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PRESS RELEASE

North West well represented at IWD conference

Four women from Londonderry, Nuala Crilly, Lynn McCarron, Pauline McLaughlin and Adrienne Nestor, were among the stars of the Equality Commission's 'Getting a Fair Share?' event in Belfast on Wednesday 6 March.

The conference, held to mark International Women's Day, was held to start a discussion on the factors impacting on women's economic independence. Each of the four local women has an interesting story to tell about jobs, career choice and life opportunities. The Equality Commission has created short video clips (now online at www.equalityni.org^[1]) of each woman telling her story which were shown to an audience of around 90 from the private, public, community and voluntary sectors.



Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner, in thanking everyone who took part in the videos for the conference said, "We're very grateful to all the women who shared their experiences by video. Their stories vividly illustrate that inequality between men and women still exists, and that women's economic independence is hedged round with difficulties of different sorts. Nearly one in three complaints to our legal advice line still relates to discrimination against women, and nearly all of those are in the field of employment."

Adrienne Nestor, originally from Dublin but now settled in Derry City, is a single parent with a 12-year old daughter. When her daughter was born, Adrienne had great difficulty in finding work as she had no family support to help with childcare and found it hard to

be flexible around working hours. Gradually her confidence eroded and she began to believe that she was unemployable.

Her chance came through Gingerbread, who found her a place on the Marks & Start scheme. She had training and then a work placement with Marks & Spencer. In her own words, the day that Adrienne was offered a permanent job was the proudest day of her life.

Three years on, Adrienne is still working for Marks and Spencer and has several times been voted employee of the month.

Pauline McLaughlin uses her video to highlight some of the issues facing older women, such as grandparents caring for grandchildren and women receiving lower pensions as a result of taking time out of the workplace.

Pauline left school after A-levels and worked as a secretary until she got married and had her two sons. Aged 29, she returned to education, progressing through a degree to an MA. A committed community worker, she is a member of the active Galliagh Women's Group and also works with a club for older people.

Nuala Crilly took and won a sex discrimination case with the help of the Equality Commission in 2010. She was not shortlisted for a job with an urban regeneration project because she did not have two years' relevant community development experience in a paid capacity. Nuala had taken a six year career break to look after her children, but while out of the labour market she was involved in high level voluntary community development and neighbourhood regeneration work.

"The Tribunal ruled that the criterion was flawed and had a disproportionate adverse impact on females as so many more women than men are away from the workplace because of caring responsibilities," Nuala explains. "I believe it's really important that employers don't follow practices which exclude women from the recruitment process, even unconsciously. By taking this case through the Equality Commission, I hope I've

helped draw attention to the issue and prevent this happening again to other women applicants.”

Lynn McCarron is divorced with a grown-up daughter and a son in his late teens. She gave up work after her daughter was born as she found childcare a real difficulty. She has since returned to education and training and has trained as a facilitator but cannot find a job. Lynn also uses her video to highlight the potential problems for families of the proposed ‘bedroom tax’ and her options - being rehoused in a smaller house with fewer bedrooms or taking in a lodger.

The ‘Getting a Fair Share’ event is the first of a series around Northern Ireland over coming months and will feed into the Equality Commission’s Shadow Report on the United Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It will also help formulate the Commission’s contribution to the Northern Ireland Executive’s mid-term review of its Gender Equality Strategy.

Ends

[¹] visit www.equalityni.org and click on the Getting a Fair Share button. Click on Bridget’s story and scroll through the playlist – Lynn is no 2, Nuala no 4, Pauline no 5 and Adrienne no 6.

Photo caption: Nuala Crilly, centre, who won her indirect sex discrimination case at Tribunal in 2011, with Heather Wilson, Equality Commission communications team and Milton Kerr, Equality Commissioner.