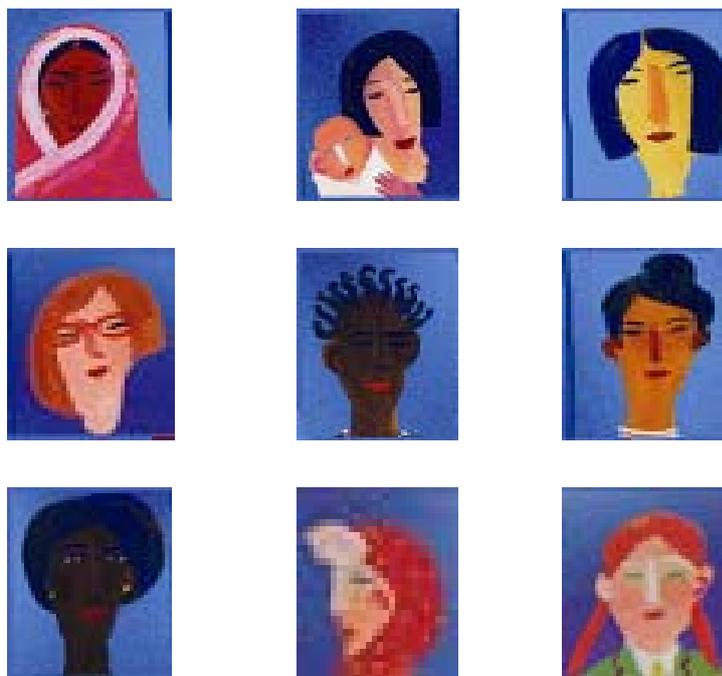


# Women's National Commission

women's voices to government



## ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 2009

This report covers the period from  
1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009



## About the Women's National Commission

The Women's National Commission (WNC) is the UK umbrella body that represents the views of several million women and women's organisations by providing a voice for women and bringing issues of concern to the attention of the Government and into public debate.

Established in 1969, the WNC is the only women's organisation in the UK that is fully-funded by Government, but is independent in its views — it is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body.

A publicly-appointed Chair and Board of Commissioners provide the strategic direction and steer for the Commission. A small team of civil servants (the Directorate) manages the day-to-day work. The WNC is sponsored by the Government Equalities Office (formerly the Women and Equality Unit) which became a department in its own right in October 2007.

## Partnership

Our partners are central to the WNC and now number around 550, covering a diverse range of women's activities and interests across the UK. Any organisation that represents women is eligible to join us as partners and we also have many individual partners that are academics and experts in their particular field.

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## Contents

<b>Message from WNC Chair .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How the WNC Works.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Chair and Board of Commissioners .....	7
The Directorate .....	8
WNC Light Touch Review .....	9
<b>Work of the WNC in 2008-2009 .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>WNC Outreach Work.....</b>	<b>9</b>
BAME Ministerial meeting .....	10
Partner event with Equality South West – 14 July 08.....	10
CEDAW/CSW Outreach Events.....	10
Outreach in the Devolved Nations and English Regions.....	11
International Women's Day .....	14
Work with Overseas Delegations .....	14
Partnership.....	14
WNC Website .....	15
WNC Newsletter .....	15
WNC Promotion .....	15
The Muslim Women's Network (MWN) .....	16
<b>Working Groups.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Violence Against Women Working Group .....	16
The Domestic Violence Policy Monitoring Sub-Group (DVPMG) .....	17
The Sexual Violence Policy Monitoring Sub-Group (SVPMG) .....	17
Migration and Asylum Working Group.....	19
<b>Equalities Work .....</b>	<b>20</b>

'Communities in Control' (Empowerment) White Paper .....	20
Equality Bill .....	20
Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF).....	21
<b>International Work.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Women's Human Rights E-Network (WHRE) .....	21
WNC Post-CSW 52 Meeting .....	21
Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – CSW 53.....	22
Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) .....	24
<b>Women in Public Life.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Women in Public Life Guide.....	25
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors' Taskforce .....	25
Women in Public Life Project .....	25
Women in Public Life Reception .....	26
Honours .....	26
<b>Other Activity .....</b>	<b>26</b>
Widowhood .....	26
Flexible Working .....	26
Women and the Recession .....	27
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Financial Report.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>WNC Partners (at March 2009).....</b>	<b>30</b>

## Message from WNC Chair

Dear Friends,

The WNC experienced a year characterised by further adjustment as well as great progress, through 2008-2009. We were delighted to welcome ten, exceptionally talented, new Commissioners in September to form a strong and vital new and expanded Board, taking it from six to sixteen members. This significant addition has helped raise our profile and expanded our knowledge and expertise, enabling us to engage better with the views of women. We also welcomed Barbara Collins, who was appointed WNC's Director in September, having taken the tiller from Susan Green who had led WNC as Interim Director for 18 months and through a difficult period of change, guiding the Directorate with considerable energy and skill. We bade farewell to Barbara Follett as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Government Equalities Office, and welcomed Maria Eagle MP in her place.



WNC has responded to important developments instigated by the Government this year. The Equality Bill, announced formally in the Queen's Speech on 3 December 2008, immediately became a priority. With its potential to transform the equalities landscape, the Bill represents a clear opportunity to improve women's lives and, at Ministers' requests for WNC to be an informed and 'critical friend' on what women want to see in the Bill. To this end, we have invited Ministers to our Board Meetings, we have written to the Cabinet Minister for Women and Equality, the Rt. Hon Harriet Harman QC MP and the Solicitor General Vera Baird QC MP who is taking the lead on the Bill, setting out WNC's position. We have also organised a Roundtable Meeting on the Bill for key stakeholders which will take place early in the new business year 2009 -10.

We warmly welcomed the Home Secretary's announcement in November of the implementation of a cross-Government Violence Against Women Strategy for England and Wales. As regular readers will know, the Violence Against Women Working Group identified a real need for such a strategy back in 2003 and again, it is testament to their hard work and tenacity that we now have this. We were delighted to agree details of a joint project with the Home Office to carry out a number of focus groups with women across England, as part of the consultation process for the strategy. The focus groups began in March and will end in June 2009 and we look forward to taking this work forward in the coming months.

It was a busy year on the international front, with WNC attending the 41st Session on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 08, where the UK's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> reports were formally examined by the CEDAW Committee. With the great help of our partners, the WNC completed and submitted a comprehensive Shadow Report to the Committee to inform the members better on the position in the UK. Liz Kelly accompanied by then Acting Director, Sue Green, helped to brief the Committee on issues relevant to women in the UK. It was rewarding to see that many of the

issues our report highlighted were raised in questions put by the CEDAW Committee to the UK delegation. We are most grateful to everyone who contributed to the Shadow Report, which examines and reports on all aspects of women's lives and is a useful reference document for women to use.

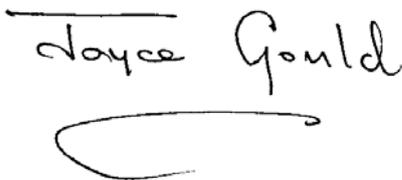
WNC attended the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN in New York in March 09. It was a particularly successful year as not only did we host a lively and well-attended side event, but we were able to represent the views of our partners more effectively having held a series of events around the country on the CSW and CEDAW process in January and February in London, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast. We were able to maximise our use of IT, by emailing news of developments to the attendees at these events and other WNC partners so their input could be fed directly into the considerations of the UK Delegation. Our thanks go to those who took the time to email their thoughts, ensuring a wider, more representative and consequently more valuable debate.

We held a successful event with Equality South West in Taunton in July. The main concern voiced by women in the South West was on public transport and we were able to take these concerns directly to the Minister for Transport.

Partners form the core of our activity: the strength of our voice from their numbers and diversity and these outreach events help us to recruit new partners to WNC. By building a more representative partner database year on year ensures we are effective in taking more women's voices to Government. During the year we increased our partners by 11% with the vast majority coming from under-represented groups such as minority ethnic and disabled organisations.

A major achievement this year was the publication of our new 'Women in Public Life Guide', which provides practical advice and guidance for women wanting to take part in public life. Throughout the year, working with the Cabinet Office and other government departments, we publicised many public appointment opportunities to encourage more women to apply for public appointments and enter public life.

Finally, I would like to express what a privilege it has been for me to be at the helm of WNC during such an exciting year and especially as we end the year during what is WNC's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. As we make plans to celebrate all the achievements in gender equality since our inception (sometimes with WNC's help) we look forward to the future and new opportunities for women that will be created by the Equality Bill. We very much value your support over the years, so thank you. We look forward to continuing to build on this year's work to strive for a better, more just and equal society.



Baroness Joyce Gould of Potternewton  
WNC Chair

## How the WNC Works

In order to fulfil our remit of providing a voice for women to Government, the work of the WNC involves undertaking consultations with partners on Government proposals, running working groups, organising information seminars and conferences, producing reports, advising Government Ministers and the Government Equalities Office (GEO), meeting visiting delegations, speaking at various events around the UK, and providing representation at international events.

## Chair and Board of Commissioners

The publicly-appointed Board of Commissioners comprises women who represent different geographical areas and sections of the women's lobby across the UK. Specialist local knowledge is provided by the appointees from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for whom seats on the Board are reserved. The role of Commissioners involves providing strategic direction, offering advice on areas of expertise, acting as WNC representatives in various fora, chairing or participating in working groups and attending regular meetings of the Board.

We would like to thank Brenda King, who stepped down as a Commissioner in April 2008 for all her work for the WNC and welcome the ten new Commissioners who were appointed in September 2008. These were Professor Baroness Haleh Afshar, Adele Baumgardt, Beatrix Campbell, Brita Fernandez Schmidt, Vivienne Hayes, Ann Henderson, Helen Jackson, Juliet Lyon CBE, Mary Ann Stephenson, and Sarah Veale CBE. They joined existing Board members: Baroness Gould (WNC Chair), Sabin Malik, Professor Liz Kelly CBE, Ranjana Bell, Bronagh Hinds and Baroness Anita Gale.

## Commissioners' Away Day

The new Board of Commissioners first met at the Commissioners' Away Day held on 3 October 2008. This gave Commissioners an opportunity to meet one another and the Directorate Team and to extend their knowledge and understanding of WNC as to whom we work with and how. In addition they had the opportunity to meet some core stakeholders and key contacts within GEO: Director General, Jonathan Rees, then Head of Gender Equality Policy, Ann Keeling and then Head of Communications and Stakeholder Management, Helene Reardon-Bond, who together presented the work of GEO to Commissioners. Also attending was John Wadham, Group Legal Director at the Equality and Human Rights Commission, who discussed EHRC's remit.

## Board Meetings

**10 & 11 June 08** – Nicola Brewer, Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) came to the Learning Exchange to speak about the EHRC and their work on gender equality. Sally Copley from YWCA attended the main Board meeting to speak about the work and role of YWCA and their current priority areas.

**14 & 15 October 08** – Newly appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, Maria Eagle MP, was invited to the Learning Exchange to discuss the Government's equality priorities and WNC's future role following the establishment of the new, expanded Board of Commissioners. Guest speaker Dr Jane Roberts came to the main Board meeting and presented details about her experiences chairing the Councillors Commission, describing in detail its findings and recommendations.

**9 & 10 December 08** – WNC Commissioner Adele Baumgardt led a policy discussion on the Gender Duty at the Learning Exchange. Melanie Field, Deputy Director for Discrimination Law in the Government Equalities Office, came to the main Board meeting to give Commissioners an official briefing on the new Equality Bill. Melanie was followed by Equality Bill Minister and Solicitor General, Vera Baird QC MP, along with Minister for Women and Equalities, Maria Eagle MP, who spoke about how the new Equality Bill was developing.

**17 & 18 February 09** – WNC Commissioner Vivienne Hayes led a policy discussion on funding issues faced by the women's sector at the Learning Exchange. The Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Trevor Phillips, came to the main Board meeting for a long and fascinating discussion on a wide range of equality issues including the Equality Bill, EHRC's work with the devolved nations and its future relationship with WNC.

## **The Directorate**

The Directorate is made up of a small team of civil servants, which carries out the day-to-day work of the WNC. Its role is to: act as the central point for the WNC partners; organise dialogue with women and consultation meetings around the country on key issues; liaise between Government departments and women's groups on issues concerning women; manage the work programme of the WNC and the budget; co-ordinate and disseminate information; manage working groups; produce position papers on policy issues and liaise with GEO in its work supporting the Ministers for Women and Equality. The team is often assisted in its work by interns from the UK and overseas. In addition, people sometimes join the Directorate on a short-term basis to work on specific projects.

The Director's role is to manage the WNC as an independent, non-departmental public body and deliver advice to Government which reflects the views of women and the sector, in line with the strategic steer from the WNC's Chair and Board of Commissioners. Barbara Collins took up the position of Director in September 2008, allowing Sue Green to turn her full focus to policy once again as Deputy Director. We thank Sue for her work as Acting Director in steering WNC through a demanding eighteen months.

Over the course of 2008-09, we said farewell to several members of staff: Leon Bond, Polly Trenow, Bethan Walker, Daisy Sands, Maria Turay and Nella Besry and wish them the best of luck. We also welcomed several interns to assist staff, including Katharine McIntosh, Sarah Priest, Erin Brooks and Sophie Howes who all became temporary employees of the Directorate. Other interns during the year,

were Rushena Miah, Ziyoda Kurbanova from Tajikistan and Lira Duishabaeva from Kyrgyzstan, PhD research student Sanja Kurd of York University and Ahmed Al Maskari of the Women's Ministry in Oman, who all spent time at WNC furthering their knowledge of the UK's gender equality sector.

We welcomed Eleri Butler in April as Policy Lead on Equalities and Violence Against Women, on secondment from Brighton and Hove City Council. Eleri brings a unique service provider perspective to our work, as a former employee at the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) and also as an academic. Fiona Lamming joined us in January as Commissioner Relationship Manager, a new post created to support the expanded Board and Sylvia Namata joined us towards the end of the year to strengthen the administrative support. We also congratulate Mutanser Ashraf and Shelly Dowrich on their successes in converting their long-term temporary promotions into permanent promotions.

Given these significant changes in staffing, we made team-building a priority at our staff Awayday in March, to gain a better understanding of the team's strengths, as well as the need to develop in other areas. We hope to be able to follow this event with further staff events in 2009/10.

## **WNC Light Touch Review**

This year, the priorities were to progress and embed the recommendations from the Light Touch Review; draft a robust and comprehensive business bid for increased resources; agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government Equalities Office; deliver advice on Violence Against Women and Migration and Asylum; complete and submit WNC's Shadow Report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and participate in the examination process; attend the Commission on the Status of Women 53 in New York; and take an active part in the equality agenda and the development of the Equality Bill.

### **Governance**

One of the requirements of the Light Touch Review was to tighten up WNC's day-to-day governance and, in particular, to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government Equalities Office as our sponsor department. We developed a new Governance Document in the previous year, but after some considerable and detailed negotiations, agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with GEO setting out our working relationship.

## **Work of the WNC in 2008-2009**

### **WNC Outreach Work**

In the period 08-09 WNC worked hard to realize the Outreach and

Communications Strategy to ensure a stronger focus in this area, as encouraged by the Light Touch Review. This included work on partnership analysis, maintenance of our partnership database, building relationships with under-represented groups - particularly those in the devolved nations - interface with all WNC partners and potential partners, raising the profile and promoting the work of WNC, improved information dissemination through a new website and a revamped newsletter. WNC also undertook to work in closer collaboration and cooperation with partner organisations and key stakeholders including Fawcett, Women's Resource Centre, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

### **BAME Ministerial meeting**

On 22 October, we supported a meeting of the 7 'O Group' of organisations with Minister for Women and Equalities, Maria Eagle MP. The 7 O is a group of seven organisations that represent the views of black and minority ethnic women and it is intended that these meetings would take place twice per year, in parallel with the 6 O meetings of the longest-established women's organisations. Thanks to Sabin for leading the pre-meeting and the group discussion at the meeting with the Minister. Issues covered included the BAME Councillors Taskforce and mentoring, childcare, refugee and asylum seeking women, single group funding, infrastructure support for voluntary and community organisations, and youths, gangs and violent crime.

### **Partner event with Equality South West – 14 July 08**

Equality South West (ESW) and the WNC held a joint event in Taunton in July 2008. The event was hosted jointly by WNC Chair Baroness Gould and the Chair of ESW, Jackie Longworth. Speakers at the event included Holly Dustin from the End Violence Against Women Coalition who spoke about the Gender Equality Duty; Annie Crocker who covered the experiences of Romani/Gypsy Women; and Manjula Bray who works with OCPA (Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments) who talked about women getting into public life.

Workshops were held to identify what the key issues were for women in the South West. The main issue that was highlighted repeatedly was access to and the price of, public transport. Other topics raised on the day included, childcare and carers issues more widely, children impacted by domestic violence, equal pay, funding issues for local groups and media representation of women and minority communities, including the traveller community. Baroness Gould wrote to the then Transport Minister, Rosie Winterton MP about the issues raised at the event and we were pleased to gain a commitment from the Transport Minister's office to meet, so that the issues raised could be discussed.

### **CEDAW/CSW Outreach Events**

In the run up to the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was held in New York in March 2009, WNC hosted a series of pioneering 'CEDAW/CSW Outreach Events', in partnership with the Government Equalities Office. The events were intended to not only raise awareness of CSW and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but to inform attendees of how they might harness provisions made under these instruments to further their own activities. The events also

enabled us to inform participants of WNC's international work and how they might feed into this.

The program of events was also intended to increase WNC's presence and dialogue across the Four Nations. The four events that took place prior to CSW53 in January and February 2009 were held in London, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast. Unfortunately the planned Cardiff event had to be postponed until May 2009, due to adverse weather conditions.

These events comprised panel discussions, question and answer sessions and related breakout sessions. Delegates also benefited from the opportunity to network, which they found particularly important and useful to them. The feedback showed that delegates found the events informative and inspiring, with the majority stating that their aims for the event had been met and with some saying they had been exceeded. Many delegates expressed a wish for this series of events to be followed up, in order to build on the knowledge they had gained through the course of the day.

It was anticipated that the five events would attract a total of about 250 delegates. In fact, on completion of the four events, a total of 232 delegates had attended, an average of 58 delegates per event. We exceeded our own target for participation when the Cardiff numbers were added. Holding these events also had the added advantage of enabling us to recruit new Partners to the WNC. This has helped to extend WNC's reach into the four nations, producing a more complete set of views resulting in a more effective, collective voice to government. This was an effective series of conferences, which we hope to follow-up in 2010.

Greater detail on each individual event can be found in the section below.

## **Outreach in the Devolved Nations and English Regions**

### **Scotland**

In mid-November 2008, WNC Director Barbara Collins visited Edinburgh where she met with colleagues from Engender to discuss how WNC could work more closely with them. She also met with officials in the Scottish administration and with several other Scottish organisations to discuss how the views of Scottish women can be included in WNC's work and are heard by the Government Equalities Office and Ministers in Westminster, especially on those issues that are not devolved to the Scottish Parliament. This visit was undertaken towards working more closely with partner organisations and to increasing our profile in all four nations.

On 20 February 2009, WNC held its CEDAW/CSW event in Glasgow with WNC Commissioner for Scotland Ann



*Participants at the CEDAW/CSW event in Glasgow on 20 February 2009*

Henderson facilitating the day. The event began with WNC Chair Baroness Gould speaking about the work of WNC, who was followed by WNC Director Barbara Collins giving an overview of CSW and the plans for the upcoming CSW53. Representatives from the Government Equalities Office, Galit Wolfensohn and Daisy Sands, also spoke giving a government perspective. Next on the agenda was Valerie Evans, former WNC Chair, who gave a humorous account of her experiences at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Issues specific to women in Scotland were addressed by Kath Davies and Marsha Scott from Engender, Isabelle Gray from the Scottish Women's Convention and Yvonne Strachan, Head of the Scottish Government's Equality Unit. Kate McCollough from Northern Ireland Women's European Platform presented her personal experiences attending CSW. Eunice Sinyemu of HIV Scotland gave a very poignant speech addressing the caring issues faced by Scottish women living with HIV/AIDS and Lesley Orr of Scottish Women's Aid also gave an interesting contribution. The breakout groups for the day produced very fruitful discussions with lots of lively debate highlighting a number of issues including childcare, wider caring roles and education.

The WNC Commissioner for Scotland Ann Henderson, met with a number of key stakeholders and partners across Scotland to re-establish WNC links with ongoing work and to participate in ongoing discussions as equality and human rights structures change under devolution. Ann Henderson met with a number of partners including Engender, the Scottish Women's Convention and the Scottish Government Equality Unit, to assist with preparation of the CEDAW/CSW outreach event on 20 February 2009 and has been following the progress of the Equality Bill inputting as necessary, with reference to devolved government responsibilities.

### **Wales**

The WNC were due to hold an event in Cardiff on the 6 February 2009, but unfortunately, due to adverse weather conditions, this had to be postponed until May 2009. A report of this will appear in WNC's next Annual Report. Similarly, the annual trip to meet with the Welsh Equality Minister was also affected by the severe weather and was cancelled.

### **English Regions**

The first of the series of CEDAW/CSW events was held in London on 29 January. There was an excellent turnout of delegates and speakers included: WNC Chair Baroness Gould, WNC Director, Barbara Collins, WNC Commissioner, Brita Fernandez-Schmidt, Shelly Dowrich (WNC), Helene Reardon-Bond, Galit Wolfensohn and Daisy Sands (GEO), Victoria Challacombe (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Kemi Williams (Department for International Development), David Balloch (Department for Children, Schools and Families) Annette Lawson (NAWO) and Hannana Siddiqui (Southall Black Sisters).

The second CEDAW/CSW event took place in Newcastle on 12 February, to listen to and speak with women and women's organisations from the North East. The day was facilitated by WNC Commissioner for the North East, Ranjana Bell. Galit Wolfensohn and Daisy Sands attended on behalf of the Government Equalities Office and gave an overview of CEDAW and CSW from the

government's perspective, which was enlarged upon by WNC Commissioner Brita Fernandez Schmidt. We welcomed Sue Robson from the NEWomen's Network, who gave a regional view on gender issues. Next, former WNC Chair, Valerie Evans, provided a personal perspective of her experiences attending CSW and Hannana Siddiqui from Southall Black Sisters gave an NGO's perspective on the CEDAW examination. The afternoon breakout session focused on CEDAW and from this a number of issues arose, including concern about the allocation of funding for women's groups, increasing women's representation in public life and finding better and more effective ways for women's organisations to work together.

### **Northern Ireland**

WNC Director Barbara Collins visited Belfast in early February. Accompanied by Bronagh Hinds, WNC's Northern Ireland Commissioner, Barbara exchanged notes with representatives from the Gender Equality and Sexual Orientation Unit in the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMdFM). They also met with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission. Following these meetings, a briefing session was held at which four WNC partners – NIWEP, the Women's Resource and Development Agency, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and the Family Planning Association, gave details of current local policy concerns. These included the thousands of women travelling to Britain and abroad for abortions, the harassment of women and workers entering the building where the FPA is located and the concern about the lack of government action in fulfilling CEDAW requirements on this matter.

In February 2009, WNC's CEDAW/CSW conference, organised in partnership with GEO, took place in Belfast and attracted around 60 WNC partners and other organisations, as well as a number of local women councillors. Joining WNC and GEO speakers were representatives from OFMdFM, NIWEP (which leads on European and UN matters for Northern Ireland women) and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, all of whom had attended the official UN CEDAW Examination of the UK in July 2008. During the morning session of the conference, participants engaged in lively discussion and posed questions to the panel on a number of issues. These included women and decision-making, women's sector funding, gender-neutral approaches, wider gender priorities, publicising and using CEDAW and their expectations of the official UK 2009 report to the CEDAW Committee. During the afternoon, representatives from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Gingerbread NI reported on their research into caring, which was the major theme at CSW 2009.

We thank all the speakers warmly for their contributions: Liz Law from the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP), Helena Macormac from the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities, Eileen Sung from the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Dr. Ann Marie Gray from NIWEP, Kate McCullough from Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Marie Cavanagh from Gingerbread NI and Pauline Buchanan from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The speeches, workshop reports and plenary deliberations will – with those from Scotland, Wales and English regions – inform future WNC work.

Over the year, Northern Ireland WNC Commissioner Bronagh Hinds fed WNC developments into discussions at various meetings she attended in Northern Ireland, including the Gender Advisory Panel convened by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMdfM), whose focus has been the gender equality strategy and preparation of gender action plans by government departments. Also, the ad hoc Women's Policy Group, a parallel women's policy forum which considers policy activity brought to it from different parts of the women's sector.

### **International Women's Day**

Every year the Government holds debates in the House of Lords and House of Commons to mark International Women's Day and provide Parliamentarians in both Houses the opportunity to consider and discuss issues central to the lives and well-being of women in the United Kingdom and the rest of the world. WNC Chair Baroness Gould opened the International Women's Day debate in the House of Lords on 12 March. A lively debate raised important issues, with a particular focus on how the global economic crisis would affect women.

### **Work with Overseas Delegations**

**Romanian Delegation** - In April 2008, the WNC assisted a delegation of women from civil society organisations from Romania who had come to the UK to research the system of public hearings and evidence-giving sessions.

During their visit the WNC helped the delegation to attend a public hearing organised by the Public Accounts Commission to hear oral evidence given by Sir Leigh Lewis, Permanent Secretary at the Department for Work and Pensions. They also met with members of the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry. The delegation members were very appreciative of WNC's assistance which helped ensure their UK visit was a success.

**Japanese Delegation** - WNC met with a delegation from Japan, which included representatives from the Institute of Gender Studies, Ochanomizu University and from the Japanese Embassy. The discussion focused on the work of WNC and how we work with the women's sector and government.

### **Partnership**

During the 12 months since April 2008, WNC recruited 64 new Partners, 17 of which were individual Partners and 47 of which were organisations. The outreach team are continuing with the aim of recruiting Partners from under-represented groups, to ensure that we represent a more diverse range of women from across the whole of the UK to become a more representative organisation. WNC now has almost 550 Partners and continues to be particularly keen to engage with women and their representatives from all the equality strands from across the UK, especially disabled women, minority ethnic women and young women.

Following the last update of WNC's Directory of Women's Organisations in the UK we aim to update the directory on a regular basis. However, we rely heavily on individuals and organisations informing us of any changes to their details or personnel if our records are to be as up to date as possible. However, in line with our aim, WNC interns Katharine McIntosh and Rushena Miah undertook an update of the directory in June/July 08. The Directory comes in three formats: one

with all our partner organisations listed A-Z, one documenting organisations by region in the UK and the other listing partners according to their interests. All three are available on our website for viewing.

### **WNC Website**

We are very pleased that we were able to launch our new website at the end of August 2008. This was the culmination of a long process whereby Commissioners chose the final design of the new website and Directorate staff undertook a considerable amount of work in ensuring all information from the old website had been transferred correctly and updated. The new design provides value for money, a much more modern look for WNC and is also more user-friendly. Thanks go especially to Leon Bond for all his hard work on the new design and transfer activity.



WNC's new look website

### **WNC Newsletter**

Since April 2008, the WNC has issued four quarterly newsletters, keeping our Partners updated on news from the WNC and the sector. In revamping parts of the Newsletter in response to partners' feedback, we have introduced two new features: '*Partner Close Up*' – where Partner organisations write about their work: and, '*A Commissioner Writes...*' where WNC Commissioners write about their role and experiences with WNC and their other equality work.

All newsletters are available on the WNC website and we have had some positive feedback so far. We are keen to receive more feedback on both the website and the newsletters and welcome all suggestions.

### **WNC Promotion**

In the lead-up to our anniversary year of 2009 WNC paid particular attention to branding and our corporate identity. So to coincide with the CEDAW/CSW events, new WNC banners and 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary materials were commissioned and used WNC's signature colours of purple and green. The banners reflect the Four Nations that we represent, with individual banners for Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales (in both English and Welsh) and standard designs for use at events across England. The banners have so far proved very successful in promoting our outreach program and will be used at future events.

An updated 'Voice for Women' leaflet, intended as an introduction to WNC, was also produced in March 2009, again using our purple and green combination and displaying our new 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo. The leaflet gives the reader a brief overview of the work of WNC and the main policy areas we cover. It also contains up-to-date contact information and is available in Welsh.

With the intention of raising WNC's Parliamentary profile, we met with Boni Sones of Women's Parliamentary Radio to discuss ways we could work together to promote each other's activities.

### **The Muslim Women's Network (MWN)**

The WNC hosted the last MWN meeting in June 2008. Having been successful in securing funding for a period of 18 months from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to enable them to formalise their legal status and governance structure, the MWN has become a fully independent Community Interest Company. This follows the WNC model of getting a group of women together to sit at the table with government and, once established, supporting them to independence. This is an exciting new start for them having begun life as a WNC Working Group, so we wish them success in all their future work. They have already become WNC Partners and we look forward to working with them in the future. We were pleased to learn that MWN Executive Director, Shaista Gohir, received an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June 2008. The WNC's work with the Muslim Women's Network was led by Mutanser Ashraf with support from Polly Trenow and Bethan Walker.

## **Working Groups**

### **Violence Against Women Working Group**

The aim of the Violence Against Women Working Group (VAWWG) is to bring a cohesive voice of the violence against women (VAW) sector to Government. During 2008/09, the Group continued to be chaired by WNC Commissioner Professor Liz Kelly, who is also the Director of London Metropolitan University's Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU). The Directorate's work for this group was delivered by Eleri Butler, Sophie Howes, Maria Turay and Sylvia Namata over the year.

During 2008/09, the VAW group met quarterly, as did both its sub-groups on domestic violence and sexual violence. Government officials regularly attend Working Group meetings to listen, seek advice and respond to the group's concerns and recommendations on VAW. For example, the group met with officials from the Department of Health to discuss the DH work on violence against women; the Forced Marriage Unit responded to concerns raised by the group about the perceived lack of consultation on the Forced Marriage Strategy; and Communities and Local Government attended to seek feedback on local area agreements, procurement and equalities. The group also met with the British Humanist Association and Women Against Fundamentalism to explore the problems facing local services from the faith and community cohesion agenda which the group felt is eroding the BME women's sector. A representative from GEO also regularly attends the VAWWG meetings.

The VAW group has continued to facilitate partnership working between the domestic and sexual violence sectors to develop National Service Standards on Domestic and Sexual Violence. The group also contributed to various other national developments at its quarterly meetings, including the cross-government Violence Against Women Strategy currently being developed by the Home Office; the proposed Murder Law Review reforms; work being done to prevent so called 'honour' based violence and forced marriage; and the commissioning of women's

services. Throughout the year, the group also provided advice to ministers, giving direct access on current and emerging issues from service providers to ministers.

Members of the Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Sub Groups are increasingly concerned about the lack of sustainable funding for the women's VAW sector. As a result of these concerns, the group has been holding a joint sub-group meeting prior to the usual sub-group meetings, to discuss the funding crisis. The joint sub-groups meeting produced a list of causes, consequences and actions, to inform a meeting being held on funding VAW services by GEO and other government officials. The WNC also secured representation at a series of IDeA Third Sector Commissioning Training seminars being held across England and focusing on equalities issues. This gave some of the members of the working group the opportunity to highlight to public sector service commissioners the importance of incorporating equality issues in commissioning processes and the importance of commissioning women's services on a regional and local level.

### **The Domestic Violence Policy Monitoring Sub-Group (DVPMG)**

The DVPMG, co-chaired by Nicola Harwin from Women's Aid and Hannana Siddiqui of Southall Black Sisters, has monitored and advised on government policy developments around domestic violence through engagement with relevant officials, including the Home Office and Forced Marriage Unit. For example, the Group provided feedback on the DH draft framework for preventing violence and abuse and group members provided evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee Report on domestic violence. Group members were also invited to participate in the Forced Marriage Unit Advisory Group and Home Office Stakeholder Groups, to provide advice on the development of associated policy, strategy and guidance. Group members also discussed the rolling out of domestic violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) systems and provided feedback to officials on the ongoing problem caused by the 'no recourse to public funds' rules and the delay in implementing Government guidance on backdated payments.

### **The Sexual Violence Policy Monitoring Sub-Group (SVPMG)**

The SVPMG, chaired by Liz Kelly, maintains effective links with government officials from a number of departments and statutory bodies, such as the Home Office, Department of Health, Crown Prosecution Service, Greater London Authority and the National Policing Improvement Agency. The group provided advice on police monitoring of sexual offences; how to support adult survivors of child sexual abuse; and discussed how to use CEDAW in future work. The group also raised concerns about the trafficking of women and girls into large sporting events like the 2012 Olympics, by writing a letter to the relevant Ministers and discussing the possibility of establishing a network to act on trafficking prevention in relation to the 2012 Olympics.

### **Regular VAW E-Newsletter**

The WNC collates and sends out regular E-news to the VAW E-Network and Working Group members. This includes news and policy updates from Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland on violence against women and related equality issues, together with information about consultations, legislative developments, new publications and forthcoming events.

### **Meetings and events**

Throughout the year WNC has also attended advisory and consultative meetings and events on violence against women including the Crown Prosecution Service launch of their Violence Against Women Strategy in June 2008; a workshop on updating the CPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence; the Home Office Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Stakeholder meetings and Honour-based Violence Advisory Group:

In June 2008 Baroness Gould met with Justice Minister and Minister for Women and Equalities, Maria Eagle MP, to discuss progress on the Corston Report, WNC partner concerns and how WNC could assist the process of the Report's implementation. Baroness Gould also wrote to Justice Secretary Jack Straw MP welcoming the Government's official response to the Corston Report, but also seeking reassurances on particular points of concern. WNC continued to meet with GEO and Ministry of Justice officials about the cross-departmental work programme and has contributed to the Corston Work Programme in a number of ways, including working with the newly-established Women's Centres Reference Group consisting of external stakeholders. A meeting in October was held to contribute to the proposed 'Diverting Women from Custody Project' Outline Business Case; and contributions were also made to a meeting on 'Improving Services to Women Offenders' in October, involving the women's leads from the Regional Offender Management Services (ROMS) and women's service providers from Together Women (Liverpool), Evolve (Calderdale) and Women's Services Strategic Network (Brighton).

### **English Cross Government consultation: Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls**

In March 2009 the Home Office launched and led an England-wide cross-government consultation on ending violence against women and girls, which was accompanied by a series of stakeholder and public events and an online consultation on public attitudes to violence against women.

The WNC welcomed this consultation and cross-government strategy. In particular we supported the adoption of the UN definition of violence against women and girls, which recognises that violence against women is a cause and consequence of gender inequality and therefore connects intervention and prevention work to equality and human rights frameworks. We also welcomed the proposed strategic framework which incorporates not only the *protection* of women and girls and the *provision* of services, but also the primary, secondary and tertiary *prevention* of violence against women and girls and hope this presents a real opportunity for the knowledge and expertise held in the VAW sector to inform the strategy's development, implementation and review in 2009-10.

To accompany this consultation, the Home Office asked the WNC to work with partners to organise a series of focus groups with women around England to hear their views about proposals to increase women's safety and about how to end violence against women and girls. Between January – March 2009, WNC spent time planning twenty-four women-only focus groups to be held between March –

June 2009, targeting a range of women based on demographics and life experience. The aim was to involve women who are unlikely to engage with the formal consultation process yet who may nevertheless be accessing local specialist services.

The WNC worked actively with partners to organise focus groups with survivors and service users, black and minority ethnic women, refugee and asylum-seeking women, older women, girls and young women, women offenders and women in prison, transgender women, lesbians, bisexual women, traveller women, homeless women, women in rural areas, women vulnerable due to mental health or substance misuse problems, trafficked women, women in the sex industry, disabled women, women retail and shift workers, women survivors of sexual violence and of female genital mutilation. The issues, suggestions and recommendations women raise at these events will be submitted to the Home Office in summer 2009 in the form of a report, to inform and influence the forthcoming cross-government Violence Against Women Strategy for England

### **Migration and Asylum Working Group**

The Migration and Asylum Working Group met several times throughout the year in April, September and December 2008 and in March 2009. Following a review of the group's membership, there was representation from a number of new organisations including UNISON, Asylum Support Appeals Project and Unite the Union.

Key priorities for the year were identified in the Migration and Asylum Group Work Plan 2008-09, incorporating engagement with government departments and officials, monitoring the Ministers for Women priorities, providing expertise to the WNC on Migration and Asylum issues and engaging with Greater London Authorities (GLAs) on local and regional dimensions affecting migrant and asylum seeking women.

Accordingly, activities for the group during the year included:

- Writing to Cabinet Minister for Women and Equality the Rt. Hon Harriet Harman QC MP highlighting concerns relating to the lack of asylum, refugee and migration issues highlighted in the Minister for Women's Priorities;
- Submitting a response to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA) Consultation on the 2009-10 Equality Scheme;
- Engaging with the TUC on a programme of work on women migrant workers;
- Working closely with the EHRC on gender and migration issues; and
- Engaging with a number of Government departments, including GEO, on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and with the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) on their work with regards to migrants and asylum seekers.

In addition, the Group discussed numerous concerns around asylum and migration throughout the year, including the Home Affairs Select Committee Enquiry into the Points Based System and the Citizenship and Immigration Bill,

the All Party Parliamentary Group on Balanced Migration, the Public Sector Equality Duty and asylum issues in the context of HIV/ AIDS.

## Equalities Work

### **'Communities in Control' (Empowerment) White Paper**

In May 2008, WNC attended a DCLG 'equalities consultation group', together with Fawcett, Womankind and other organisations representing equality strands. Women's organisations highlighted that connections need to be made with 'empowerment' strategies between state institutions and communities of interest, the structural inequalities that sustain gender inequality and women's disempowerment in interpersonal relationships, especially with regards to their experience of violence and abuse. The WNC circulated further information about the resultant consultation to partners and working groups, which was published in July 2008 as the 'Communities in Control' White Paper. It aimed to shift power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power and into the hands of communities and individual citizens.

### **Equality Bill**

Proposals for an Equality Bill and the Government's response to the Consultation were published by GEO in July 2008. The Bill was introduced to Parliament during the year, which included some important commitments to equalise protection and to introduce new measures aimed at improving compliance with the law. It also included proposals for a single equality duty which will require public bodies to consider the diverse needs and requirements of their workforce and the communities they serve, when developing employment policies and planning services; making public bodies more transparent; and for improving enforcement.

A Senior Stakeholder Group was set up by GEO to advise the Government on stakeholder concerns; the group included a wide range of interests including NGOs, trade unions and employers' organisations. The WNC was invited to nominate a Commissioner to represent the WNC on the Stakeholder Group

WNC collated responses from Commissioners, Working Groups and from recent briefing papers on GEO's proposal to incorporate 'religion and belief' into the proposed new single public sector duty, although partners do not hold a unified position on this issue. A summary of responses reflecting this diversity of views was passed to GEO to inform their decision-making.

WNC offered to host a Roundtable Meeting on the Bill with key stakeholders, GEO and Ministers and this is expected to take place at the start of the new business year.

A sub-group of the WNC Board was established in January 2009 to consider particular issues on which the WNC would want to make representations. The sub-group identified a range of gender-related issues to pursue with the Government. These included auditing pay systems in order to be able to identify illegal unequal pay, retaining the best elements of the gender equality duty when the proposed generic equality duty was introduced, the introduction of

'hypothetical comparators' to help low-paid women in women only workforces and proposals to provide a quicker and more effective means of handling litigation on gender inequality. A letter was sent to the Minister for Equalities setting out these concerns.

### **Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF)**

WNC is a member of and attends, monthly meetings of the EDF and provides email updates to Commissioners and partners as appropriate. The EDF includes representatives from every strand of the equality agenda, including the Equality Bill.

## **International Work**

All of our activity on International areas was brought together into one coherent International Strategy, which set out a plan of action and priorities for our work for 2008-09, as resources allowed. It aimed to bring together the views of women around the UK and contribute to Government policy, building capacity to engage actively with international instruments and included plans for CEDAW and CSW activity.

### **Women's Human Rights E-Network (WHRE)**

The WHRE was established to bring together the views of women from around the UK on international issues, raise awareness of important topics and to contribute to government policy. This work has been led by Shelly Dowrich, with support from Sarah Priest.

The WNC has responsibility for two ongoing work areas: producing a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) shadow report and preparations for the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

The E-network is open to WNC partners, as well as organisations and individuals interested in learning more about women's human rights and gender equality from an international perspective. In a regular email circulation, E-network members receive up-to-date information on gender issues in the international arena, invitations to events and seminars, information on current government and NGO initiatives and have opportunities to contribute to consultation exercises.

### **WNC Post-CSW 52 Meeting**

On 15 May 2008, WNC held a meeting between the UK Government delegation to CSW 52 and UK NGOs. Speakers at the event included representatives from GEO and the Department for International Development, with WNC Chair Baroness Gould chairing the meeting.

The UK Government delegation provided feedback to attendees on the Agreed Conclusions and Resolutions and described the strategic actions to be taken forward. This was followed by the recounting by WNC representatives of the WNC side event, *An Economy for Equality*, which was held in conjunction with the UK

Women's Budget Group. The meeting was also an opportunity for NGO attendees to CSW52 to discuss their experiences and to offer feedback on specific side events.

An important aspect of the post-CSW meeting was the time spent discussing the lessons that could be learned from CSW 52 and how working practices can be improved for future CSW conferences. Partners had been encouraged to consider and contribute to this question, in advance of the meeting.

### **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – CSW 53**

The 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place at the United Nations (UN) in New York from Monday 2 March to Friday 13 March 2009. CSW is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. It is the principal, global, policy-making body. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations' Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of women worldwide.

CSW was the preparatory body for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing — the outcome of which was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PfA). The UN General Assembly mandated the Commission to play a central role in monitoring the implementation of the PfA and this has been the main focus of work for CSW since 1996. Generally, a priority theme is selected each year for the Commission to focus on and the agreed conclusions developed from the priority theme of the preceding year's CSW are also reviewed.



(from left) Wivica Holst, Swedish Women's Lobby; Liz Gardiner, Working Families; Baroness Gould and Beatrix Cambell of WNC at the WNC Side Event at CSW.

The priority theme examined in 2009 was: *(i) The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS*

The review theme was: *(ii) Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels.*

The emerging issue was: *(iii) Gender perspectives of the financial crisis.*

WNC Chair Baroness Gould, and WNC Director, Barbara Collins represented the WNC at CSW 53, along with WNC Commissioner and feminist broadcaster

Beatrix Campbell. Beatrix was the keynote speaker at WNC's successful side-event held on Tuesday 3rd March, entitled: *Who Cares? The complexities of gendered caring in a modern society*. Also on the panel were Elizabeth Gardiner from Working Families Organisation and Wiveca Holst from the Swedish Women's Lobby, who together, covered the following: childcare provision, flexible working, carers, leave arrangements, the sandwich generation, shared responsibilities between men and women and the impact of the global recession on parents in the UK and Sweden.

**Written and Oral Statement** - The WNC also submitted a written statement to the Commission, highlighting the situation of carers in the UK, as well as making a request to the Commission for Baroness Gould to deliver an oral statement, which she duly gave during CSW.

**Ambassador's Reception** - As in previous years, the UK Ambassador to the UN, HE Sir John Saver KCMG, hosted a Reception to provide an opportunity for the UK Government delegation and UK NGOs to meet. The Reception was held on 2 March at the UK's UN Mission, where the Ambassador helped celebrate WNC's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**WNC at CSW 53** - The WNC once again acted as a focal point for and a link between the many UK NGO representatives attending CSW and members of the UK Government Delegation who were involved in the formal negotiations. WNC co-ordinated and facilitated morning and evening meetings of NGOs most days, to enable them to share their knowledge and experiences with each other and to receive updates from members of the UK delegation on the progress of the formal negotiations. There were successful side events hosted by a number of WNC partner organisations, including; National Alliance of Women's Organisations, UNIFEM, Hope Medical Enterprises, Widows for Peace Through Democracy and the International Council of Jewish Women to name a few. The majority of these events were held during the first week.

In week two, Barbara Collins, working closely with colleagues at the UK Mission to the UN and members of the UK Delegation, was actively engaged in feeding in the views of WNC partners to the UK's position on the Agreed Conclusions. This process was made possible following the highly successful stakeholder events held during February and March in the four nations, whereby comments and contributions from participants were synthesised and used to influence the direction of the emerging text.

In addition, a new initiative was introduced whereby all those who had attended the CSW 4-nations events during January and February, were emailed drafts of the agreed conclusions as they were agreed in New York and invited to comment and input their views via email to Barbara, who in turn fed comments direct to the UK delegation. This innovative process allowed for much wider participation from Partners beyond those able to attend the UN, ensuring a quick and direct voice to the CSW negotiating table. We intend to look at building on this approach for CSW 54. Particular thanks for their role in administering this process go to Barbara Collins, Shelly Dowrich and Sarah Priest.

### **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

On 10 July 2008, the UK Government's fifth and sixth reports were formally examined at the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which took place in New York from 30 June – 18 July 2008. The UK Delegation was led by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, Barbara Follett MP, supported by a team of officials from GEO and other government departments and Overseas Territories.

CEDAW is a powerful tool that serves to articulate, advocate and monitor women's human rights. The Convention's enforcement is monitored through a reporting system mechanism used to scrutinise government activity and ensure accountability within the country undergoing examination and at the United Nations. The Government's report is a review of their efforts to comply with the Convention.

As part of the CEDAW process, the UN invites NGOs to voice any concerns about the Government's evidence and provide the CEDAW Committee with any opposing view or additional information, where necessary. As a result, the CEDAW committee, by recognising the need for an independent objective assessment, implemented a system of 'shadow' reports in order that national and international focus can be brought to the most prominent concerns of women. The WNC submitted their Shadow Report on 1 May 2008, compiled with the help of expert input from our partners over many months. Information contained in the report informed the CEDAW Committee's thinking, giving a more comprehensive picture of gender equality in the UK and highlighting where further work is needed. This helped Committee members to formulate their questions to the Delegation.

WNC Commissioner Professor Liz Kelly represented WNC at the examination at the UN in New York, alongside Acting WNC Director Sue Green and Sheila Coates of South Essex Rape and Incest Crises Centre, an active member of the Violence Against Women Working Group. Other NGOs in New York included representatives from the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Rape Crisis and Southall Black Sisters. Andrea Murray from the EHRC also attended to represent the EHRC Shadow Report and helped brief the Committee Members. A number of NGOs also attended to observe the examination at the UN. Also, for the first time, a video link was used to transmit the formal examination to London, which allowed not only for more officials to participate in the Government Delegation, but also allowed NGOs in the UK to be able to observe the formal process.

Following receipt of feedback from the CEDAW Committee in its concluding remarks, the UK Government drafted a cross-government action plan on implementing the recommendations before the next UK report is due in 2011. One of the Committee's recommendations that has already been worked on in collaboration with WNC was to work more closely with women in the devolved nations. Further details of this are available above in the section in Outreach on CEDAW/CSW Events.

## **ECOSOC**

As an organisation which has Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, we are required every four years to produce a brief report outlining all the activity we have carried out at UN level since the previous report and which justifies us having Special Consultative Status.

WNC submitted two reports in May 08 covering the periods 1997 to 2000 and 2001 to 2004, both of which were unfortunately overdue, and which set out WNC's activity, with the main focus being on CSW and CEDAW.

## **Women in Public Life**

### **Women in Public Life Guide**

The WNC are pleased to announce that the popular and informative *Women in Public Life Guide* was updated and revised in March 2009. The revised version contains useful advice on how to obtain a public position and profiles women's journeys into public life. A diverse range of women are profiled as current or past holders of public appointments according to region, race, disability and age. For example, there are three profiles of women under 30, with our youngest representative at 22. Profiles also represent a range of appointments, from magistrates and school governors, to peers and Government taskforce members. The relevant bodies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were involved in preparations for the Guide to ensure that it reflects different systems or processes operating in the devolved administrations.

Recently-appointed WNC Commissioner Mary-Ann Stephenson led on this work in close collaboration with the Office for the Commissioner of Public Appointments (OCPA) and the Cabinet Office and was supported by Shelly Dowrich, Sarah Priest and Sue Green in the Directorate.

### **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors' Taskforce**

In order to address the under-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors, the Government set up a BAME Taskforce chaired by Baroness Pola Uddin. The Taskforce has held several regional outreach events throughout the year to encourage more BAME women to become local councillors and WNC Commissioners spoke at a number of these about the role of WNC in encouraging more women into public life. A strategic partners group of which WNC is a member was set up to work closely with the Taskforce. This group is a virtual group which met quarterly and at which WNC took the opportunity to contribute to ensuring that the Taskforce made links with the right organisations and shared good practice.

### **Women in Public Life Project**

In March 2008, WNC began working with the Cabinet Office on a new initiative to encourage more women to apply for posts on public bodies. In collaboration with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Home Office and the Appointments Commission, we publicised widely both on our website and direct to our partners by email, a selection of current

advertisements for posts on the boards of public bodies. All this activity is aimed at encouraging more women with the specified skills and experience to apply for the advertised posts and enquire further into other opportunities that might exist. Following an evaluation, the possibility of extending the project to all central government departments and engaging with devolved administrations is being considered.

### **Women in Public Life Reception**

On 14 July 2008, Cabinet Minister for Women and Equality, Rt. Hon Harriet Harman QC MP and Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP hosted a Reception bringing together equality organisations, headhunter firms, Parliamentarians and public appointees. At the event, Ministers highlighted the need for greater diversity in public appointments and identified measures to make this change happen, including new targets. WNC supported this Reception with Baroness Gould speaking about the project with which WNC was involved in conjunction with GEO and the Cabinet Office to bring public appointment opportunities to the attention of many more women and encourage them to apply.

### **Honours**

WNC is active in promoting experienced and deserving women to receive honours as part of the central government process, in liaison with GEO Honours officials. During this year, we were especially pleased to note that WNC Commissioner and Director of the Prison Reform Trust, Juliet Lyon, was awarded a CBE.

## **Other Activity**

### **Widowhood**

Following discussion between Baroness Gould and Margaret Owen at the start of the year, it was agreed that WNC would provide administrative support, with the development of a simple consultation of partners, on the attitudes towards and experiences of widows in the UK. This project was supported by WNC Commissioner Helen Jackson, Margaret Owen, Lady Fiona Hodgson and Daniel Barrow from the Directorate.

What began as a simple idea expanded into the creation of a full questionnaire asking recipients about their experiences of dealing with widowhood. The questionnaire is due to be completed and circulated to partners and others in the coming months and responses will be analysed with relevant government departments informed of the findings.

### **Flexible Working**

Last autumn, the Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) announced that he planned to reconsider a number of commitments to improve employment legislation in light of the deepening recession and the need to avoid "burdens" on business. In particular, the proposed extension of the right to request to work flexibly to include parents of children up to 16 years old and the planned extension of paid maternity leave from nine months to one year was to be reconsidered.

The WNC considered that this change would not help those women already at work nor those wishing to work, so a letter was sent to the Secretary of State setting out the arguments. Shortly after this, an announcement was made that he would, after all, introduce the extended right to request to work flexibly and this was subsequently done in April 2009. The WNC will continue to press the case for the extension of paid maternity leave.

### **Women and the Recession**

On 4 March 2009, a group of more than 50 women from business, the third sector, trade unions, the public sector and women's organisations met at No. 11 Downing Street for a round table discussion on women and the recession. The WNC was represented by Commissioner Ann Henderson. The event was organised by the Government Equalities Office at the request of the Minister for Women and Equalities, Harriet Harman QC MP. Several Government Ministers attended the event. The discussions were wide ranging and considered the impact that the economic recession was having on women, identifying possible policy responses that would be best suited to respond to the issues and to support women through this period. The summary of the discussions was shared with the Cabinet and was intended to inform part of the Government's contribution to the G20 Summit in London the following month.

### **Conclusion**

The year has held many exciting developments for WNC, particularly with the recruitment of 10 new Commissioners and a new Director. The year almost seemed to be in two halves: the first half focusing on embedding the changes highlighted in the Light Touch Review and anticipating the arrival of a new Board and the second half responding to the arrival of the new Commissioners and new Director and the changes that these brought. With the revamped newsletter, a completely new website, an updated partners directory, increased links with Scotland and Northern Ireland and an 11% increase in WNC partners, with most coming from under-represented groups, we are better placed to represent all parts of the UK.

With the arrival of our new Director, we have been able to establish a better staff structure whilst maintaining our levels of activity on VAW and Migration and Asylum groups, honours, international activity and women in public life. But towards the end of the year, we saw a significant increase in work on equalities with the arrival of the Equality Bill. This is an extremely important development for equality in the UK and WNC wants to ensure that it is able to feed into the Bill at every opportunity to ensure that the voices of women are as loud as they have always been.

Three other major achievements were celebrated. The first was the completion of WNC's CEDAW Shadow Report and the UK's formal examination by the UN CEDAW Committee in July. Second was the project working with the Cabinet Office and other government departments to bring public opportunities to the attention of more women; and third, was the Home Office activity on developing a national strategy to tackle violence against women and WNC's lead on consulting

with marginalised women on how this should look, through a series of focus groups around England. These will continue into the New Year with a report expected after these have been completed.

It is thanks to the new WNC Board of Commissioners, partners and Directorate staff that WNC has again achieved so much this year. With the additional funding provided during the year to support the additional 10 Commissioners and several other areas, we have been able to maintain our activity during what was another significant year of change for WNC. We look forward to capitalising on the skills, knowledge and experience of our Board during the next year.

## Financial Report

### WNC Budget for FY2008/2009

Baseline Budget (GEO)	£443,836
Income	£ 20,000 (Additional GEO funding)
	£ 27,000 (HO funding)
Additional GEO payment to cover new rent costs	£ 73,500
Total	£564,336

### Draft Expenditure during FY2008/2009

Staffing	£347,338
Outreach, Conferences and Meetings	£ 29,699
Corporate Services - IT, Stationery, etc	£ 4,837
WNC Priority Activity/Development	£ 28,576
Board of Commissioners	£ 45,899
Eland House Rent	£ 73,500
HO VAW Project	£ 24,624
Total	£554,473

#### Notes

1. The cost of rent was added to WNC's costs during the year, but additional funding was provided by GEO to cover this full amount.
2. Not all expenses during 08/09 were processed by departmental finance colleagues by the deadline so these will now be charged to WNC in the new financial year.

## WNC Partners (at March 2009)

1990 Trust  
4Children  
A Brave New World Ltd  
AAINA Asian Women's Group  
Abortion Rights  
Active Learning Centre  
Adele Baumgardt Consulting  
Adept Community Development Agency  
African and Caribbean Women's Association (ACWA)  
African Women's Council/African Families Foundation  
African Women's Welfare Association  
Age Concern England  
Age Concern Scotland  
Agency for Culture and Change Management  
Al-Isharah Deaf Foundation  
Al-Nisa Association NI  
AMICUS  
AMICUS Wales  
Amina - The Muslim Women's Resource Centre  
Amnesty International UK - London  
Amnesty International UK - Northern Ireland  
Angel International GB  
Arab International Women's Forum  
Ardmonagh Family and Community Group  
Ardoyne Women's Forum  
Army Families Federation  
Asian Women's Network  
Associated Country Women of the World  
Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services (AIMS)  
Association of Bahai Women UK  
Association of Jewish Women's Organisations in the UK  
Association of Radical Midwives  
Association of Scottish Business Women  
Association of Teachers and Lecturers  
Association of Teachers' Widows  
Association of Women Barristers  
Association of Women Solicitors  
Asylum Aid  
ATL (Yorkshire) Ltd  
Balliol Women's Society  
Ballybeen Women's Centre  
BAWSO Ltd  
Bedford Centre for the History of Women  
BETI (Birmingham Empowerment Training Initiative)  
Birmingham Women's Advice and Information Centre  
Black Women and Europe Network  
Black Women's Health and Family Support  
Black Women's Mental Health Project  
BME Business Women's Network  
BME Women's Forum  
Breast Cancer Care  
Brighton Women's Centre  
Bristol Women's Forum  
British Association for Women in Policing  
British Association of Early Childhood Education  
British Association of Women Entrepreneurs  
British Computer Society  
British Federation of Women Graduates  
British Housewives' League  
British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)  
British Women Pilots' Association  
Brook  
Bryson Charitable Group  
BTCV  
Business and Professional Women Northern Ireland  
Business and Professional Women UK  
Business Ethics Ltd  
Cambridge Association for Women in Science and Engineering  
Campaign to End Rape and Truth About Rape  
Cardiff Women's Safety Unit  
Carers UK  
Catholic Women's League  
Central America Women's Rights (CAWN)  
Centre for Women & Democracy  
Chaste UK  
Children in Scotland  
Church Army Women's Day Centre  
Church of Scotland Guild  
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland  
Churches Together in England - Women's Coordinating Group  
Chwarae Teg  
CIS'ters (Childhood Incest Survivors)  
City Women's Network  
Colchester Rape Crisis Line  
Colwyn Girl Guiding  
Commonwealth Countries' League  
Communication Workers Union Women's Advisory Committee  
Community Development Foundation - European and International Unit  
Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association  
Community Transport Association Ltd  
CONNECT  
Conservative Women's Organisation  
Co-operative Women's Guild  
Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse  
Cornwall Council  
Cruse Bereavement Care

Cullyhanna Women's Group  
 Cumbria Women First  
 Cunliffe Centre  
 Daycare Trust  
 Department for Transport  
 Derby Women's Centre  
 Derry Well Woman  
 Early Education  
 Eaves Housing  
 Eaves Housing - Lilith and POPPY Research and Development  
 Education For Choice  
 Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)  
 ELBWO Centre  
 Employ A Woman  
 End Violence Against Women Coalition  
 Endometriosis UK  
 ENGENDER  
 Equality & Diversity Forum  
 Equality Commission for Northern Ireland  
 EQUINOXCARE  
 Ethnic Deaf  
 European Federation of Black Women Business Owners  
 European Union Of Women - British Section  
 European Women's Lobby  
 Every Woman Ltd  
 Fair Play Partnership  
 Family Education Trust (Family and Youth Concern)  
 Family Mediation Scotland  
 Family Planning Association  
 Family Planning Association (N Ireland)  
 Farm Women's Club - Farmers Weekly (FWC)  
 FATIMA Women's Network  
 Fawcett Society  
 Federation of Women's Institutes of NI  
 Feminist Library and Information Centre  
 Footprints (UK)  
 Footprints Women's Centre  
 FORWARD (Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development)  
 Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths  
 Foundation for Women's Art  
 Full Time Mothers  
 Fundango (UK) Ltd  
 Funny Women Ltd  
 Gender & Justice Policy Network  
 Gender in Education  
 Gender Statistics Users Group  
 Genuine Empowerment of Mothers in Society  
 GFS Platform for Young Women  
 Gingerbread NI  
 Girlguiding UK  
 Girl's Brigade England and Wales  
 Global Consultant on Public Health, FGM and Surgical Reversals (GCPH)  
 GMB Britain's General Union  
 GMB Scotland Regional Rights Committee  
 Grandparents Plus  
 Greater London Authority  
 Greenwich Chief Executives Social Inclusion and Justice Division  
 Griot Institute  
 HALT(Help, Advice & Law Team)  
 Haven Paddington  
 Haven Whitechapel  
 Hillcroft College  
 Hindu Women's Network  
 Home-Start Conwy  
 Hope Medical and Educational Aid  
 Housing For Women  
 Hull Women's Centre  
 IMECE Turkish Speaking Women's Group  
 IMKAAN  
 Infertility Network UK  
 Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales - Narrowing the Gap  
 Institute of Our Lady of Mercy  
 Intellect Women in IT Forum  
 International Alliance of Women  
 International Council of Jewish Women  
 International Federation for Home Economics (UK Section)  
 International Federation of University Women  
 Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation  
 Irish Congress of Trade Unions  
 Islamic Foundation  
 iVillage UK  
 Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants  
 Josephine Butler Society  
 Junior League of London  
 Just Media  
 Justice for Women  
 Justice for Women Leeds  
 Kurdish Women's Rights Watch  
 Labour Party  
 Lambeth Young Women's Project  
 Law Centres Federation/Lynn Evans  
 League of Jewish Women  
 LeicestHERDay Trust  
 Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland  
 London Borough of Islington Women's Equality Unit  
 London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)  
 Low Pay Commission  
 Making Tracks  
 Mansfield and Ashfield Domestic Violence Forum  
 Mansfield District Council  
 Married Women's Association  
 Mary Seacole Memorial Association  
 Medical Women's Federation

Men, Women and God  
Menopausal Research and Information Service  
Merched Y Wawr  
Methodist Women in Ireland  
Middlesex University  
Milton Keynes Women & Work Group  
Minerva - The Independent West Midlands Women's Alliance  
Mothers' Union  
Multi Cultural Resource Centre  
Muslim Voice UK  
Muslim Women's Network UK  
National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO)  
National Assembly of Women  
National Association of Diocesan Advisors in Women's Ministry  
National Association of Head Teachers  
National Association of Ladies' Circles (GB+1)  
National Association of Widows  
National Association of Women Pharmacists  
National Association of Women's Clubs  
National Black Women's Network  
National Board of Catholic Women of England and Wales  
National Childbirth Trust  
National Childminding Association  
National Consumer Council  
National Council of Women of Great Britain  
National Federation of Women's Institutes  
National Federation of Women's Institutes Wales  
National Group on Homeworking (NGH)  
National Women's Register (NWR)  
NETWORK  
Newham Asian Women's Project  
Nexus Institute  
North East Asian Women's Network  
North East Ecumenical Women's Group  
North London Cooperative Party Council  
Northern Ireland Childminding Association  
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform  
Object  
One Parent Families  
One Voice  
One World Action  
Operation Black Vote  
Opportunity Now  
Overseas Women's Club  
Oxfam GB  
Parentline Plus  
Peterborough Women's Centre  
Pre-School Learning Alliance  
Probus Women's Housing Society Ltd  
Professional Coaching and Development Consultancy  
Prowess  
Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)  
Queen's University Students' Union  
Race on the Agenda (ROTA)  
RADAR  
Rainbo  
Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Centre (NI)  
RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre)  
rba Equality & Diversity Limited  
Refuge  
Refugee Action  
Refugee Voice Wales  
Relate  
Relatives and Residents Association  
RESPECT  
Rights of Women  
Royal College of Midwives  
Royal College of Nursing  
Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland  
Royal College of Surgeons of England  
Royal Society of Chemistry - Women Members Network  
Safra Project  
Sahara Communities Abroad (SACOMA)  
Salford Women's Aid  
Salvation Army  
Savana  
School of Lifelong Learning  
Scottish Baptist Women's Fellowship  
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)  
Scottish National Party - Women's Forum  
Scottish Women's Aid  
Scottish Women's Convention  
Scottish Women's Rural Institutes  
SERTUC Women's Rights Committee  
Shakti Women's Aid  
Sheffield Women's Forum  
Single Parent Action Network  
Sizani Africa  
Social Inclusion Unit (Women's Opportunities Unit)  
Social Vision  
Society of Women Writers and Journalists  
Solace Women's Aid  
Somaliland Women and Children Group  
Soroptimist International of Great Britain and Ireland  
South Bank Women's Centre  
South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre  
South Wales Police  
South Wales Police Minority Support  
Sparkhill Asian Women's Association  
Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future  
Standing Conference of Women's Organisations  
Standing Together Against Domestic Violence  
Stonewall

Stonewall Cymru  
 Stonewall Scotland  
 STUC Womens Committee  
 Suzy Lamplugh Trust  
 Swansea Chinese Community Co-op  
 The Amar International Charitable Foundation  
 The Haven Wolverhampton  
 The Judith Trust  
 The London Centre for Personal Safety  
 The Miscarriage Association  
 The National Group on Homeworking  
 The Princes Trust  
 The Roselle Antoine Foundation  
 The Royal British Legion Women's Section  
 The Union of Catholic Mothers  
 The Women's Group  
 Tina Fahm Training Limited  
 Toc H  
 Townswomen's Guild - Northern Ireland  
 Townswomen's Guild  
 Trades Union Congress  
 Training for Women Network  
 Training Opportunities  
 TULIP GROUP  
 UK Asian Women's Conference  
 UK Resource Centre for Women in Science  
 Engineering and Technology  
 UK Sport  
 UKJCW  
 UNIFEM  
 UNIFEM UK  
 UNISON  
 UNISON Wales  
 Unite the Union T and G section (previously  
 Transport and General Workers' Union)  
 Unite the Union T and G section Welsh Officer  
 United Nations Association UK  
 United Reformed Church  
 University of Bristol  
 University Women's Club  
 vis-à-vis Research Consultancy Ltd.  
 Voice UK  
 WAITS (Women Acting in Today's Society)  
 Wales Assembly of Women  
 Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline  
 Wales TUC Women's Committee  
 Wales Women's National Coalition (Women's  
 Voice)  
 WAND (Women's Association for African  
 Networking and Development)  
 Warwick Anti-Sexism Society (WASS)  
 WATCH (What About the Children)  
 WATCH (Women and the Church)  
 Welsh Labour Women's Committee  
 Welsh Women's Aid  
 West Rhyl Young People's Project  
 Westminster Women's Forum  
 Widows for Peace Through Democracy  
 Windsor Women's Centre  
 WiTEC UK - European Association for Women  
 in Science, Engineering and Technology  
 WIZO.UK  
 Womankind Worldwide  
 Women and Health  
 Women and Manual Trades  
 Women for Women International UK  
 Women in Architecture  
 Women in Banking and Finance  
 Women in Film and Television  
 Women in Jazz Charitable Trust  
 Women in Journalism  
 Women in Management Network (WIM)  
 Women in Music  
 Women in Physics Group - Institute of Physics  
 Women Into Business  
 Women into Politics  
 Women Into Work - Building Futures  
 Women Liberal Democrats (WLD)  
 Women Living Under Muslim Laws  
 Women of Africa  
 Women Welcome Women World Wide  
 Women's Aid Federation England  
 Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland  
 Women's Art Association  
 Women's Budget Group  
 Women's Business Network (North West)  
 Women's Coalition for Palestine  
 Women's Co-ordinating Group for Churches  
 Together in England  
 Women's Design Service  
 Women's Employment Enterprise and  
 Training Unit  
 Women's Engineering Society (WES)  
 Women's Environmental Network (WEN)  
 Women's Farm and Garden Association  
 Women's Food Farming Union  
 Women's Forum Northern Ireland  
 Women's Health Concern Ltd (WHC)  
 Women's Health Network  
 Women's interfaith Network (WIN)  
 Women's International League for Peace and  
 Freedom  
 Women's Leadership Network, FE  
 Women's Network for Peace and Freedom  
 Women's Network of the Methodist Church  
 Women's Pioneer Housing Limited  
 Women's Resource and Development Agency  
 Women's Resource Centre (WRC)  
 Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)  
 Women's Sports Foundation (WSF)  
 Women's Support Network  
 Women's Technology and Education Centre

Workers' Educational Association

Working Families

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl  
Scouts

World Federation of Methodist and Uniting  
Church Women

YWCA England & Wales

Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust

Zonta International London II