

The background features large, expressive brushstrokes in shades of purple, green, and yellow. The NWC logo is positioned in the upper left, with the letters 'nwc' in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the full name 'National Women's Council' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

nwc

National Women's Council

Celebrating 50 Years of Feminism

NWC Annual Report 2023

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Message from the Chairperson

2023 was a very special year for the National Women's Council as we celebrated our 50th anniversary.

In 1973, when the National Women's Council was established, Ireland was a very different place for women. Many women had to leave work when they got married due to the marriage bar. Divorce and contraception were illegal. Women could be legally raped within their marriage. Women had no right to collect the children's allowance and there was no law that prevented women from being paid less than men.

Against this background, a group of pioneering women and their organisations came together to establish the Council for the Status of Women which would later turn into the National Women's Council.

Throughout our anniversary year, NWC celebrated the significant gains for women and women's rights over the past five decades and recognised the often invisible, hard work of women's rights campaigners. We also looked ahead and discussed ongoing barriers to women's full equality and the need for women's organisations to continue to work together for our shared feminist future.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to our Banlaoch for the year, Sabina Higgins, who kicked off our year of celebration with a video message on Nollaig na mBan. And we wish to thank President Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins for inviting former and current NWC Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons, former Directors and current staff for a special lunch, and all of our members and wider supporters to a Garden Party in Áras an Uachtaráin.

On International Women's Day, we were delighted to be invited to celebrate our 50th anniversary with a special feature on the Irish Times Women's podcast.

At our Annual General Meeting in June we looked back at five decades of women's struggles and triumphs for women's rights on the island of Ireland. In collaboration with An Post, we developed a special 50 year postmark that was included on all letters over a three week period in March.

We were delighted to welcome artist Grace Dyas as our Artist in Residency who has been working with our members on a project to represent 50 years of women's struggle and activism for women's rights in Ireland. This work continues in 2024.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new group members and Feminist Changemakers in 2023. Thank you also to our existing members and supporters for your input and engagement with us throughout the year.

I would like to acknowledge the support of our funders and to sincerely thank all of the NWC Board members, the Director, Orla O'Connor and the NWC staff team for their commitment and support for the work of NWC over the last year and going forward.

Margaret Martin, Chairperson



Message from the Director

We were delighted to mark the 50th anniversary of the National Women's Council with so many different events, initiatives and projects throughout the year. It was a really special occasion to celebrate and recognise the advancements and the role of women campaigners and organisations in achieving these.

A positive moment in 2023 was the publication of the long-awaited abortion review and the success of the abortion e-action campaign in May and June. Almost 8,000 emails were sent to TDs across Ireland, calling on Government to implement the findings of the review and ensure timely, safe and legal access to abortion for all who need it.

Another standout moment was the launch of our Purple for Public campaign for a publicly funded model of early years education in the run up to Budget 2024. Parents across the island took part in a National Day of Action calling on Government to transition to a public model of childcare.

2023 was also a year marred by gender-based violence. Following the murders of women both North and South of our island, NWC joined calls to meaningfully tackle gender-based violence and femicide. Launching a new report, we highlighted the challenges faced by victim survivors of domestic violence in our Courts system who often have to navigate three separate legal systems; criminal, family and child care processes, and called for a victim-centred approach. In November, we welcomed milestone progress on this issue with the introduction of tougher sentences for violence against women, alongside the introduction of non-fatal strangulation and stalking as new and standalone offences. In December, the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women launched its first monitoring report of the Government's Zero Tolerance strategy.

NWC was delighted to officially launch our Feminist Communities for Climate Justice Project with our member, Community Work Ireland, and to see advanced planning for our accredited training programme with Maynooth University.

2023 was a year marked by an upsurge in far-right discourse and activity. The narratives emerging serve as stark reminders that we cannot be complacent when it comes to women's rights. In February, we helped to organise the historic Ireland for All Rally, and spoke on the day from the podium. Following the Dublin riots we made further calls on Government to tackle the growing wave of racist violence facing the country. NWC also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the establishment of a women-centred peace process.

NWC is proud to have achieved so much for the women and girls of Ireland. All this work would not be possible without our members and our very dedicated staff and board.

I sincerely thank the membership, the team and our voluntary Board members for all their commitment, dedication, and passion. While the path is never easy, we know that the next 50 years can and will bring greater change, equality and progress for Mná na hÉireann.

Orla O'Connor, Director

Who we are

The National Women's Council is the leading national representative organisation for women and women's groups in Ireland, founded in 1973. We have almost 200 member groups and a large and growing community of individual supporters.

The ambition of the National Women's Council is an Ireland where every woman enjoys true equality and no woman is left behind. This ambition shapes and informs our work, and, with our living values, how we work.

We are a movement-building organisation rooted in our membership, working on the whole island of Ireland. We are also part of the international movement to protect and advance women's and girls' rights.

Our purpose is to lead action for the achievement of women's and girls' equality through mobilising, influencing, and building solidarity.

Our living values guide us. They are given expression in our work, and in how we work, as an organisation.

We are committed to these living values:

Feminist:

Feminism is a core and essential value of our organisation. This means we consistently act to achieve true equality for all women and girls.

Inclusive:

We are active in ensuring that no woman is left behind in our journey to achieve true equality.

Fearless:

Our ambition and purpose mean that we are fearless leaders for all women, actively challenging that which is in the way of the achievement of true equality.

Caring:

We value care, including its full expression in how we act as an organisation.

Strategic:

Being effective and successful in advancing our purpose requires us to be strategic; Showing leadership and strength in collaborations with partners, prioritising our work and making choices that are achievable and future-oriented.

Diverse:

The women of Ireland are a diverse group, and we are their voice, therefore we bring diversity to everything we do and how we operate as an organisation.



NWC celebrates 50 Years

Sabina Higgins launches our 50 year celebration on Nollaig na mBan

We began 2023 with the launch of our 50-year anniversary celebrations, led by our specially appointed *Banlaoch* (champion) for the year, Sabina Higgins. On January 6th, *Nollaig na mBan*, we released a video message from Sabina congratulating NWC on 50 years of advocating for women and championing women's rights and equality. In her message, Sabina said the organisation has played a "crucial role in bringing women's voices together to demand equality and deliver change" and that "it has also helped shape Ireland and make it a better country". Sabina Higgins also acknowledged and praised our almost 200 strong membership base, speaking of the "representative mandate and diverse membership" that "has been and is a deep source of collective strength".



50 Years of Feminism

- Irish Times Women's Podcast

To mark International Women's Day and to celebrate NWC's 50 years, The Irish Times Women's Podcast released a special '50 Years of Feminism' episode on March 8th 2023. The conversation with a live audience explored five decades of Irish women's struggles and triumphs, and examined the challenges and inequalities that remain. Hosted by Róisín Ingle and Kathy Sheridan, guests included Sonya Lennon, Tara Flynn, Dr Salome Mbugua, Suzy Byrne and NWC Director Orla O'Connor, with music from Sharyn Ward. The podcast was recorded in front of a live audience in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, and was available to stream on the Irish Times website.



Marking NWC's 50th Anniversary in Áras an Uachtaráin

NWC was delighted to be invited to celebrate our 50th Anniversary in Áras an Uachtaráin on two occasions in 2023.

President Michael D. Higgins and Sabina Higgins welcomed the current Executive Board and staff as well as former Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons and Directors of the National Women's Council to Áras an Uachtaráin for a special lunch in celebration of the organisation's 50-year anniversary in March 2023.

In addition, NWC members and friends were invited to celebrate 50 years of women's activism in Ireland at a Garden Party in Áras an Uachtaráin in June 2024. The party featured a speech by President Michael D. Higgins about women's rights and equality today and a number of musical performances, including a performance by the Pillow Queens.



AGM Morning Event

- Celebrating 50 Years of Feminism

At our Annual General Meeting Morning Event in June 2023, NWC looked back at 50 years of feminist activism in Ireland. We remembered the many achievements for women since 1973, recognising the role that women activists and women's organisations played in achieving these. We also highlighted the systemic inequalities that women continue to face, and the changes women want to see in our feminist future.

Speakers included Caroline McCamley, Former Chairperson (1986 – 1988); Grainne Healy, Former Chairperson (1999 – 2001); Dr Salome Mbugua, Former Deputy Chairperson (2010 – 2014); Joanna McMinn, Former CEO (2001 – 2009); Ellen O'Malley Dunlop, Former Chairperson (2017 – 2018); Sarah Monaghan, Board Member and Consent Director with DRCC; Collette McEntee, Project Coordinator with Feminist Communities for Climate Justice, NWC; Rose Marie Maughan, National Traveller Youth Programme Coordinator with Irish Traveller Movement; Paula Soraghan, Independent Living Movement Ireland. The event was chaired by journalist Martina Devlin.



NWC welcomes Grace Dyas as our Artist in Residency

In April, NWC partnered with CREATE in an Artist in Residency programme and were delighted to announce artist and activist Grace Dyas as the recipient of an Artist Residency Award as part of our 50 years celebration. The residency is supported by funding from The Arts Council / An Comhairle Ealaíon.

Grace Dyas is an established artist and activist with nearly twenty years of experience making socially engaged art. The aim of the Artist in Residency is to celebrate the achievements for women and women's rights in Ireland and recognise the important, often invisible contribution of women's organisations and activities in bringing about this change.

Grace has been embedded within NWC during 2023 and has held exploratory conversations with a diverse range of members and staff about what matters to them. The emphasis was on providing the artist and member organisations with the time and space to see what emerged in an organic process. Through these exploratory conversations emerged a really strong desire for the residency to culminate in a meaningful celebration of NWC work. Further engagements with members are planned for 2024.

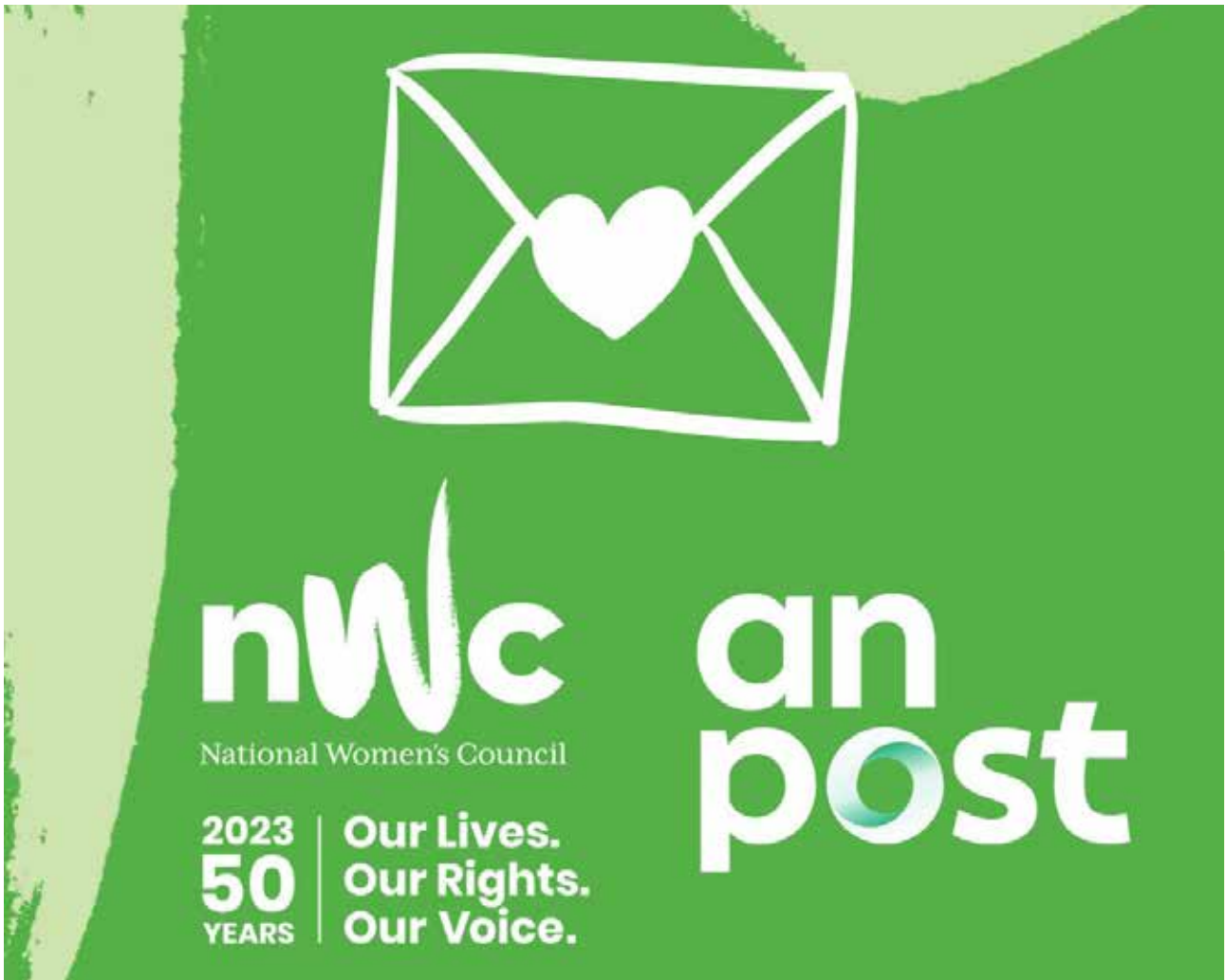


Grace Dyas

Artist-in-Residence

NWC Anniversary Logo and Postmark

To mark the occasion of NWC's 50th anniversary, we commissioned a special logo and, in collaboration with An Post, a postmark for the organisation. The NWC anniversary postmark was used on all posted letters for a period of two weeks in March 2023 to coincide with International Women's Day.



Championing Feminist and Just Climate Action

Feminist Communities for Climate Justice project

NWC was delighted to officially launch Feminist Communities for Climate Justice, a joint project between NWC and NWC member group Community Work Ireland in 2023. The project is the first of its kind in Ireland and is supported by an Advisory group composed of climate justice activists, academics and representatives of our members. It aims to amplify the voices of women and marginalised communities most affected by the climate crisis and to influence climate policy. The project also mobilises communities to support and learn from one another, and trains those working with or active within women's and marginalised groups and communities.

Unique to the project is a feminist-community work approach, which champions collective victories, identifies systemic structural issues as creators of inequality and focuses on women's representation in decision-making spaces. This approach also recognises the value of care and caring work as low-carbon, green work which is key to women's experiences of the climate crisis.

In September 2023, Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan launched the 'Feminist Communities for Climate Justice' project at the F2 Centre, Rialto, Dublin. The event saw varied contributions from a number of speakers: Orla O'Connor of NWC spoke about a feminist approach to climate justice; Ann Irwin of Community Work Ireland spoke about a community work approach; Collette McEntee and Vanessa Conroy, the FCCJ project team, introduced the project and its elements; Mimi Unamoyo of BOMOKO NI talked about what feminist climate justice means for people seeking asylum and refuge in Ireland; and Martin Collins of Pavee Point spoke about the Traveller community who have long been involved in the circular economy.

The project team also created and recruited for the project's accredited certificate programme in collaboration with Maynooth University's Department of Applied Social Studies to upskill community workers, volunteers and activists in climate justice issues and feminist approaches to their work.

The project team awarded the tender for a baseline review of Irish climate policy and its impacts on women and marginalised communities in Ireland to Dr Fiona Dukelow, Dr Catherine Forde and Edith Busted of University College Cork's Department of Applied Social Studies. This review will launch in April 2024.

Feminist Communities for Climate Justice is a part of the Community Climate Action Programme: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing (Strand 2) and is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.



Ending Gender-Based Violence and Exploitation

The intersection between Criminal Justice, Private Family Law and Public Law Child Care Processes – New Report

In May 2023, NWC launched a new report on the intersection of the Criminal Justice system, Private Family Law and Public Law Child Care Processes in relation to domestic and sexual violence. The report stresses how the current system forces many survivors to navigate three separate legal systems: criminal, family and, if children are involved, child care processes. The onus is on the survivor to navigate these processes simultaneously, because the systems do not acknowledge or interact with each other. This causes significant trauma and re-victimisation for survivors. The report calls for a victim-centred approach in addressing the needs of survivors of domestic and sexual violence within the court system.

The report was funded by the Department of Justice and co-authored by Nuala Egan SC and Ellen O'Malley Dunlop. It was officially launched by Minister for Justice, Simon Harris who highlighted the importance of moving forward with several of the practical recommendations included in the report.

The launch event featured a presentation by the authors and was chaired by Louise Crowley, UCC. This was followed by a panel discussion which offered a variety of perspectives on the findings and recommendations of the report. The panel featured: Megan Berry, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre; Mary-Louise Lynch, Survivors Informing Services and Institutions; Noeline Blackwell, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre; and Áine Costello, Barnardos. The different perspectives and recommendations offered by the panellists made the report more concrete and connected it to lived experiences, in relation to the need to reform the justice system. The launch was well attended by representatives from Government and civil society.

Following the launch, NWC developed two digital campaigns to further highlight the report's findings and recommendations. We emphasised the need for a victim-centred approach (including a court and non-court support person to assist the victim throughout the entire legal journey) and the re-traumatising effect of the legal systems on women and children through the repeated experience of interviews. We also called for a more victim-friendly physical court environment and an amendment of the in-camera rule from the perspective of the of victims/survivors. Finally, our campaigns highlighted the limited ability to produce data in relation to cases.



Monitoring the Implementation of the Third National Strategy – 16 Days event



In December 2023, the National Observatory on Violence Against Women and Girls ('the Observatory') launched the first monitoring report on the implementation of 'Zero Tolerance', the Government's Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

The Observatory is chaired and convened by NWC and brings together 28 leading domestic, sexual and gender-based violence organisations in Ireland.

Funded by Community Foundation Ireland, the report reviews the significant progress and achievements in the delivery of the national strategy, as well as the remaining gaps in its implementation. It highlights the epidemic of violence against women in Ireland and calls on the Government to centre the needs and voices of survivors of male violence against women, such as the impetus to consider a survivor's needs in the Family Court system. Other gaps identified in the report are the weak intersectional lens of the implemented actions, the additional barriers that some groups face and a lack of robust monitoring mechanisms for the strategy.

The report was officially launched by Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee, in a video message at our event in December 2023 as part of the 16 Days of Action to End Violence Against Women. The event also featured contributions from Denise Charlton, Chief Executive of Community Foundation Ireland, Francesca Montagna, Programme Manager at the Secretariat of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism at the Council of Europe, and a presentation of the report by Ivanna Youtchak, NWC's Violence against Women Coordinator. This was followed by a panel discussion chaired by presenter Miriam O'Callaghan with speakers including Helen McGrath, Central Statistics Office; Mary-Louise Lynch, Survivors Informing Services and Institutions, and Doncha O'Sullivan, Department of Justice. The launch was well attended by representatives from Government and civil society organisations.

Members of the National Observatory on Violence against Women in 2023:

ActionAid, AkiDWA, AMAL, Amber Women's Refuge, Aoibhneas, Ascend Domestic Abuse Service - North Tipperary, Cairde - Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities, Cope Galway Domestic Services, Domestic Violence Response Galway, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Haven Horizons, ICGBV, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Longford Women's Link, Love and Care for People, Women's Collective Ireland, Pavee Point, Ruhama, SAOL project, SERP, Sexual Violence Centre Cork, Sisi - Survivors Informing Services and Institutions, Sonas, Spunout, Traveller in Prison Initiative (TPI), Women's Aid, YWCA.

Celebrating progress in policy, legislation and funding to end violence against women



2023 was a year of significant progress in policy, legislation and funding for domestic, sexual and gender-based violence in areas that NWC and our members have been advocating for over many years. One important highlight in 2023 was the enactment of legislation to set up the new Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence agency, Cuan.

Cuan will centralise the implementation and monitoring of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, thus moving away from a fragmented approach that has been problematic for years. Funding was increased to set up Cuan and for specialist service provision.

NWC made a submission in relation to the Bill to establish the agency and also presented to the Oireachtas Justice Committee on our recommendations.

As part of our Pre-Budget Submission and Budget 2024 campaign, NWC prominently called on Government to fully cost and resource the implementation of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, including funding for the agency and increased funding for the violence against women sector.

Another important milestone after a long campaign by NWC and our members was the Government's introduction of Domestic Violence Leave under the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023.

NWC also welcomed the introduction of the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023, that specifically outlaws stalking and non-fatal strangulation, increases the potential length of sentences for assault causing harm, and overall, sets an important marker that these forms of abuse constitute serious crimes and will not be tolerated.

It was positive to see the Department of Justice announce specialist accommodation for victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation which is more tailored to their recovery, and the reform of the National Referral Mechanism improving and extending the process of identification of victims of trafficking through the Criminal Justice (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2022. Refuge spaces and safe homes for survivors of domestic violence have increased in the past year, offering women and children a place of safety at an extremely dangerous time.

The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) published their first report in respect of Ireland, echoing many of the recommendations that the National Observatory on Violence against Women, chaired and convened by NWC, highlighted in our shadow report to GREVIO in 2022. This report identified serious shortcomings in how women and children are protected from violence and murder, and underlined the need to bridge the gap between the progressive policies and legislation that Ireland has enacted and the reality on the ground.

Finally, the results of the Sexual Violence Survey were published by the Central Statistics Office in 2023. The survey finally gives us baseline data on sexual violence which is critically needed by Government, State Agencies, civil society organisations, and frontline services to properly tackle sexual violence. NWC had long campaigned for this survey and also supported the development of the survey through its liaison group. The survey findings show distressing levels of sexual violence in Ireland and highlight the considerable challenges that remain in tackling gender-based violence.

North-South Cooperation to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls

In 2023 NWC, in partnership with Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland, began a new project to build greater understanding and collaboration on shared issues between civil society organisations across the island in the area of male violence against women.

This work builds on successes of NWC's All Island Women's Forum and aims to identify new opportunities for North-South cooperation. The project is funded by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The work of the project is ongoing in 2024. We will look at learnings across jurisdictions to demand better services for survivors, identifying shared areas of concern and gaps in legislation, policy and service delivery, as well as potential areas for cross-border collaboration.



Towards a Zero Tolerance Approach – A good practice guide for Higher Education Institutes

In April 2023, NWC launched Towards a Zero Tolerance Approach: A good practice guide. The guide aims to assist Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland in implementing, and giving true life to, Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions (the Framework). The Framework is a Government document, published in 2019, setting out fifteen key outcomes to end sexual violence and harassment in Higher Education Institutions. The Good Practice Guide is the result of collaboration at every stage. Based on input from universities, institutions, and NGOs, as well as staff and students on the frontline of sexual violence responses in Higher Education, it brings together their expertise and experience and provides very practical and detailed advice.

The Good Practice Guide was officially launched by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and Minister for Justice, Simon Harris TD at an in-person event. Additional speakers included Aoife Grimes, Project Coordinator of NWC's ESSTE project; Professor Louise Crowley, UCC; Suzanne Walker, Higher Education Authority; Orla O'Connor, Director, NWC.

Following the official launch event, NWC organised two workshops (one in person and one online) to look in detail at how to use the Good Practice Guide as a tool.

The development and publication of the Good Practice Guide was supported by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.



It Stops Now Mural Installation to mark International Women's Week 2023



NWC organised the display of the It Stops Now mural for International Women's Week at the National College for Art and Design (NCAD) in collaboration with USI and the NCAD Student Union. The mural aims to be a talking point for students and staff on creating a zero-tolerance culture towards sexual violence and harassment on campus.

The event was covered with a video in the Irish Times online and also featured in the Irish Times pictures of the day.

In addition, NWC produced five posters based on the It Stops Now digital campaign. Copies of the posters were sent to 10 different colleges and universities across Ireland.

This project was supported by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Sex for Rent Exploitation

In Autumn 2023 NWC commenced work on a research report examining Sex for Rent Exploitation in the Irish Rental Market. This work was being carried out in-house by the Violence Against Women team, generously funded by Community Foundation Ireland. NWC were also awarded funding through the Membership and Activities Support Fund of the European Women's Lobby for this project. The objective of this funding round was to design initiatives in relation to the adoption of a strong EU Directive on combatting violence against women. NWC applied for a small grant to research Sex for Rent exploitation and was successful.

Achieving Women's Economic Equality

The Women's Budget – NWC's Pre-Budget Submission 2024

With the increasing cost of living and pressure on under-resourced public services particularly impacting women, NWC's Budget 2024 campaign called on Government to invest in a future for Ireland which is sustainable, just, caring and fair – a future where the state leads in tackling gender inequalities head-on, and one in which no woman is left behind.

In advance of the Budget, NWC attended the National Economic Dialogue and the Department of Social Protection's Pre-Budget Forum, highlighting our vision for the upcoming budget focused on the delivery of public services that support women's equality.

We developed a comprehensive and visionary Pre-Budget Submission, entitled The Women's Budget, and launched it with a successful online event in September 2023. We hosted a members' consultation event on an early draft of the Pre-Budget Submission to get feedback from our member organisations, and to ensure it reflected their key values and priorities. We engaged directly with policymakers including Government Ministers to advocate for our Budget priorities in the run up to Budget Day.

Our Pre-Budget Submission had three key asks:

- Delivery of a Public Model of Early Years Education and School-Age Childcare
- Tackling Violence Against Women by properly resourcing and financing the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the new DSGBV agency, Cuan
- Income adequacy for all women by benchmarking social protection and pension rates

Our direct advocacy work with politicians and civil servants was complemented by a social media campaign which highlighted key demands for women in Budget 2024.

We were successful in securing a number of welcome measures for women in Budget 2024 – including increased investment in childcare, increased spending to tackle violence against women, and expanded access to free contraception for women. However, many of our calls for significant structural change and investment went unheeded by Government. We developed and published a Post-Budget Analysis Snapshot within three days of the Budget announcement. We will continue to work on and advocate for the issues raised in our Budget Submission through 2024.



Celebrating May Day to mark 50 Years of Irish EU Membership

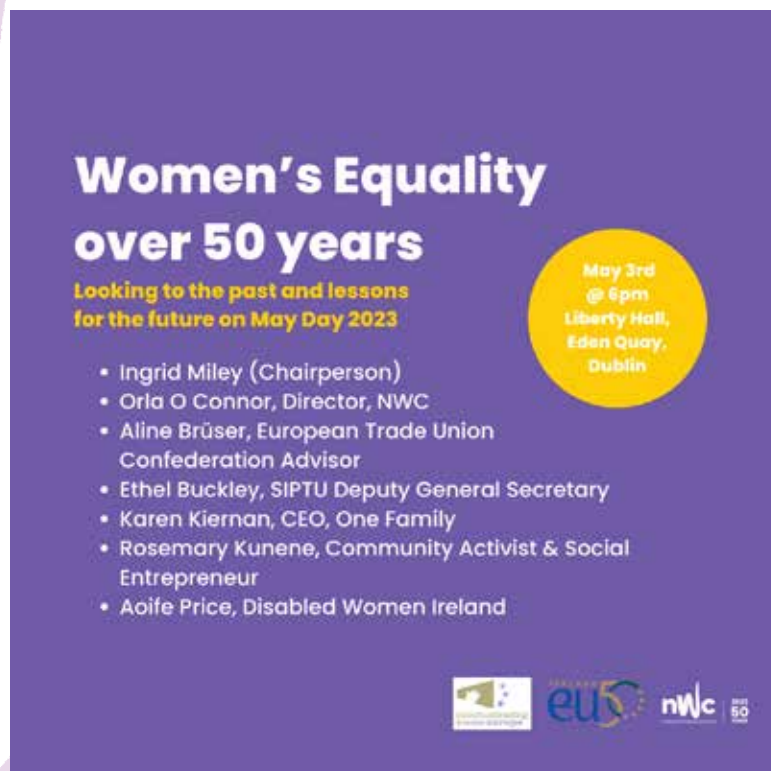
On May 3rd in the historic Liberty Hall, we held our May Day event to celebrate 50 years of the EU in Ireland, as well as NWC's 50-year anniversary. A diversity of people joined us from the trade union movement, civil society and political life.

A fantastic line up of speakers looked back at how much women's equality has advanced in that time and the role of the EU in driving this change. We were delighted to have Aline Brüser, spokesperson for the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) join us remotely to share information on the Pay Transparency Directive and how this tool can deliver on equal pay in a substantive way.

Our panel of speakers included Ethel Buckley, SIPTU; Karen Kiernan, One Family; Rosemary Kunene, Community Activist & Social Entrepreneur; and Aoife Price, Human Rights and Disability Researcher, Academic and Activist. Ingrid Miley chaired the discussion which generated lots of conversations on the ongoing challenges for workers and women's economic independence. The speakers shared lessons for the future to ensure disabled women, women from a migrant background and lone parents can achieve full equality in the workplace. The event highlighted the importance of the EU in advancing women's rights and the crucial role of collective bargaining in delivering equality for women in the workplace. Care was highlighted as the missing piece as women continue to bear the economic cost for care, particularly childcare, which affects their equality during their working lives and in retirement.

We took the opportunity at our event to interview a number of women who are active in the economic equality space. We wanted to hear their thoughts on Ireland's membership of the EU, as well as the history of NWC. Interviewees included trade union activists, migrant women, a lone parents' rights advocate, a disability advocate, an LGBTQ rights campaigner, and a sitting Senator.

The diversity of voices ensured the resulting videos offered a variety of perspectives on the struggle for women's equality over the last 50 years, as well as the mechanisms that we can use to drive change going forward.






**Women's Equality
over 50 years**

Looking to the past and lessons
for the future on May Day 2023

May 3rd
@ 6pm
Liberty Hall,
Eden Quay,
Dublin

- Ingrid Miley (Chairperson)
- Orla O Connor, Director, NWC
- Aline Brüser, European Trade Union Confederation Advisor
- Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary
- Karen Kiernan, CEO, One Family
- Rosemary Kunene, Community Activist & Social Entrepreneur
- Aoife Price, Disabled Women Ireland

Campaigning for Pension Justice

We joined with SIPTU, Age Action, Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament and Active Retirement Ireland to launch the Pension Promise Campaign in June 2023. The campaign calls on Government to honour the commitment in the Roadmap for Pensions Reform to benchmark the state pension at 34% of average earnings.

Older people deserve adequate and secure incomes, and this is a vital first step in ensuring that the state pension supports everyone in older age. Older women are more likely to be reliant on the state pension than men, and the gender pension gap is currently several times the gender pay gap at around 30%. Women's pensions continue to be affected by the fact that women undertake significantly more unpaid caring work than men, are more likely to be working part time, in precarious jobs and for lower wages, and by legacy issues such as the marriage bar. Ensuring an adequate and secure income in older age is a gender equality issue.

Throughout the summer and autumn, NWC joined several Pension Promise townhall meetings – in Sligo, Waterford, Cork, Galway, Tullamore and Monaghan – to speak to and hear from older people affected by pension income inadequacy and insecurity, and to push policymakers for change. This campaign continues in 2024.

NWC also partnered with TASC to undertake an analysis of the Government's new pension auto-enrolment scheme, in a project funded by IHREC. Our research on auto-enrolment from a gender and care-based lens will look at the impacts of the new auto-enrolment pension scheme for women, and its impact for those who are outside the paid employment market – particularly those engaged in giving or receiving care and support. The research report is expected to launch in 2024.



Lone parents and our work with NOPFA

Lone parents, 86% of whom are women, and their families continue to be among the most marginalised groups in society, with deprivation faced by more than two in five lone parents, and a consistent poverty rate twice the national average. Lone parent family homelessness is a significant issue – at the last census, 17% of families are headed by a lone parent yet 56% of all families living in emergency accommodation are one-parent families.

We continued our work with the National One Parent Family Alliance throughout 2023, advocating for increased support for lone parents and their families. We made a joint NOPFA Pre-Budget submission to the Department of Social Protection, highlighting the need for targeted increases in social protection payments like the Increase for a Qualified Child, and for action to tackle the alarming increase in homelessness for lone-parent families.

We joined the other members of NOPFA in hosting a briefing for politicians in Buswell's Hotel in July 2023, and engaged with politicians from a range of parties in advocating for our priorities for lone parents in Budget 2024.



Ensuring care and care work is valued in society

Purple for Public Childcare Campaign

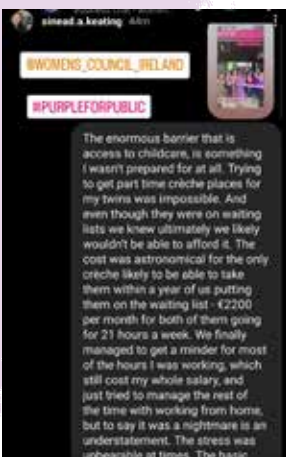
In September we held a Day of Action for Public Childcare in Liberty Hall, launching our *Purple for Public Campaign* for a public model of early years and school-age care and education in the run up to Budget 2024.

Our Day of Action brought together a variety of stakeholders within the Early Years sector. Speakers included Sinead Massey, parent to a three-year-old boy; Tracey Reilly, a parent from the Traveller community; Elaine McQuillan from StartBright; Deborah Reynolds from SIPTU; and Dr Naomi Feely from the Children's Rights Alliance.

The current system of early years education and school-age education and care in Ireland is not sustainable. Together we called on Government to start the transition to a public model of childcare. The event was well attended by our own members, members of the public, political parties and was well covered in national media.

Following our Day of Action, we invited women to share their experiences of accessing childcare for their children in Ireland. We saw a significant outpouring of stories on social media from women, telling their own personal stories of how lack of affordable childcare was holding them back – the worries for women around returning to work, taking a promotion, and securing a mortgage were all highlighted across social media.

Following on from this Day of Action, we will continue to campaign and lobby for a public model of early years and school-age care and education, and we are working to build and strengthen relationships and collaboration across the sector with organisations and individuals.



A Feminist Vision of Care and Economic Equality

- Human Rights Hearing on Care

NWC and ActionAid Ireland were awarded a grant from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission for a collaborative project that sought to advance greater economic equality in care by informing policy and practice on human rights-based solutions to care.

Ensuring an approach that centres the voices of those most affected, we held a number of workshops with women who provide and/or receive supports including women with intellectual disabilities, lone parents, Traveller women and women living in Direct Provision. In addition, surveys were carried out.

The workshops culminated in a Human Rights Hearing on Care in May 2023. This conference focused on the direct testimonies from women as human rights holders.

Speakers included Shelly Gaynor, Independent Living Movement Ireland; Margaret Turley, Inclusion Ireland; and Georgia Grogan, Doras Bui.

A panel of national and international experts responded to what they heard. Experts included Ivana Bacik TD; Huma Haq, Public Services International, the Global Union of Federation of Workers in Public Services; Diane Elson, economist and leading academic on care work; and Wangari Kinoti, Global Lead for Women's Rights and Feminist Alternatives at ActionAid International.

The feedback was used to inform the development of a policy paper on care in Ireland which was launched in early 2024.



Preparing for a referendum on family and care

NWC welcomed the Government's announcement on International Women's Day to hold a referendum on family and care in November 2023. The referendum on care was a long-standing campaign goal of NWC and followed the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality and the Joint Oireachtas Report on Gender Equality.

NWC saw this as an opportunity to update the definition of family to include all families, and a chance to remove Art. 41.2 with its limiting language on women's roles from the Constitution while also recognising the important role of care and the need for greater supports.

Throughout 2023 NWC, together with other civil society organisations including Family Carers Ireland, One Family, SIPTU and Treoir, lobbied the Government to publish the proposed wording for the referendums in line with the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

Together with ILMI, a disabled persons organisation and member of NWC, we also developed a broad and inclusive understanding of both care and family that would form the basis of our potential referendum campaign.

NWC also organised an information session on a possible referendum on family and care as part of the Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival in November 2023.

When the referendum wording was finally announced in December 2023, NWC expressed our disappointment that the wording on care differed significantly from the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly and Joint Oireachtas Report. NWC held a members' meeting to discuss NWC's possible referendum campaign. Following this consultation NWC announced its support for a yes vote in both referendums as an important, albeit small step forward for women and women's equality.



Ensuring a Positive Transformation in Women's Health

SPHE submissions and roundtable

In 2023, NWC continued to provide a gendered perspective on the integration of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) into the curricula redevelopment process for Social, Political and Health Education (SPHE). The aims of the SPHE curriculum – to advance gender equality, promote public health, and prevent violence against women – are core values within NWC's women's health programme of work. Furthermore, this work is aligned with NWC's commitment to supporting the implementation of the prevention pillar of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

NWC submitted to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) consultation on the Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum. This submission was developed in consultation with our membership, resulting in recommendations that were intersectional and responsive to the needs of marginalised students, including disabled young people, LGBTQI+ youth, and those from ethnic minority groups, like Travellers and Roma.

NWC also hosted an exploratory roundtable event on the SPHE curricula redevelopment. This event focused on the implementation of the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum and the ongoing redevelopment at Senior Cycle. It was an opportunity to explore the gender lens and dimension of the integration of RSE in the updated curricula. The speakers and participants were representative of a diverse range of stakeholders, including young people, civil society groups, NCCA colleagues, key academics, the HSE, and the Department of Education.



Perinatal Mental Health

In November 2023, NWC hosted a roundtable event on perinatal mental health. The event aimed to explore the current models of good practice within perinatal mental health research, and ongoing developments and challenges in the delivery of perinatal mental health services and supports, as well as key recommendations for improvements going forward.

The event was successful, with engaging discussion from participants who had a range of clinical and academic experience, HSE colleagues, as well as civil society groups working with Traveller women and migrant women, and an individual with lived experience of perinatal mental health difficulties.

A summary report featuring specific recommendations to inform the next Perinatal Mental Health Model of Care, the need for a dedicated Mother & Baby Unit, the provision of community-based supports and improvements at primary care level, as well as targeted supports for women, with a particular focus on marginalised women, will be published in 2024.



Women's Mental Health Network

The Women's Mental Health Network (WMHN) is comprised of people and organisations with a committed interest in women's mental health. It is a forum for information-sharing and networking and seeks to advance interdisciplinary and multi-agency collaboration on issues relating to women's mental health. We had over 440 mental health practitioners, civil society representatives, researchers, and experts by experience in the network at the end of 2023.

It is co-convened by St Patrick's Mental Health Services and NWC. Two successful networking events took place during the year, in addition to the circulation of two newsletters. Events and newsletters provided members the opportunity to highlight emerging trends, make connections, share relevant resources, and other upcoming events of interest with the network.



Launch of Gender-Sensitive Mental Health Services Research

In June 2023, NWC launched *Gender-sensitive Mental Health: Developing Policy and Services Which Meet the Particular Needs of Women and Girls* report. This research examines current best practices in gender-sensitive mental health care, maps current provision and the gaps in Ireland. The research is underpinned by an extensive literature review, as well as qualitative interviews and focus groups. The report identifies several recommendations to inform the delivery of a mental health care system which is responsive to the gender-sensitive needs and contexts of women and girls.

The launch was attended by members of NWC's Women's Mental Health Network, our funders and partners in the HSE and Department of Health, mental health professionals across HSE and community services, people with responsibility for implementing mental health policy, individuals with lived experience, and the advisory group for the project.

Since the launch of the report, NWC continues to work closely with the HSE and Department of Health to support a gender-sensitive approach to health service delivery, in line with *Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone*.



Women's Health Taskforce

NWC continued to be an active member of the Women's Health Taskforce, which was established by the Department of Health in 2019 to improve women's health outcomes and experiences of healthcare. NWC supported the delivery of several key milestones within the Women's Health Action Plan (2022–2023). This includes the free contraception scheme being extended to women aged 17 – 31 years old, 17 of the 19 maternity hospitals providing abortion care, the development of six specialist menopause clinics, and publicly funded assisted human reproductive treatments – including IVF – being made available through six regional fertility hubs.

These developments have long formed part of NWC's advocacy on women's health. The success of the free contraception scheme, evidenced by almost 200,000 women accessing this service in the first 10 months of 2023, is complemented by NWC's work to advocate for greater prescribing rights for pharmacists.

In 2024, NWC will support the development of the next Women's Health Action Plan, with a greater emphasis on robust implementation, data collection, and monitoring mechanisms. This will support targeted measures for marginalised cohorts of women – including migrant women, Traveller women, Roma women – accessing mainstream services.

**Women's Health
Action Plan
2022–2023**

**Listen.
Invest.
Deliver.**

Abortion Access Campaign



NWC continued to chair and convene the Abortion Working Group (AWG), a collective of civil society organisations and healthcare providers, throughout 2023. The AWG's work ranged from the coordination of submissions, meetings and events to the effective dissemination of the latest updates on the provision of abortion care in Ireland.

NWC engaged extensively with the consultative process surrounding the independent review of the abortion legislation undertaken by Marie O'Shea, BL. This included preparing a submission to the consultation, engaging with various media requests, meeting with the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly and relevant HSE colleagues, including representatives of the HSE Service Improvement Group on Termination of Pregnancy. NWC attended the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health sessions in which the review was being discussed and supplied Committee Members with relevant briefing documents.

NWC also ran a successful e-action campaign, urging our supporters to demand real change from their TDs with respect to abortion access. The campaign ran for 37 days and in total 7,866 emails were sent to TDs across all constituencies.

Members of the Abortion Working Group: Abortion Access Campaign West, Abortion Rights Campaign, Abortion Support Network, AkiDWA, Alliance for Choice, Belfast, Amnesty Ireland, BelongTo, Cairde, Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment, Disabled Women Ireland, Doctors for Choice, Dublin Well Woman Centre, Gynaecology & Obstetrics Women's Network (GOWN), Inclusion Ireland, Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL), Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA), Lawyers for Choice, Leitrim for Choice, London Irish Abortion Rights Campaign, National Traveller Women's Forum, START Group, Together for Safety, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI), Termination for Medical Reasons, UCC School of Law, Union of Students in Ireland (USI), Women's Aid, Women's Collective Ireland

Driving women's and girls' leadership

NWC establishes Youth Advisory Panel

Young women play a key role in the movement for women's rights and in shaping our feminist future. As we celebrated 50 years of NWC, we invited young women aged 18 - 25 from our group members to join our new Youth Advisory Panel.

NWC set up this panel in order to increase the participation and representation of young women in NWC, and ensure the voices and experiences of young women inform our work.

There was a significant interest from young women in joining the panel. We currently have 30 members from across the island and from a diversity of backgrounds. The group has been getting to know the organisation and each other, meeting twice in person and three times online in 2023. They have been working together to inform NWC's advocacy and campaigning work, amplifying young women's voices. Members attended the garden party in Áras an Uachtaráin to celebrate 50 years of the women's movement in Ireland, participated in a European Women's Lobby feminist summer camp, travelled as part of the delegation to Brussels and informed the development of a social media campaign as part of the 16 days of action on violence against women.

The young women were nominated from the following NWC members: Action Aid, Age Action, Aontas, ASTI, BeLoNG To, Doras Bui, Energy Services Union, Fine Gael Women's Network, Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, ILMI, INTO, Irish Traveller Movement, TENI, Unite – the Women's Committee, Women & Gender Studies UCD School of Social Policy, Women in Medicine in Ireland Network, YWCA.



Alliance for Gender Quotas at Local Level

NWC continued to convene the Alliance for Gender Quotas for Local Elections. The Alliance is a collective of civil society organisations and academics working together to advocate for the provision of statutory gender quotas of 40% for local elections. In addition, the Alliance supports the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Gender Equality's recommendation for the introduction of a coherent national gender quota strategy to accompany legislation.

The Alliance held a series of meetings throughout 2023. It finalised a position paper on Gender Quotas for Local Elections and developed a plan and messaging to move the campaign for local gender quotas forward.

The Alliance has adopted an intersectional approach to the campaign. Traveller and Roma women, working class women, disabled women, migrant women, women of colour, women in rural communities and LGBTQ+ women experience the impact of policy making the most. The Alliance has committed to extending the campaign to ensure diversity in women's representation and has taken steps to engage the Electoral Commission in research into legal mechanisms to ensure the representation of marginalised women.

Family Friendly Local Government

Following the successful 2022 national launch of NWC's *Toolkit for Local Authorities on Supporting Family-Friendly Local Government*, we held a series of regional launches in 2023.

In the initial stages, a copy of the toolkit was sent to all 31 local authorities with a letter outlining the purposes of the toolkit.

Three regional launches were held in 2023 in Limerick on April 19th 2023; Wicklow May 8th 2023 and Longford May 29th 2023.

A webinar event 'Power, Politics, Participation: Working for Women's Representation & Democracy' was held in August 2023 where a copy of the toolkit was emailed to all 180 registered participants.

As part of NWC's all-island approach to work, a copy of the toolkit was sent to all councils in Northern Ireland with a presentation of the toolkit held in Mid Ulster Council.

The response to the regional launches of the toolkit was overwhelmingly positive and the engagement of the local authorities where regional launches were held was exceptional. We are subsequently continuing to build working relationships with these local authorities to continue to make local Government more family friendly.



Key Demands for Women in Rural Communities

In 2023, NWC published *Her Rural Future: Key demands for women in rural communities* which outlines the key challenges and recommendations for change for women in rural Ireland. It calls on decision makers to listen to women's voices and experiences when making decisions about rural policies and investment and recognise and tackle the causes of inequality for women in rural areas. The paper was informed by discussions, contributions, and engagement from women in rural communities who participated in a survey, focus groups and attended our *Claiming Our Space* conference in 2022.

In addition, NWC continued to collaborate with Longford Women's Link on research into the experiences of women living in rural Ireland and the particular experiences of migrant women in achieving economic equality. In 2023, we also convened a working group and met four times to provide a collective space for NWC member organisations working at a local and grassroots level to bring their perspective into our policy and campaigning work.

The working group currently has the following members: Amber Refuge (Carlow/Kilkenny), An Cosán, Aontas, Community Work Ireland, Cope Galway, Derry Women's Centre, Doras Buí, Exchange House, Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Independent Living Movement Ireland, Lus Na Gréine Family Resource Centre, Love and Care for all People, Linc, Longford Women's Link, Wicklow Partnership, Women's Collective Ireland (Monaghan), Women4Women/ Southside Partnership.



Balance the Odds Campaign

NWC's 'Balance the Odds' campaign to increase women's representation on corporate boards is a critical campaign for women's equality. In 2023 NWC continued our engagement with TDs and key stakeholders.

We were part of the Balance for Better Business Advisory Group, and provided feedback on the report of the group which was launched in December 2023.

Developing all-Ireland partnerships for women's equality across the island

NWC's All-island Women's Forum

NWC's All-island Women's Forum (AIWF) continued to develop as a space for women's voices across the island in 2023. The AIWF represents a contribution by NWC to the Irish Government's Shared Island Initiative led by the Department of An Taoiseach. Supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund, the AIWF brings together women's groups and activists to examine issues and areas of commonality North and South, and identify key areas that can be addressed on an all-island basis.

The second term of the forum was a period of transition, focusing on bringing a community development approach to the work. This facilitated more in-depth and collaborative analysis and engagement with the key priority areas, strengthening relationship building and addressing issues on an all-island basis. Membership of the forum increased from 28 to 40 participants from across the North and South.

In light of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the All-island Women's Forum reflected on the successes and limitations of the Good Friday Agreement and the decades since through the lens of women and people from diverse communities on this island.

We are delighted to see how the work of the forum has fostered off-shoot cross border working between a number of our forum members and the development of other all-island projects. These include the Women's Collective Ireland's Community Grassroots Weaving All Island Connections Project, the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network, the Shankhill Women's Centre's Grassroots Weaving All Island Connections Project, and The All-Island LGBTQIA+ Forum, established by LGBT Ireland and the Rainbow Project.



Broadening and diversifying a nationwide membership

Membership Mapping and Outreach

In 2023, NWC continued a membership mapping exercise which involves meeting with individual member groups to learn more about their experience of being a member of NWC and how we can support their engagement and participation in our policy and advocacy work. This provided a useful opportunity for the membership and policy team to get to know our members better and ensure that members are aware of how they can get involved with our work. We met with 26 members during 2023 in person and online and look forward to continuing to meet with more members in 2024.



NWC delegation to Brussels

A delegation of NWC board members, members (including members of the Youth Advisory Panel) and staff travelled to Brussels hosted by MEP Frances Fitzgerald's office in October.

We had the opportunity to meet with David Kerr, member of the Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli. We also visited the offices of the European Women's Lobby to hear more about their work on the EU directive on violence against women.

We observed the FEMM committee in session discussing gender budgeting and met with Irish MEPs, Ciaran Cuffe, Colm Markey, Grace O'Sullivan and Sean Kelly to talk about their priorities and legislative work.

We visited the European Commission and the European Parliament and discussed our work on violence against women, women in rural communities and funding for civil society.

We sincerely thank Frances Fitzgerald and her office for hosting our visit.



Membership Survey

NWC conducted our annual survey of our members in January and February 2023. The survey was designed to elicit responses from members to inform our engagement and planning for 2023 specifically in the context of our 50-year anniversary.

Members told us that violence against women, women's health and economic equality were the top three priorities for them in our policy and campaigning work. They said that funding and staff retention were having serious consequences due to the lack of multi-annual and sustainable funding. The cost-of-living, housing and health crises featured strongly in the responses as issues for the women and communities they work with.

Members wanted a combination of online and in-person events with hybrid access, with a focus on informal networking spaces in regional locations and concise quarterly information on NWC activities. To enable greater accessibility and more informal spaces for networking, we held two virtual members meetings and members were invited to share their ideas and suggestions for the space. We shared a summer and Christmas members newsletter summarising what we have achieved together and sharing opportunities for getting involved, as well as member updates.

Here are some examples of what our members have about NWC.

"Strength in unity and diversity."

"Has its finger on the pulse"

"Brings together all of the progressive, intersectional feminist groups to continue in the vital battle for equality"

"Great networking opportunities"

"Representing and fighting women's causes across Ireland"

"collective support and advocacy"

Welcome to our new Group Members

In 2023, NWC welcomed 21 new group members, including:

- 50:50 NI
- South Tipperary Women in Business
- Roche Industries Women's Group
- Outcomers
- Amdalah Africa Foundation - AMDAF
- Westport Family Resource Centre
- Treoir
- Wexford Women's Refuge
- Saoirse Domestic Service
- Leitrim for Choice
- Ethnic Minority Domestic Abuse Observatory
- Bohemians FC
- Communications Workers' Union
- Latina Women Against Violence
- Women's Aid NI
- Unforgettable Women's Network
- Irish Heart Foundation
- Community Law Mediation
- Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- The Northern Ireland Refugees & Asylum Seekers Women Association (Bomoko NI)
- Men's Development Network

Growing and promoting a diverse and inclusive feminism

Disability Equality Training

Continuing to build an inclusive and diverse feminism is an important goal of our current strategic plan No Woman Left Behind and is critical to our work.

We were delighted that Fiona Weldon from our member group Independent Living Movement Ireland was able to facilitate a workshop on Disability Equality with NWC staff in May 2023. We had the opportunity to learn more about the lived experiences of disabled women in Ireland, challenge our own unconscious biases and think about ways to ensure our feminism is inclusive for disabled women.

The disabled women's group who worked with NWC over two years made a strong recommendation that inclusion for disabled women was mainstreamed across the organisation. The team felt it was important to continue to develop our own awareness and continue to focus on how we can remove the barriers to participation and support the voices and experience of disabled women across our work on health, violence against women, leadership, climate action and in our communications.

We look forward to continuing to work with Disabled Persons Organisations and disabled women in the collective struggle for rights and equality for all women.



Safer Spaces Conversations

NWC continued our project to develop a shared understanding of a feminist trans inclusive ethos and approach. The project was led by NWC member LGBT Ireland in collaboration with Trans Equality Together and involved designing, testing and piloting a toolkit Safer Space Conversation. The aim of the toolkit is to facilitate safe spaces for conversations to create a respectful and safer learning environment where people can gain additional perspectives on trans people's lives and experience, and can address any concerns or misinformation in relation to trans lives.

Safer spaces conversations took place with two NWC member groups, An Cosán and Rathnew Social Inclusion Network delivered by LGBT Ireland. The process with Rathnew also included a foundational LGBTQ+ Awareness Training.

Working against discrimination and racism

NWC takes part in protest and solidarity marches

NWC was actively involved in a number of solidarity marches, austerity protests, housing rallies and peace rallies throughout 2023. One of the standout moments was the Ireland For All solidarity march which took place in February, a peaceful, family friendly demonstration that celebrated diversity and countered division. It was an incredibly powerful day, with tens of thousands of people flooding the streets of Dublin in order to show love and solidarity to all who call Ireland home. NWC Head of Campaigns and Mobilisation Rachel Coyle spoke at the event, highlighting the ways that racism and discrimination are intertwined with misogyny, and calling for solidarity with migrant and ethnic minority women.

We also took part in Rosa's solidarity march on International Women's Day, the protests against the ending of the eviction ban, Dublin Pride, Dublin Trans Pride, the Cost-of-Living Protest, and the November rally calling for a Ceasefire in Palestine.



Vindicating women's rights as human rights

NWC highlights key issues for women's equality in CEDAW submission

In September 2023, NWC made a written submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This is ahead of Ireland's State Report that the Government will submit to the Committee in 2024. This report will outline the actions Ireland has taken to give effect to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Convention includes a broad range of cross cutting issues impacting on women and girls living in Ireland including in health, economic and social life, violence against women, and many others. Of note, Ireland's State report will be in response to what is called a 'List of Issues Prior to Reporting' (LOIPR) issued by the Committee. NWC will provide a coordinated voice for civil society through the CEDAW reporting process, including through this submission on the 'List of Issues Prior to Reporting' and the future development of a shadow report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Engaging with our Supporters

We continued to engage with our supporters via our weekly supporter emails and monthly newflash. We had over 10,000 subscribers on our mailing list and we sent on average 5 supporter emails per month. We also connected with our supporters across our social media channels and in-person at the many events, launches, rallies, marches and webinars throughout the year.



Culture Night

In a first for NWC, on Friday 22 September we opened our doors for Culture Night! We were delighted to participate in this national cultural initiative as part of the #WeAct programme of events for charities and non-profits. We decorated the ground floor office space with posters and pop ups to demonstrate the breadth of our work over the last 50 years, and we had a reel running in the background with archival material and photographs documenting our history. Attendees were invited to find a seat in the boardroom to enjoy an intimate conversation between three of Ireland's leading feminists - Orla O'Connor, Salome Mbugua, and Ailbhe Smyth. We finished the evening with a poetry reading from the brilliant Jessica Traynor.

NWC's first podcast

We innovated in how we engaged with our supporters by putting out the first episode of our very own podcast. The episode was recorded live at Culture Night to capture the wide-ranging conversation between Orla, Salome and Ailbhe. We entitled the episode "50 Years of Feminism" to link in with our Culture Night event and NWC's 50th anniversary. The podcast medium meant that supporters who were unable to attend in person could still access the content, and it also offered a means of preserving the evening for archival purposes. We hope to continue our foray into the world of podcasting further in 2024.



Digital Fundraising

We built on the previous year's fundraising success, using our 50-year anniversary as a hook for the Feminist Changemaker programme. In February and March, we used the new St. Brigid's bank holiday and then International Women's Day to promote our donation asks. We ran a successful fundraising campaign in tandem with the abortion e-action, and again during the 16 Days of Action on Violence Against Women in November. On Black Friday we ran a special Feminist Changemaker deal, whereby anyone who signed up received a free tote bag.

At the end of November 2023, we launched a Festive Fundraising Appeal which ran through the Christmas and New Year period. We used a combination of social media posts and targeted email marketing, appealing for one-off donations. We would like to sincerely thank all of our donors and Feminist Changemakers for their ongoing, generous support.



Hi << Test First Name >>

Happy International Women's Day!

I've got something to ask you today. But first: do you believe women in Ireland deserve a fearless and independent voice?

We are living with an epidemic of male violence against women. We still don't have the access to abortion we voted for. Our childcare costs are among the highest in Europe. And we are still not properly represented where decisions are made affecting women's lives... in the Dáil, on local authorities and at board level.

Change and action is needed now, and we will keep campaigning, keep speaking up, and keep holding the Government to account (whoever that Government is) as long as women are denied their rights and opportunities and regardless of what some politicians say.

And I need your help today to do that.

[I support a strong voice for women](#)



NWC in the Media & Social Media 2023

The National Women's Council continues to be a go-to commentator when it comes to issues important to women and gender equality in Ireland.

- In 2023, NWC featured on RTÉ's Six One News 8 times, which routinely reaches an audience of half a million people. The Irish Independent mentioned us at least 53 times, The Irish Examiner at least 38 and The Irish Times at least 33 times. NWC was also a regular contributor to significant radio programmes such as The Pat Kenny Show, Morning Ireland and RTÉ Drivetime. NWC was also regularly invited to comment on local media.
- While director Orla O'Connor continues to be NWC's main spokesperson, many of NWC staff members also participated in interviews and spoke to the media. To support staff in this role, we provided in-house media training to all policy and campaigns staff.
- On social media, our big success story is our continued growth on Instagram. Our reach in 2023 was 307k, an increase of 300%. On Facebook we reached 231.6k, an increase of 92%. On Twitter and on LinkedIn, our follower and engagement rates continued to grow, and we are now well-established and growing our engagement on TikTok.
- January 2023 saw some of the most media coverage of NWC since the 2018 Repeal campaign. Key drivers of this were Ashling Murphy's anniversary, and a rally we held for Natalie McNally in Lurgan.
- Coverage indicators were also very strong in March 2023. We welcomed the Government's 8th March announcement of a referendum on care and the family and this received blanket coverage across media outlets. On the week of International Women's Day, a special edition of The Irish Times Women's Podcast celebrated 50 years of NWC, with the episode release coinciding with IWD on March 8th. NWC's 50th anniversary continued to be a cross-cutting theme across our media and social media in 2023.
- In May, our report launch examining the intersection of several courts systems in domestic, sexual and gender-based violence cases generated extensive media coverage, including Newstalk Breakfast, Morning Ireland and RTÉ Six One News, along with national and regional coverage in print media of the report and findings.
- In April, there was extensive media coverage of our comments on Marie O'Shea's Abortion Review. Orla O'Connor and staff members featured on several Newstalk programs and Virgin Media's The Tonight Show.

People we worked with in 2023

NWC would like to thank the following people who supported our work and campaigns in 2023:

- Geraldine McDonnell
- Grainne Healy
- Helen Lowry
- Dr. Fiona Dukelow
- Dr. Catherine Forde
- Edith Busted
- Sabina Higgins
- Grace Dyas
- Dr. Ursula Barry
- Adam May and the team in Language
- Frances Fitzgerald

Our Team



Alana Ryan
(finished July 2023)



Anne Gibney



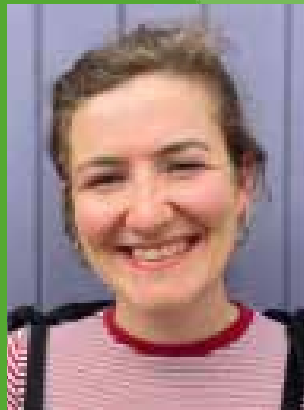
Catherine Lane



Catherine Hearn



Ciara McHugh
(started January 2023)



Collette McEntee
(started March 2023)



Doireann Crosson
(started October 2023)



Donal Swan
(started March 2023)



Fay White
(finished May 2023)



Feargha Ní Bhroin
(started July 2023)



Jane Finn



Kate Mitchell
(started June 2023)

Our Team



Orla O'Connor



Poushali Kundu
(started July 2023)



Rachel Coyle



Róisín Lambe



Sandra McCullagh
(finished March 2023)



Sinéad Nolan



Silke Paasche



Susan McCormack



Vanessa Conroy
(started August 2023)



Vicky Masterson



Our Executive Board



Margaret Martin, Chairperson

Most of Margaret's working life centred on women's issues, particularly violence against women, and community education. Recently retired from her role as Director of Women's Aid, other key posts included Women's Education Officer and Deputy Director at AONTAS; Coordinator with POWER Partnership (NWC, WERRC, UCD, Women's Support Network, Belfast and University of Ulster); and Projects Manager in NWC.



Dr Jennifer Okeke, Deputy Chairperson

Jennifer is the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator with the Immigrant Council of Ireland. She is a community activist and former chairperson of a migrant women's organisation based in Ireland. Jennifer is a board member of the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) and has extensive knowledge and expertise on issues of gender-based violence, anti-trafficking, human rights and migration, including refugees, asylum seekers and Direct Provision. She has a proven history of supporting local migrant communities in the promotion of integration.

Jennifer was recently awarded a PhD from Dublin City University, and her research was on the experience of African women trafficked into/through Ireland for sexual exploitation. She holds a Masters' degree in International Relations from the School of Law and Government, DCU and a BSC from University College Birmingham.



Ethel Buckley

Ethel was elected Deputy General Secretary of Ireland's largest trade union in 2017. As SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for Organising and Membership Development she is responsible for the union's organising, campaigning, education and learning, communications, equality and a network of District Councils. She has led high profile campaigns such as the Justice for Clery's Workers Campaign and Fair Play campaign for union recognition for the Republic of Ireland's international women's football team. She is a member of the Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.



Dr Norah Burns

Norah is a law lecturer and specialises in human rights, clinical legal education and women and the law. She holds a Bachelor of Laws in Law and European Studies and Masters in Human Rights in Criminal Justice from the University of Limerick and a PhD in Law from Trinity College Dublin. In 2018 she was chosen by the Asia-Europe Foundation as a future young ethical leader in Europe. In 2021 she was awarded a national teaching award by the Union of Students in Ireland and The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.



Sarah Monaghan

Sarah Monaghan is Consent Project Manager at Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. She has previously worked as Campaigns Manager for The Wheel, the National Association of Charities, Community and Voluntary Organisations and Social Enterprises. Sarah has been involved in the Abortion Rights Campaign since 2014 and has acted as Campaign Co-Convener as well as serving on the Board. She was a founding member of Together for Yes where she sat on the National Executive while also acting as a Campaign Spokesperson and Head of Campaign Outputs. She was Director of Logistics on the Campaign to Re-Elect Michael D Higgins in 2018. She has a BA in Psychology and English Literature from NUIG as well as an MA in Comparative Literature from DCU and an MA in American Literature from UCD.



Amina Moustafa

Amina is Programme Manager of the Women's Leadership Programme at the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, supporting women who have been affected by political and violent conflict to become active leaders in their communities. She holds a BA in Neuroscience from Trinity College Dublin and is completing a PhD exploring the contentiousness of Muslim women's involvement in sport considering themes such as identity, belonging and anti-Muslim racism within the Irish context. Amina is on the Board of Sport Against Racism Ireland.



Collette O'Regan

Collette has been working with LGBT Ireland since 2017. As Senior Training & Advocacy Coordinator she is responsible for internal training (helpline volunteers, peer support group facilitators) and external training (delivering LGBT Awareness training to various service providers). Strong priorities in Collette's advocacy role are peer support to and advocacy on LGBTI+ asylum seekers living in Direct Provision; visibility and inclusion of LGBTI+ Travellers & Roma in key support services; and older LGBT+ people's visibility/inclusion through the LGBT Champions Programme. Before LGBT Ireland, Collette worked for 8 years in human rights and advocacy in Cambodia, where she also co-founded Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) in 2009, Cambodia's first and (since 2014) legally registered LGBT+ NGO. Collette's professional background is community development, community & adult education and grassroots advocacy. For a period of 10 years 1997-2007 Collette worked in community development and leadership in the border counties and in Northern Ireland using the Training for Transformation methodologies. Collette holds an MSc in Equality Studies from the School of Social Justice, UCD.



Sara R Phillips

Sara R Phillips is a Trans activist working globally. She has been involved with human rights activism for over 40 years. Sara is the Co-Chair of the International Trans Fund in Toronto, and the Co-Chair of Transgender Europe in Berlin. She was previously the Chair of the Board of Directors of Ireland's national trans organisation, Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). Sara is an experienced senior manager and consultant across many industries including the construction industry. Sara is currently the National Manager in Ireland for multinational construction materials manufacturer CPG-Europe.



Nuala Ryan

Nuala is a dedicated feminist and a long-standing member of NWC, representing the Irish Federation of University for Women many years. As a mature student Nuala graduated from UCD with a BA in history and politics and M Litt in politics. She strongly advocates access to education in its broadest forms for all women at every level and stage of their lives. She has a special interest in European affairs and has been the Irish representative on the European Network of Women (ENOW) and the board of the European Lobby in Brussels. Currently Nuala is Chairperson of a Prison Visiting Committee. Her work reflects her commitment to the importance of education and training in building economic independence, equality, and social inclusion for women.



Shirley Scott

Shirley Scott is the Policy Manager for the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. She has been employed there since 2004 where she has held a number of positions. She has been involved in voluntary work for much of her adult life and currently serves on the board of Bethany, the National Bereavement Support Group for Adults. She has a Bachelor of Business Studies from Dublin City University as well as a BA (Humanities) and MA (Human Development) from St Patrick's College (DCU).

Committees, Campaigns and Groups

NWCI is a Board Member of

- European Women's Lobby
- Survivors Informing Services and Institutions (SiSi)

NWC is a member of

- Advisory Group on Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions of the Higher Education Authority
- 'Always Here' and 'Let's have the consent conversation' Campaign Advisory Group of the Third National Strategy
- Alcohol and Gender-Based Violence
- Better Europe Alliance
- Big Start
- Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service
- Children Living with Domestic and Sexual Abuse
- Coalition 2030
- Coalition Against Hate Crime
- Combatting the Harms of Pornography Group
- Community and Voluntary Pillar
- Community Platform
- Community Work Ireland Mental Health Network
- COP26 Coalition Ireland
- Courting Disaster Coalition
- CSO Sexual Violence Survey Liaison Group
- Department of Children, Equality, Integration and Youth ELC Stakeholder Forum
- Department of Children, Equality, Integration and Youth ELC Advisory Group for Admin and Regulatory Simplification
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade NGO Standing Committee on Human Rights
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government – Gender Diversity Network
- Department of Justice and Equality – Strategy Committee for the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017–2020
- Department of Public Expenditure & Reform – Equality Budgeting Expert Advisory Group

- Family Justice Development Forum
- Four Day Week Ireland Campaign
- HEA Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Working Group
- Home Care Coalition
- Home For Good
- HSE Patient Forum
- Interdepartmental forum on the monitoring of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence
- Irish Network Against Racism
- Irish Network for Gynaecological Oncology
- Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women and Girls
- Le Chéile
- National One Parent Family Alliance
- National Steering Committee on FGM
- New Deal for Early Years Campaign
- Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education – Steering Group
- Pension Promise Campaign
- Public Participation Network National Advisory Group
- Raise the Roof Coalition
- Stop Climate Chaos
- Survivors Informing Services and Institutions SiSi – Advisory Group
- The Irish Coalition for Business and Human Rights
- The Tusla Strategic Review of Domestic Violence Accommodation Group
- Trans Equality Together
- We Consent Advisory Group of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- Women’s Mental Health Network

Submissions and Publications

February

- NWC Submission on the Review of the Civil Legal Aid Scheme, February 2023
- NWC Submission on the SICAP New Programme Design, February 2023

March

- A Report on the Intersection of the Criminal Justice, Private Family Law and Public Law Child Care Processes in Relation to Domestic and Sexual Violence, NWC Report, March 2023
- Her Rural Future: Key Demands for Women in Rural Ireland, March 2023

April

- Submission to Climate Action Plan 2024: Feminist Communities for Climate Action, April 2024
- Towards A Zero Tolerance Approach: Good Practice Guide to the implementation of "Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education" (the Framework), NWC Toolkit, April 2023
- NWC Submission on the Draft General Scheme of a DSGBV Agency Bill, April 2023

May

- Social media and online hostility: Experiences of women in Irish journalism, Dr. Dawn Wheatley in partnership with National Women's Council, May 2023

June

- Shifting the Narrative, NWC Annual Report 2022, June 2023
- Gender Sensitive Mental Health: Developing Policy and Services Which Meet the Particular Needs of Women and Girls, NWC Report, June 2023

August

- The Women's Budget: Pre-Budget Submission 2024, August 2023

September

- NWC Submission to the Media Commission of Ireland: Call For Inputs: Online Safety, September 2023
- NWC Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, September 2023
- NWC Submission to the Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life, September 2023

October

- NWC Post Budget Analysis Snapshot: What does Budget 2023 mean for women?, October 2023

November

- NWC Submission on the Draft specification for Senior Cycle SPHE, November 2023

December

- Monitoring the Implementation of Zero Tolerance – the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, December 2023

Legal and Administrative Information

National Women's Council of Ireland Company Information

Directors	Margaret Martin Nuala Ryan Ethel Buckley Jennifer Okeke Shirley Scott Sarah Monaghan Sara Phillips Norah Burns Amina Moustafa Collette O'Regan
Company secretary	Anne Gibney
Company number	241868
Registered office	100 North King Street Dublin 7
Auditor	Browne Murphy & Hughes Chartered & Certified Accountants 28 Upper Fitzwilliam Street Dublin 2
Bankers	Bank of Ireland Lower Baggot Street Dublin 2
Solicitors	Gartlan Furey Solicitors 20 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2



Board Meetings & Subcommittees

There were 7 Board meetings during 2023

Attendance at meetings

Margaret Martin	7 meetings
Nuala Ryan	7 meetings
Ethel Buckley	6 meetings
Jennifer Okeke	6 meetings
Shirley Scott	3 meetings
Sarah Monaghan	5 meetings
Sara Phillips	6 meetings
Norah Burns	7 meetings
Amina Moustafa	4 meetings
Collette O' Regan	7 meetings

Governance Subcommittee

Norah Burns, Margaret Martin, Amina Moustafa & Collette O'Regan
Subcommittee met 3 times during 2023.

Norah Burns	3 meetings
Margaret Martin	3 meetings
Amina Moustafa	2 meetings
Collette O'Regan	0 meetings

We comply with the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and charitable organisations in Ireland. We confirm that a review of our organisation's compliance with the principals in the code was conducted in July 2023. This review was based on an assessment of our organisational practice against the recommended actions for each principle. The review sets out actions and completion dates for any issues that the assessment identifies needs to be addressed.

Employment Subcommittee

Margaret Martin, Sarah Monaghan, Sara Phillips
Committee met 2 times during 2023

Attendance at meetings

Margaret Martin	2 meetings
Sarah Monaghan	2 meetings
Sara Phillips	2 meetings

Finance Subcommittee

Nuala Ryan, Sheena Frost (Co-opted member), Margaret Martin, Jennifer Okeke, Shirley Scott
Committee met 4 times during 2023.

Attendance at meetings

Nuala Ryan	3 meetings
Sheena Frost	2 meetings
Margaret Martin	4 meetings
Jennifer Okeke	2 meetings
Shirley Scott	4 meetings

Financial Report

The main work and activities of NWC for 2023 were in line with our Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024

Income & Expenditure

INCOME

Department of Justice	13,036
Dept. of Children, Equality Disability Integration & Youth	644,887
SSNO – Dept. of Rural and Community Development	90,146
Membership Fees	38,317
HSE	133,296
Donations	10,156
IHREC	7,200
Dept. of Rural & Community Development (Social Partnership)	18,840
Miscellaneous income	46,244
Rental Income	2,600
European Women's Lobby (EWL)	5,660
Dept of Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation & Science	18,585
Dept. of Housing, Planning & local Government	14,566
Centre for Reproductive Rights	15,000
Community Foundation of Ireland	111,711
Miscellaneous Grants	25,000
Pobal – Dept. of Environment, Climate & Communication	124,976
Department of Foreign Affairs – Shared Island Civil Society Fund	37,790

TOTAL INCOME

€1,358,010

EXPENDITURE

Staff Costs	877,952
Office running costs	40,135
Rent, Cleaning	94,777
Communication & Information	28,410
Governance & Statutory costs	18,871
Professional Fees	8,155
Auditors Remuneration	4,680
Programme Activities	180,409

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

€1,253,389

FINANCIAL RESULTS

The financial results for the financial year ended 31st December 2023 shows a net surplus of (€104,620) 2022: net deficit (€18,866).

INCOME

National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) raised total income of €1,358,010 for the financial year ended 31st December 2023 (2022: €1,133,139).

EXPENDITURE

Total expenditure for the year at €1,253,389 some of which relates to income received in previous years for programmes of work which were carried out in 2023.

The balance sheet is showing reserves of €204,546 in restricted funds and €267,266 in unrestricted funds. The directors regard this level of unrestricted funds as inadequate for contingency purposes and have resolved to try to increase the level of unrestricted reserves in the future.

Reserves to be maintained at a level which ensures that NWC's core activity could continue during a period of unforeseen difficulty. It takes into account risks associated with each stream of income and expenditure being different from that budgeted, planned activity level and the organisations commitments.

NWC's ability to deliver quality, value for money programmes has ensured strong positive relationships continue with Government Departments, Trusts and Philanthropic organisations. NWC wishes to increase the grants received from membership and non-statutory organisations.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF IRELAND

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

	Restricted Funds 2023 €	Unrestricted Funds 2023 €	Total 2023 €	Total 2022 €
Incoming Resources				
Donations	-	48,473	48,473	59,536
Charitable Activities	1,260,692	48,844	1,309,536	1,073,603
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Incoming resources	1,260,692	97,317	1,358,009	1,133,139
<hr/>				
Resources Expended				
Raising funds	(7,885)	(4,389)	(12,274)	(11,753)
Charitable Activities	(1,225,713)	(15,402)	(1,241,115)	(1,140,252)
	-----	-----	-----	-----
Total Resources Expended	(1,233,598)	(19,791)	(1,253,389)	(1,152,005)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the financial year	27,094	77,526	104,620	(18,866)

These financial statements were approved by the directors on 8th May 2024 and are signed on their behalf by Margaret Martin, Chairperson and Nuala Ryan, Director.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCIL OF IRELAND

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023		2022
	€	€	€
Current assets			
Debtors	8,212		51,195
Cast at bank and in hand	522,943		361,839
	-----		-----
	531,155		413,034
Creditors: amounts falling due within One year	(59,342)		(45,842)
	-----		-----
Net current assets		471,813	367,192
		=====	=====
Reserves			
Restricted Funds		204,546	177,452
Unrestricted Funds		267,267	189,740
		-----	-----
Members' Funds		471,813	367,192

These financial statements were approved by the directors on 8th May 2024 and are signed on their behalf by Margaret Martin, Chairperson and Nuala Ryan, Director.

These summary accounts have been extracted from the statutory financial statements of the National Women's Council of Ireland. Those statutory financial statements, on which the Auditors (Browne Murphy & Hughes) expressed an unqualified audit opinion, will be filed with the Registrar of Companies following the Annual General Meeting. Copies of the full audited financial statements have been sent to members and are available on the NWCi Website (www.nwci.ie).



National Women's Council

National Women's Council
100 North King Street
Dublin 7

www.nwci.ie

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