Carrickfergus Women's Forum
13	Carew II
14	Causeway Women's Aid
15	Chrysalis Women's Centre
16	Clan Mor Women's Group (Sure Start)
17	Derry Well Woman
18	Derry Women's Centre
19	Falls Women's Centre
20	First Steps Women's Group
21	Footprints Women's Centre
22	Foyle Women's Aid
23	Foyle Women's Information Network
24	Granaghan District Women's Group
25	Greenway Women's Centre
26	Kilcooley Women's Centre
27	Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative
28	Lesbian Line
29	Lenadoon Women's Group
30	Ligoneil Family Centre
31	Link Women's Group
32	Manor Women's Group
33	Markets Women's Group
34	NI Women's Aid Federation
35	NI Women's European Platform
36	Fermanagh Women's Network
37	Newry & Mourne Women
38	Newtownabbey Women's Group
39	Older Women's Network NI
40	Omagh Women's Aid
41	Rape Crisis Centre
42	Rasharkin Women's Group
43	Shankill Women's Centre
44	Strabane & Lifford Women's Centre
45	Strathfoyle Women's Centre

46	The Learning Lodge
47	Voices Women's Group
48	Waterside Women's Centre
49	Windsor Women's Centre
50	Women Connect Project
51	Women into Politics
52	Women's Information Group
53	Women's News
54	Women's TEC
55	Women 2 Gather
56	Women's Resource & Development Agency
57	WISPA (Women in Sport & Physical Activity)
58	Ardcarn Women's Group
59	OIYIN Women's Group
60	Mossley Women's Institute
61	Mount Vernon Women's Group
62	Coole New Opportunities
63	North Belfast Womens Initiative & Support Project
	<b><u>Associate Members</u></b>
1.	Ballymena Community Forum
2.	CiNI
3.	Community Relations Forum
4.	East Belfast Community Partnership
5.	Employers for Childcare
6.	HIV Centre (Women's Support Group)
7.	Mencap
8.	National Women's Council of Ireland
9.	Playboard
10.	RNIB (Women's Group)
11.	Good Morning Newtownabbey
12.	Monkstown Community Association
13.	WAVE Trauma Centre
14.	WEA
15.	Parents Advice Centre
16.	Templemore Community Action Group
17.	Gingerbread
18.	Larne Community Development Project
19.	Community First Coaching
20.	Changing Faces
21.	Sands NI
22.	Women's Project Ashton Centre
23.	Women on Track
24.	Matt Talbot Women's Group
25.	Ulster People's College
26.	Council for the Homeless NI