

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN A
BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND

Report of a Consultative Conference

Armagh Campus

14 November 2001



Organised by Queen's University Belfast, Armagh
Campus
and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

INTRODUCTION:

This is a report of a Bill of Rights Consultation Conference held by the Women's Resource Centre, at the Armagh Campus of Queen's University, together with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC).

The event was held on 14 November 2001 as part of a consultation undertaken by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on its draft proposals for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and was one of a series held by the Commission aimed at the women's sector to facilitate women's contributions to the consultation process.

The conference was intended for individuals and members of women's and community groups, including those representing victims of the conflict, and other groups who participated in the Women and Peace Building Programme. The majority of delegates were from the greater Armagh area.

The initial proposal for the event came from Alison McCullagh, Development Worker of the Women's Resource Centre at the Armagh Campus, who worked jointly with Miriam Titterton, Development Worker with the NIHRC, to organise the event.

This report is intended to:

- inform the Human Rights Commission about the concerns of women regarding women's rights as human rights, and the protection of these rights in the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The report will form a submission to the Bill of Rights consultation process.
- give feedback to conference delegates, and help them to consider future actions in raising the awareness of women about developments in the Bill of Rights debate.
- remind decision-makers and political parties that commitments were made to women in the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and new equality legislation, and that women's rights are a crucial part of human rights. The report may therefore assist them in considering the actions they should take in order to comply with best practice in human rights.

Thanks are due to the following:

Professor Christine Bell, Commissioner, NIHRC
Allister Lee, Campus Administrator, Queen's University Belfast, Armagh Campus
Mary McSorley, Equality Commission
Elaine Reid, Queen's University Belfast, Armagh Campus
Paddy Sloan, Chief Executive, NIHRC
Support staff, Queen's University Belfast, Armagh Campus

Facilitators:

Eileen Fegan, School of Law, Queen's University Belfast
Clodagh Kelly, NIHRC
Grainne Kelly, Democratic Dialogue
Felice Kiel, Belfast Women's Training Services
Christine Loudes, NIHRC
Lesley McAuley, Independent Trainer Rachel Rebouché, NIHRC

BACKGROUND:

Queen's University Belfast, Armagh Campus:

The primary purpose of the University's Outreach Campus in Armagh, which opened in 1995, is to widen access and educational opportunity for people in Armagh and the surrounding areas. A series of community orientated lifelong learning programmes has been designed to increase participation in higher education by women, part-time mature students and those with non-traditional qualifications.

Women's Resource Centre:

The Women's Resource Centre at the Armagh Campus aims to be a focal point in the empowerment of women in their commitment to personal development and in their various roles within the home and community.

In addition to its wide selection of books, reports and journals, the Women's Resource Centre also holds a comprehensive range of training videos and CD-ROMs which can be viewed in its training suite.

Open from 9am-5pm during university term time, there is no charge for use of the Resource Centre and its facilities by women or their community groups. Special arrangements can be made to access the Women's Resource Centre outside of these hours. For further information please contact Alison or Elaine at wrc@qub.ac.uk or 028 3751 0678.

Women and Peace Building Programme:

Based in the Armagh Campus and funded by the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, Women and Peace Building is an innovative development programme for women. Its primary aim is to work with women to enhance their personal development skills, to empower them to take proactive roles in their communities. Between March 2000 and December 2001 over 1,000 women had participated in the programme.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission:

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) was created as a result of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and is governed by the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission is charged with consulting and advising the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Bill of Rights Consultation:

Since the launch of the Bill of Rights consultation in March 2000, the Commission has met with and listened to views from as many individuals and groups as possible. On 4 September 2001 the Commission launched its consultation document, entitled *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, which contained its draft proposals to the Secretary of State. The consultation document is available in various formats, including audio-tape, and in a young people's version, which many adults may also find a useful starting point. Summaries are available in Irish, Ulster-Scots and Cantonese. A large print version of the document is available on request, as are educational and training materials including a video.

Information and materials may be obtained free of charge from the Commission. Please contact the NIHRC on 028 9024 3987 or you can view the NIHRC website at www.nihrc.org

The consultation document was provided in full and summary forms at this Conference.

How the consultation document was drafted:

The document was drafted by Commissioners based on a number of factors including international human rights standards, the meetings held with organisations and individuals, responses received during the first phase of the consultation, and the views of nine independent Working Groups chaired, in the main, by people outside the Commission.

The Working Groups discussed pamphlets drawn up by the Commissioners which raised questions about 10 areas of rights. The Groups advised the Commission on topics ranging from criminal justice and language rights, to victims' rights and social and economic rights.

The Working Groups' advice was presented at a public meeting in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast in January 2001 and can be viewed on the NIHRC's website.

Consulting with Women:

As each Working Group was charged with the Commission's equality duty (section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act), and because it was believed initially that women's rights would be mainstreamed in the document, a specific working group for women was not set up. However, following representations from the women's sector, a pamphlet on Women's Rights was prepared by Professor Christine Bell, a Commissioner at the NIHRC and a guest speaker at the Armagh Conference. This can be obtained free from the Commission or accessed on its website at www.nihrc.org.

Deadlines and How to Respond:

Although the official deadline for responses has now passed, the Commission has agreed to continue to receive submissions. It is currently considering the submissions made since September 2001 and is planning a third phase of consultation, during which it hopes to engage more fully with the political parties, with those who have responded, and with key sectors of society on the complex and difficult issues emerging from the consultation. The third phase will last until at least December 2002. The Commission may take well into the year 2003 to prepare its final advice to the Secretary of State.

Those interested in responding should contact the Commission on 028 9024 3987 as soon as possible. It is not necessary for submissions to be written in legal or formal language - a letter, e-mail or list of concerns or needs will be given serious consideration. Groups can also request to meet with the Commission to raise their concerns or present their views on a Bill of Rights.

Children's Consultation:

The Commission engaged on a parallel process of consultation with children and young people, with a deadline of the end of January 2002. Again, it has been flexible about this deadline and will continue to take views for as long as is feasible.

A Children's Co-ordinator for the Bill of Rights Consultation, Sara Boyce, has been employed to assist children and young people to present their views to the Commission in a variety of innovative and artistic ways. A short booklet called *What You Said*, which encapsulates the views of the young people who have taken part is available from the Commission. For further details phone Sara Boyce or Miriam Titterton on 028 9024 3987.

QUB Armagh Campus and the NIHRC also worked together on a further consultation conference for selected schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area. The event, entitled *Young People's Rights in A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, was held in the Market Place Theatre, Armagh on 19 November 2001. A separate report of this event is available from QUB Armagh Campus or from the Commission.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and Supplementary Rights:

The Bill of Rights has to build on the human rights protections of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and supplementary rights. The Human Rights Act 1998, which came into force on 2 October 2000, incorporates most of the key rights contained in the ECHR into domestic (UK/NI) law. The Act imposes a duty on public authorities to comply with the Human Rights Act. This means that a wide range of bodies - including central and local government, Health and Social Services Boards, Education and Library Boards, and some companies like British Telecom or private nursing homes - must meet the standards of the Human Rights Act.

International Human Rights Standards:

The Commission takes as its starting point international human rights standards. The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement states that the Commission may “draw as appropriate on international standards and experience”; for example, it may consider Bills of Rights in other countries and how they work.

As well as equality legislation, many human rights documents protect areas of rights which concern women and girls, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). There are international standards around disability rights. Economic, social, cultural and environmental rights are protected by various international Covenants and European agreements, including the UNCRC.

ECHR and Supplementary Rights:

The Bill of Rights will be made up of the rights in the ECHR and “supplementary”, or extra, rights. The ECHR protects mainly civil and political rights. It is, however, over fifty years old. It does not protect certain kinds of rights (for example, those for which governments generally have programmes of provision, like rights to health, housing, income, and community care). Its equality provisions apply only to the rights it protects; that is, they are not freestanding. They require to be updated in line with the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement of 1998, and Northern Ireland legislation.

The Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement states that the supplementary rights making up the Bill of Rights, together with those in the ECHR, are to reflect the special circumstances of Northern Ireland and guarantee the rights of both (main) communities. Among the issues for consideration are “a clear formulation of the rights not to be discriminated against and to equality of opportunity in both the public and private sectors.”

The Bill of Rights should set the values and framework for the kind of society people want to see in Northern Ireland.

The Commission’s proposals:

The Commission has made proposals and asked questions concerning areas of rights which include:

- Women’s rights to equality, reproductive health care, freedom from gender-based violence, and fair, full and effective participation
- Social and economic rights including health care, standard of living, housing, work and a healthy and sustainable environment
- Victims’ rights
- Children’s rights
- Rights to family life and private life

Aims of the Consultative Conference:

- To help participants find out more about the Commission's draft proposals for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- To facilitate participants to contribute to the consultation on the Bill of Rights
- To help the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission understand how the rights proposed would impact on women

Conference format:

Following the welcome and introductory comments by Alison McCullagh, Armagh Campus and Paddy Sloan, Chief Executive, NIHRC, Professor Christine Bell, Commissioner, presented an overview of the Bill of Rights and of the consultation process to date. See Appendix 1 for Professor Bell's presentation notes.

A brief question and answer session on the consultation and women's involvement in the process preceded the first workshop on ***Introducing a Bill of Rights***.

Delegates participated in one of six workshops on this general theme, the feedback from which was presented by each group's facilitator at a summation and plenary session at the end of the morning.

Mary McSorley of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland gave the opening comments of the afternoon session, in which she outlined the role of the Equality Commission and gave details of the proposed Single Equality Bill. See Appendix 2 for Mary McSorley's presentation notes.

Delegates then returned to workshop groups for discussion on women's rights in the following thematic areas:

- 1 (a) Rights to family life and private life
- 1 (b) Rights to family life and private life
2. Social and economic rights
3. Victims, including violence against women
4. Health, including reproductive rights
5. Fair, full and effective participation in public life

Facilitators and rapporteurs from each group presented feedback from the workshops at a summation and plenary session which concluded the conference.

WORKSHOP RESPONSES AND FEEDBACK

Morning Session - General Points raised:

- Human rights are rights that all humans have by virtue of our humanity
- The Bill of Rights is positive - a Bill of rights could take fear away from people voicing opinions and therefore empower people
- Recognise others' rights, respect others' rights
- Could we go too far with rights?

How do we use the Bill of Rights?

- Tool for the future - women, children
- Education
- (Need for) Accessible language – there is no point in having a document that many people will find difficult to understand

Consultation Process:

- The consultation process for the Bill of Rights is too short and not inclusive enough

Implementation of the Bill of Rights:

- How can we be sure rights will be implemented?
- The need for a support mechanism to assist with and monitor implementation
 - Equality legislation
 - Human rights

Women's Rights in the Bill of Rights:

The question as to whether women's rights should be dealt with in a separate chapter or mainstreamed into the document was central to the day's discussions.

In one workshop the question was posed, "Where would women's rights be best placed in the Bill of Rights - within a special chapter on women's rights or allocated as appropriate to relevant chapters in the Bill?" A category: "or Both" was added during discussion. Responses indicated that:

- Most participants wanted women's rights in *Both*, that is, within the relevant chapters in the document **and** in a specific chapter (11 participants)

One participant suggested that women's rights should **only** appear in a specific chapter, and one participant suggested that these rights, and all other rights, should be mainstreamed into the document.

WORKSHOPS 1A AND 1B RIGHTS TO FAMILY LIFE AND PRIVATE LIFE

The NIHRC's proposal:

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees that “everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence”, and limits the interference by public authorities with the exercise of this right. The consultation document proposes adding the following:

“Everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law.”

“Everyone has the right of access to data which has been collected concerning him or her, and the right to have it rectified.”

Article 12 of the ECHR states that “men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family, according to the laws governing the exercise of this right.” The document recommends including the right to have a marriage terminated in accordance with the law. The Commission puts forward the following for comment:

“The State shall adopt legislation to recognise and guarantee equality of rights and responsibilities of a private law character for persons living together in marriage and in long-term domestic partnerships. Such legislation shall provide for the formal recognition of the relationship and the rights and responsibilities of the partners during the relationship and in the event of its dissolution.”

Context: The Commission recognises that Article 12 does not effectively guarantee the right to have a marriage terminated or the right of same-sex couples and other partnerships to formal recognition of their relationships or to the same rights as married couples. The proposed formulation would, amongst other things, legitimise partnerships between gay men or between lesbian women. At the same time the Commission provisionally concludes that such protection should be given without undermining the special religious and civil significance of marriage.

(For further information see *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, Chapter 9).

Issues Raised in Discussion

Right to marry:

- Issue of mixed marriages

Choice re having children:

- Rights to have children need to be discussed alongside rights to choose
- Consequences - moral, social, physical - evidence-based
- Respect for all choices
- Equal availability including sterilisation, fertility treatment
- Every situation is individual (Can't legislate for all in one specific provision)

Family:

- Inclusion of other units other than the norm
- Value all family units as well as relationships (there should be a separate clause in the Bill of Rights to show importance)

- Mothers/parents should have the support to stay at home if wished
- Need family friendly policies in the workplace

Life:

- Euthanasia, Abortion -
 - Legalisation of abortion
 - The right to live / die - your own choice
 - Abortion available on the NHS

Information:

- Data protection - ease of access

WORKSHOP 2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

The NIHRC's proposals:

The Commission has made proposals for the protection of social and economic rights including the protection of property (already guaranteed under Article 1 of the First protocol (addition) to the ECHR), the right to health care, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to housing, the right to work, and the right to a healthy and sustainable environment. The proposals also set out a general provision about how such rights should be enforced; that is, through measures to “develop and enforce programmatic responses” to these rights, and “legal remedies protecting the due process and equality rights of all citizens in respect of social and economic rights”.

The right to healthcare includes: “Everyone has the right to have equal and free access to sexual and reproductive health care and to information and education relating to sexual and reproductive matters at all levels, free of coercion, discrimination or violence”.

(For further information see *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, Chapter 14).

Issues Raised in Discussion

There was agreement that social and economic rights impacting on women were also applicable to men and children.

Family:

- Family values
- Family based taxation system to include family orientated tax relief
- You should not be looked on as a second class citizen if you are a homemaker
- Difficult to get back into work if you have been looking after a family
- Women should be recognized as having qualifications due to the experience of looking after family

Right to health care:

- Accessibility
- Greater priority and adequate resources

Rights concerning Property:

- Protection of property and protection of women's rights to property

Right to an adequate standard of living:

- A standard of living which meets human, not just statistical standards

Right to housing:

- Wording in the document regarding this right needs to be strengthened
- Not just adequate but affordable

- Housing free from fear of intimidation, violence or threat of violence
- Disabled persons can be discriminated against on basis of perceived income

Right to a healthy and sustainable environment:

- Agreed that everyone has the right to have such an environment but measures need to be put in place to be sure it is implemented

Right to work:

- Recognition and status to be given to women who stay at home and raise a family
 - Right to accumulate tax rights, pension
- Everyone, whatever age, should get some wages if all doing the same job
- Accidents in the workplace - no tax = no rights

Needs to address in order for women to access work:

- Provision of childcare
- More crèches on worksites
- Family-friendly policies
- Flexibility
- Training

Provision of childcare:

- An essential requirement to allow women to participate fully in the workplace
- Family friendly policies - eg crèches, flexibility in working hours and holidays

Training:

- Funding to be mainstreamed for everyone to allow women from all backgrounds to avail of training programmes

The NIHRC's proposal:***Freedom from violence:***

The State shall take all appropriate measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls whether physical, mental or emotional."

Context: The NIHRC has proposed a chapter on victim's rights. It has made clear that the Bill should protect the rights of victims of domestic violence and crime as well as of conflict. Men's groups have submitted that men too should be protected from domestic violence, from which they argue more men suffer than is reported.

(For further information see *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, Chapters 6 and 8).

Issues Raised in Discussion**Victims' Rights:**

- While acknowledging that there are widows of all circumstances, there should be protection for widows of the conflict
- Identification of the needs of victims and funding to respond to those needs
- Examination of how money (funding) is being spent on victims' issues – consider ways of compensating people differently
- Looking at definition of victims - what does this encompass?
- Justice needs to be seen to be done with regard to victims of the conflict / justice around victims' issues central to the debate on Rights
- In terms of domestic violence, compensation is not given to victims and their families - there is not equal recourse to the law for those victims
- The children of those affected by domestic violence need particular support
- Definition of victims is inclusive - but would wish to see more assistance given to these groups
- Police Service need adequate training to deal with domestic violence
- There are many issues relating to victims - eg victims of poverty
- Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABx) should be funded as they provide a source of knowledge for all sectors
- We should not concentrate on one specific section of society
- Should be a separate issue dealing with the conflict as a security for the future
- Don't want the Bill of Rights to get tied up too much with victims of the troubles – women can also be victims because of power being held by men
- There should be parity of esteem for victims

Access to information, advocacy and advice:

- Citizens' Advice Bureaux should be funded as they provide a source of knowledge for all sectors
- Government agencies' responsibility to let people know what support / finance is available

Equality:

- (Concern about) treatment of Travellers / ethnic minorities / people from other countries by government agencies
- Importance of childcare - impact on women's right to work

Employment, Training:

- More initiatives to get people back into work

Rights for People with Disabilities:

- Access to education for people with disabilities

Community Care:

- People leaving work to become carers, financial issues around placing people in (care) homes

WORKSHOP 4 HEALTH, INCLUDING REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The NIHRC's proposals:

Various international agreements promise to protect the right to health and healthcare. The NIHRC proposes that:

- 1. "Everyone is entitled to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and well-being.*
- 2. Government shall take all reasonable steps to promote good health and well-being, and to ensure adequate prevention and treatment of ill-health.*
- 3. Equality of access to health promotion, treatment and prevention of ill-health shall be assured.*
- 4. Everyone has the right to be consulted about decisions which affect his or her physical or mental health.*
- 5. Everyone has the right to have equal and free access to sexual and reproductive health care and to information and education relating to sexual and reproductive matters at all levels, free of coercion, discrimination or violence".*

Context: The term "health" is intended to be used in the sense preferred by the World Health Organisation; that is, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being that does not consist solely of the absence of disease or infirmity." Health rights are set in the context of social and economic rights. The proposed rights regarding housing, favourable conditions of work, and the environment also impact on health. The right to an adequate standard of living includes the right to "social and civic care", and to an effective remedy if legal rights are not respected.

(For further information see *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, Chapter 14).

Issues Raised in Discussion

Given what we know about women suffering violence, health problems (including reproductive), and lack of information and influence about their own health, disproportionately to men in NI, what should the Bill of Rights include in relation to health for women?

- (The proposals on health are) Too narrow regarding reproductive rights
- Health and well-being of women is greater than reproduction

Information and Disclosure:

- Consultation is meaningless without information and education
- Women are not asked enough about their health choices
- The NIHRC is not in the business of judging people's choices, but it is charged with *protecting individuals from having the choices of others forced upon them.*
- Information and education is necessary to allow people to make new choices - eg not having a hysterectomy
- Reference was made to evidence-based medical practice

Education and Training:

- Empowerment is necessary
eg at school, sex education should be informed by respect, responsibility, "Life Skills"

- Courses and support should be available re parenting skills

Government Policies:

- The State needs to review health and social policies for their effect on women and consult with women in the process

Legacy of the Conflict:

- Specific reference should be made to health problems which stem directly from the conflict, for example, the use of tranquillisers during the “Troubles”

WORKSHOP 5

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO FAIR, FULL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE

The NIHRC's proposal:

"The State shall take all appropriate measures to promote the right of women to fair, full and equal participation in public life, including participation in decision-making processes and access to power."

Context: the severe under-representation of women - as of 2000, women held only 14% of Assembly seats, and only 31% of public bodies had appointed women. This right is specifically mentioned in the Agreement as a right to which the Parties are committed and should therefore be included in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

(For further information see *Making a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*, Chapter 5).

General points raised during discussion

What do we mean by "effective" participation? Is there a baseline to measure women's participation against, a goal or percentage to work towards?

- Importance of language - ie the difference between "promoting" a right and "ensuring" a right
- Equality of outcome (not just of treatment)
- Provision of childcare and elder-care
- Need for family-friendly policies and hours for women to be able to participate fully in public life
- Importance of education and training tailored to women's needs
- Too often it is only "soft" areas for example teaching and nursing that are resourced to women, but it is also important to ensure that women participate in non-traditional career areas
- To ensure fair representation, gender should be used as a criterion for selection to public bodies. The example of the Police Board was given, as a public body currently unrepresentative of women.
- Need to set achievable targets for positive action and ensure these targets are met
- Public life has a wider context than just political life, all elements of women's experience should be taken into account
- Consultation - not enough, action is needed
- If political parties are serious about women's involvement, they should be putting women candidates into safe seats.
- Need for a Code of Practice to ensure that there is not sexism in the Assembly or other public bodies
- Women in churches – their potential to achieve positions of power is greatly restricted
- Women as role models - women (need to) support women
- The role of media in representing women and in promoting women's visibility in public life
- Training for women in politics

Suggestions to the NIHRC:

Strongest possible wording should be used in the Bill of Rights, for example:

- Replace *promote* with **ensure** in the proposed clause (See above)
- Insert **positive action and resource** into the proposed clause
- If possible set targets and a timescale for the targets to be reviewed.

Follow-up event:

The workshop also suggested a follow-up event to discuss the impact of the consultation conference and to consider other aspects of the Bill of Rights.

APPENDICES

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| Appendix 1 | Presentation notes: Professor Christine Bell, Commissioner, NIHRC |
| Appendix 2 | Presentation notes: Ms Mary McSorley, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland |
| Appendix 3 | Conference programme |
| Appendix 4 | Workshop list |
| Appendix 5 | Delegate list |

Presentation notes: Professor Christine Bell, Commissioner, NIHRC

What is a Bill of Rights?

- List of rights
- Enforcement mechanism
- Constraints on majority powers
- Vision for society
- No blueprint -- 'tailor made'

The Belfast Agreement

The new NIHRC will be invited to consult and to advise on the scope for defining, in Westminster legislation, rights supplementary to those in the European Convention on Human Rights, to reflect the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, drawing as appropriate on international instruments and experience. These additional rights to reflect the principles of mutual respect and parity of esteem, and -- taken together with the ECHR -- to constitute a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Belfast Agreement

Among the issues for consideration by the Commission will be:

- the formulation of a general obligation on government and public bodies fully to respect, on the basis of equality of treatment, the identity and ethos of both communities in NI; and
- a clear formulation of the right not to be discriminated against and to equality and opportunity in both the public and private sectors.

What then does the NIHRC have to do?

- Consult
- Advise on rights
- Supplementary to ECHR
- Particular circumstances of NI (international instruments)
- Reflect principles of mutual respect
- Particular attention to equality and parity of esteem

How is NIHRC consulting?

- Education
- Advertising
- Meetings
- Working Groups
- Receiving submissions
- Networking
- You should decide what else

What is the timetable?

- 28 February 2001 -- first phase ended
- September 2001 -- first draft published
- December 2001 -- second phase ends
- Final advice February 2002 (*NB: This timeline may now extend until at least February 2003*)
- Government must take forward

'Fill the Bill'

Women and the Bill of Rights

- Difficulties for women with the bill of rights
- Socio-economic rights
- Discrimination issues
- Protection for affirmative action

'Fill the Bill'

- Violence against women
- Reproductive rights
- Complex overlapping identities
- Implementation issues

Getting involved

- Send in views
- Encourage other women and groups to do same
- Organise meetings
- Training sessions
- Conference
- Attend Commission events
- Suggest other ways

Very important

- Create the vision. Challenge traditional divisions. Seize and re-shape the debate.

Presentation notes: Ms Mary McSorley, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality Commission for NI

- Established under Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Operational since 1 Oct 1999
- Replaced the former Equal Opportunities Commission; Fair Employment Commission; Commission for Racial Equality and NI Disability Council

Equality Legislation

- Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997
- Northern Ireland Act 1998

Statutory Duty on Public Authorities

From 1 Jan 2000, all bodies which provide public services required “to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.”

Main Duties

- Enforcement/review of legislation
- Complainant Advice and Assistance
- Advice, Information & Training
- Research and Policy Development
- Promotion/awareness raising

Proposed Single Equality Bill

- more effective (prevent discrimination AND promote equality)
- harmonise & extend existing provisions
- simplify & clarify the law
- comply with EU Directives (eg, age, sexual orientation)
- comply with Human Rights Act

Women in Public Life and Politics

- Northern Ireland Assembly 13%
- Scottish Assembly 37%
- Welsh Assembly 40%
- House of Commons 18%
- European Parliament 30%
- Public Bodies (Northern Ireland) 33%
- Civic Forum 37%



Women's
Resource Centre

Bill of Rights Consultation

Women's Resource Centre, Armagh Campus

Wednesday 14 November 2001



NORTHERN
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Programme

9.45 am - 10.15 am	<i>Registration and coffee</i>
10.15 am - 10.25 am	Welcome and Introduction Alison McCullagh, Queen's University Belfast, Armagh Campus Paddy Sloan, Chief Executive, NI Human Rights Commission
10.25 am - 11.00 am	Women's Rights in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland Professor Christine Bell, University of Ulster at Magee Commissioner, NI Human Rights Commission
11.00 am - 11.20 am	<i>Coffee</i>
11.20 am - 12.15 pm	Workshops Introducing a Bill of Rights
12.15 pm - 12.45 pm	Feedback, discussions, summation
12.45 pm - 1.30 pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.30 pm - 1.45 pm	Introductory comments Mary McSorley, Equality Commission
1.45 pm - 2.30 pm	Workshops Themed Workshops
2.30 pm - 3.00 pm	Feedback, discussion, conclusion



Women's
Resource Centre

Bill of Rights Consultation

**“Women’s Rights in a Bill of Rights
for Northern Ireland”**

Wednesday 14 November 2001



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

WORKSHOPS

The aim of the workshop sessions is to facilitate discussion in small groups on specific aspects of the proposed Bill of Rights and how they might impact on women.

The intention is that each facilitator will feed back the responses of their group at the end of the morning and afternoon session.

The responses will be collated and presented to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission as part of their consultation process.

MORNING WORKSHOPS

General workshop introducing the concept of, and background to, the proposed Bill of Rights.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS

- 1 (a) Rights to family life and private life
- 1 (b) Rights to family life and private life
2. Social and Economic rights
3. Victims, including violence against women
4. Health, including reproductive rights
5. Fair, full and effective participation in public life

Delegate List

Forename	Surname	Organisation
Carolyn	Agnew	Armagh & Dungannon HSS Trust
Christine	Bell	NIHRC
Margaret	Brown	
Helen	Browne	North-South Ministerial Council
Elaine	Buller	Faculty of Legal, Social and Educational Sciences, QUB
Phil	Cauldwell	
Patricia	Clarke	Citizen's Advice Bureau
Imelda	Clarke	Out and About
Lucy	Cole	NSMC
Roisin	Corrigan	
Mary	Curran	Citizen's Advice Bureau
Hannah	Dalgleish	FAIR
Justine	Daly	Keady Women's Group
Maura	Daly	Dungannon and District Women's Group
Ann	Daly	
Catriona	Doherty	Faculty of Legal, Social and Educational Sciences
Anne	Dougan	FAIR
Sarah	Dougan	FAIR
Lorna	Dougherty	NIWAF
Heather	Ellis	Armagh & Dungannon HSS Trust
Eileen	Fegan	School of Law, QUB
Eileen	Fisher	Women's Aid
Peggy	Flanagan	Community Work Education and Training Network
Irene	Foster	
Joanne	Friel	
Cecila	Gartland	SPRING
Archie	Gibson	Armagh Local Strategy Partnership
Ruth	Greer	FAIR
Noella	Hampton	
Imelda	Haughey	Armagh Carers Group
Moya	Henry	Belfast Women's Training Services
Louise	Hilliard	Mothers' Union, Armagh Diocesan Social Concern Rep
Patricia	Hughes	Co-operation Ireland
Maria	Joyce	Armagh City and District Partnership
Clodagh	Kelly	NIHRC

Forename	Surname	Organisation
Grainne	Kelly	Democratic Dialogue
Felice	Kiel	Belfast Women's Training Services
Katherine	Lesslar	Dungannon and District Women's Group
Christine	Loudes	NIHRC
Orla	Maloney	
Maggie	Mayberry	Mid-Ulster Women's Network
Lesley	McAuley	Independent Trainer and Facilitator
Paul	McCabe	
Denise	McCann	Acorn Women's Group
Ruth	McConnell	
Hilda	McConnell	Armagh & Dungannon HSS Trust
Norma	McConville	HOPE
Alison	McCullagh	Women and Peace Building, Armagh Campus
Margaret	McCullough	
Siobhan	McGeough	
Pauline	McGlone	Dungannon Community Relations Development Group
Patricia	McNally	Equality NOW
Angela	McQuade	Ulster People's College
Shirley	McReynolds	Southern Health and Social Services Board
Pearl	McRoberts	Ulster People's College
Stella	McRory	
Mary	McSorley	Equality Commission
Jacqueline	Melville	NI Women's European Platform
Betty	Morris	Dungannon and District Women's Group
Majella	Murphy	South Armagh Women's Network
Elizabeth	Nugent	Keady Woman's Group
Sharon	O'Gorman	Armagh City and District Council
Una	O'Neill	
Paula	O'Neill	Dungannon and District Women's Group
Pat	O'Rawe	Sinn Féin
Mary	Patterson	Armagh & Dungannon Health and Social Services Trust
Bernie	Powell	
Margarite	Preston	Ballyhegan and Kilmore Community Association
Terri	Quinn	
Lesley	Quinn	
Rachel	Rebouché	NIHRC
Catherine	Regan	Co-Operation Ireland
Elaine	Reid	Women and Peace Building, Armagh Campus

Forename	Surname	Organisation
Jean	Reynolds	Glenanne, Loughgilly and Mountnorris
Pauline	Rice	South Tyrone Area Partnership
Barbara	Rivers	
Frances	Sands	
Paddy	Sloan	Chief Executive, NIHRC
Lavinea	Spence	FAIR
Mary	Toal	Armagh City and District Council
Nichola	Toman	Equality NOW
Elizabeth	Whiteside	FAIR
Judith	Willoughby	Belfast Women's Training Services
Vera	Winters	Dungannon and District Women's Group
Cecilia	Woods	Lay Panel of Juvenile Courts (NI)