

A Response to: Promoting Good Nutrition

Issued by: Department of Health, Social Services and Public
Safety

February 2011

Introduction

- 1.1. The Women's Support Network (WSN) welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation issued by DHSSPS.
- 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 62 community based women's centres, projects and infrastructure groups and 22 associate members drawn from across the community and voluntary sector who support women, families and communities. (see Appendix 1).
- 1.2. 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
- 1.3. 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.

- 1.4. 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.
- 1.5. Network members are actively engaged with their local communities, cross-community initiatives and regional structures throughout Northern Ireland.
- 1.6. WSN welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Promoting Good Nutrition Strategy issued by DHSSPS. WSN agrees with the Department that "nutritional care should be provided with an equitable, person centre approach respecting the diversity of people, patients, their family and carers."

2.0 **General Comments**

- 2.1 WSN notes that there is very little reference to the role of the community based women's sector within the document. We would contend that the sector should have a role to play and be actively invited to join any 'Nutrition Coalition' that would be established.
- 2.2 Information and education play a key role in improving health by helping people to make healthier choices and encouraging healthier behaviours. The community based women's sector continually promotes good health which assists in meeting the 2008-13 EU Public Health Programme¹

¹ European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2007) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServe/LexUriServ.do?uri=Oj:l:2007:301:0003:0013:EN:PDF>

- 2.3 WSN would like to see a gender breakdown of data included in Section 2 of the document. We feel this is important given that the life expectancy of women is greater than that of men.²
- 2.4 WSN would encourage the department to include a comment within Key Characteristic 1 in relation to people **'being asked'** about special dietary requirements or assistance they may require with eating or drinking. Rather than just making an assumption.
- 2.5 We agree with Key Characteristics 2, 3 and 4 and would further highlight the need for consistency, relevant guidance and the individual needs of people taken into consideration especially women whose nutritional needs may differ from that of men..
- 2.6 WSN welcomes Key Characteristic 8 and 'identifying champions'. The community based women's sector has been instrumental in contributing to the promotion of food and nutrition. For example, Footprints Women's Centre has won several awards for their health inequalities programmes delivered within the Colin area. They offer a diverse range of programmes to educate and promote skills that will improve parenting and health awareness. Their Colin Neighbourhood Food Policy encourages a healthier food culture, healthier food economy and a safe food environment. The Centre Food Programmes target those most in need; including pregnant mums, children and older people. This approach is all within a safe and caring setting, making it fun and informative. The work has been recognised by the Food Standards Agency, which cited their Food is Fun programme as an example of good practice.

² <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=168>

Conclusion

WSN welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Whilst welcoming this document, we have offered some constructive recommendations as to how it could be improved. We particularly wish to highlight the excellent work of the community based women's sector and the positive role they already play in meeting the needs of women and children within disadvantaged areas. We would very much welcome the inclusion of a representative from the community based women's centres in any implementation group. A more detailed plan of action to take this document forward would also ensure the strategy is fit for purpose.

For further Information, contact:

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MEMBERSHIP 2011

	<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	Granaghant 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	Foyle Women's Aid
	<u>Associate Members</u>
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