

Mr Phil Hogan, T.D.
Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government
Custom House
Dublin 1

10 July 2014

Re: Funding Arrangements for National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks

Dear Minister Hogan,

I am writing to you in support of the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks (NCCWN) and its future in the context of the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) planned for 2015. As the tendering process for the programme is now underway, I would urge you to consider ringfencing the existing levels of support of €1.3 million to the NWCCN and its member organisations.

As you will be aware, the NCCWN was established in the late 1990's as a result of ten years of effort by AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, working in partnership with women's groups and networks; this led to its recognition and funding as an alternative structure under the LCDP in January 2011. NWCCN has been an effective structure for supporting local women's groups to offer a range of services and supports to disadvantaged women. These supports include access to childcare, domestic violence supports, counselling and health information, many of which are delivered by volunteers. This model of delivery has been developed through real knowledge of the challenges facing disadvantaged women and has supported over 36,000 women to enhance their lives through education, volunteering and progression to employment.

There are genuine concerns that the expertise of NCCWN will be lost as the new SICAP programme is rolled out and that the focus on women's needs and issues will be diluted. The capacity and existing membership of the NWCCN is limited in terms of tendering for the new programme on a county by county basis. Disadvantaged women are not named as a target group within the new programme. The tendering process is also competitive which means that some groups may be successful in their applications while others are not. This will have the overall effect of reducing the impact at national level where the support structure developed by the NWCCN has enabled groups to develop their capacity to meet the needs of women in their communities. By working together, groups can improve their practice, support volunteer participation, and the

barriers to women's participation can be examined at national level.

Donegal ETB's Adult Education Service has worked in partnership with Donegal Women's Network for almost 15 years on a range of education projects and values the work that it undertakes with marginalized women in the county. Donegal ETB is reliant on groups such as Donegal Women's Network to assist in the delivery of community education supports to educationally disadvantaged adults in Co. Donegal and urges you to continue to support the vital work that it undertakes at this critical time for local communities.

Yours sincerely

Cróna Gallagher
Adult Education Officer
Donegal ETB