

WELCOME....The Policy Bulletin is an opportunity to briefly update you on what we have been involved in over the last few months, and to look at what we will be working towards in the coming months. We hope you find it useful.

RECENT RESPONSES AND ACTIVITIES

View these responses in full on our website at www.nirwn.org.uk/Consultations

RESPONSE TO 'A COMMISSIONER FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND'

In the response we made to 'A Commissioner for Older people in Northern Ireland' we strongly supported the development of a Commission led by an Older People's Commissioner.

Evidence indicates that older people in Northern Ireland face many barriers that inhibit their quality of life and equitable participation in Northern Irish society. We argued that often these barriers are further exacerbated by gender and geography and research indicates that a higher percentage of older people in Northern Ireland will be older women.

We are very clear that the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland should be a full-time paid post. Feedback from our focus groups indicated very strongly that the part-time advocacy role for Older People, while filled very competently by Dame Joan Harbison, has served to highlight that for a Commissioner to be a truly effective change agent for older people; they must be full time, with the powers and resources to effect change.

EQIA WELFARE REFORM BILL RESPONSE

With this response we welcomed the acknowledgement that childcare provision in Northern Ireland is a major consideration. We supported the policy of positively encouraging lone parents into paid work, however the policy needs to acknowledge that lone parents face acute barriers to work. This is particularly emphasised in rural areas because there are fewer work opportunities, greater barriers to obtaining employment. Harder to reach single parents will be far more at risk of sanctions. The financial hardship of sanctions may increase the financial burdens of many lone parents.

We argued that there needs to be consideration of a parent of disabled children as it can be very difficult and expensive to find childminders for children with challenging behaviour or access needs. See our website for a copy of the response we made.

NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (NIRDP) MID TERM EVALUATION

The NIRDP 2007-2013 is due to undergo a Mid Term Evaluation. NIRWN is a member of the NIRDP Equality Sub Group and we were asked to comment on the proposed evaluation questionnaire. NIRWN highlighted that the Mid Term Evaluation provides a timely opportunity to assess the progress to date achieved by the NIRDP and initiate change and prioritisation where it is required. We will be working with our colleagues on the Sub Group to ensure the mid term evaluation brings meaningful and useful information to DARD to allow them make any amendments to the Programme.

UPDATES

POLITICAL PARTY CONFERENCES

NIRWN hosted an information stand at both the UUP Party Conference in the Europa Hotel on October 24th and the DUP Party Conference in La Mon Hotel on November 21st. The aim of attendance was to highlight rural women's issues with our elected representatives and policy makers. NIRWN plan to attend the SDLP and Sinn Fein Party Conferences to raise the same issues.

NIRWN will be attending the SDLP Party Conference in February and we look forward to highlighting the issues and barriers rural women face and networking with the delegates and other organisations hosting a stand.

RURAL WHITE PAPER STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The Rural White Paper Stakeholder groups presented their reports to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development at a Plenary meeting on the 27th January. NIRWN made recommendations specific to the inclusion of women on all the specific area reports: People, Services, Governance, Places and Vision.

The next steps will see the RWP taken to the Committee and Executive. It will go out to public consultation towards the end of the year. NIRWN will continue to work on this to ensure the voices of rural women are not lost in what could be a long term tool for Government in their policy making for rural NI.

On the horizon.....

NIRWN will be forming responses to the following consultations in the coming months. Why not contact our Policy Officer to discuss the many ways in which you can contribute to consultation responses.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT REFORM - DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT is conducting a public consultation exercise on reforming arrangements for the planning and delivery of public transport. Closing date for responses is 5th February 2010

EQIA ON AGRI-ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AND THE LESS FAVOURED AREA COMPENSATORY ALLOWANCE SCHEME CONTAINED WITHIN THE NIRD 2007-2013 The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is carrying out a consultation on the equality aspects of the Agri-Environment Programme (AEP) and the Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances Scheme (LFACAS). Closing date for responses is 5th April 2010

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND NIRWN will be responding to the NIO regarding their paper 'A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland'. NIRWN are working with other women's organisations to establish the best format of response. Closing date for this response is 1st March 2010.

REGISTER NOW
For the
**Rural Women's
Policy Forum**
on
028 8676 9191
or email
louise@nirwn.org.uk

Is this Policy Bulletin useful? We welcome any comments that you have on the Policy Bulletin. Did you find it useful? Is there any other information that you would like to see included? Please contact us with your feedback. If you would like to be included in our circulation list regarding policy consultations, please contact our Policy Officer, Louise Coyle on 028 86769191 or email louise@nirwn.org.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK
15 Molesworth Street, Cookstown, BT80 8NX
T: 028 8676 9191 F: 028 8676 5644
E: info@nirwn.org.uk W: www.nirwn.org.uk

