

A Response to

***Equality Impact Assessment on the
Implementation Arrangements for the
Strategic Business Review***

By
Women's Support Network

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Table of contents

1. Introduction	Page 2
2. Specific Comments	Page 2-4
3. WSN Member Groups	Appendix 1

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** The Women’s Support Network (WSN), established in 1989, is an infrastructural umbrella organisation, which provides support services to, and represents over 40 groups (see Appendix 1 for full member and associate member listing) including: community based Women’s Centres, women’s projects and women’s infrastructure groups.
- 1.2.** 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. The 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.
- 1.3.** The Women’s Support Network (WSN) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the public consultation on the *Equality Impact Assessment on the Implementation Arrangements for the Strategic Business Review*.

2. Specific Comments

2.1. Marital Status

- 2.1.1. WSN questions why Civil Partnerships were not included in information gathered on marital status. The failure to collect this information may

obscure potential impact on lesbian, bisexual and transgender women and their families, whether staff or services users.

2.2. Gender

2.2.1. Recruitment

2.2.1.1. We note the evidence that women are over-represented in rural offices, and would like further information to be included on how recruitment processes have been or will be changed to address this imbalance.

2.2.1.2. We seek further clarification as to whether a breakdown of gender by grade was conducted, and if so, whether there was any evidence of gender segregation at various grades within the agency.

2.2.2. Travel

2.2.2.1. It can be assumed that any added expense for transportation will have greater impact on workers at lower grades. We would suggest that gender should therefore be cross referenced with current travel arrangements.

2.2.2.2. If it is found that there are more women at lower grades, then relocation/redeployment will have even greater impact on female staff that don't have access to their own transport.

2.2.3. Childcare

2.2.3.1. It is necessary to consider the correlation between gender and childcare. Childcare provision is a crucial component in enabling women who are socially and economically disadvantaged to take up training and/or education, thereby enhancing their employability and assisting in the transition into the paid labour market.

2.2.3.2. In a study carried out by Employers for Childcare, 67% of women cited the lack of affordable quality childcare as the main barrier to seeking employment¹.

¹ Employers for Childcare, 2003, The Childcare Barrier

2.2.3.3. It is therefore important to consider what impact the location, availability and affordability of places, and travel time required between work and schools or crèches, will have on relocated/ redeployed female staff, and on female services users.

2.3. Dependents

2.3.1. WSN supports the assumed correlation between gender and caring roles. However, it is unclear as to whether having dependents is being acknowledged as having possible negative impact on female staff in particular. We therefore believe more information needs to be gathered in order to assess potential impact.

2.3.2. The 2001 Census figures show that the overwhelming majority (92.2%) of lone parent households in Northern Ireland are headed by women. It is therefore important that information on single parent families be collected to assess whether the Strategic Business Review has any potential adverse impact on women with children.

WSN Member groups

All Ireland Mother's Union
Antrim & Ballymena Women's
Aid
Ardmonagh Women's Group
Ardoyne Women's Group
ATLAS
Al Nisa Women's Group
Ballybeen Women's Centre
Ballymurphy Women's Group
Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid
An Munia Tober (Travellers)
Carrickfergus Women's Forum
Carew II
Causeway Women's Aid
Clan Mor Women's Group
Derry Well Woman
Derry Women's Centre
Falls Women's Centre
First Steps Women's Group
Footprints Women's Centre
Foyle Women's Aid
Foyle Women's Information
Network
Granaghant District Women's
Group
Greenway Women's Centre
Kilcooley Women's Centre
Lesbian Advocacy Services
Initiative
Lesbian Line

Lenadoon Women's Group
Ligoneil Family Centre
Markets Women's Group
NI Women's Aid Federation
NIWEP
Newry & Mourne Women
Older Women's Network
Omagh Women's Aid
Rape Crisis Centre
Shankill Women's Centre
Strabane & Lifford Women's
Centre
Windsor Women's Centre
Women into Politics
Women's Information Group
Women's News
Women's TEC
WRDA

Associate Members

Ballymena Community Forum
EBCEC
HIV Centre
Newtownabbey Community
Voice
Parents Advice Centre
WEA
Rasharkin Women's Group
Affiliated Members
National Women's Council of
Ireland