

Centre for Women & Democracy

Annual Report 2007/8

An Overview of our First Year

Centre for Women & Democracy Annual Report 2007/8



Foreword by Nan Sloane
Director, Centre for Women & Democracy

Welcome to our first Annual Report, which covers our activities during our set-up year of 2007/8.

CFWD was established to work for better representation for women in public life - especially elected public life - in England. It is based in Leeds, and mainly works in the north, but some of its work is national, and it works in partnership with national bodies. It has come a long way in its first year, and will continue to grow in 2008/9.

A number of people - too many to name - were particularly supportive during the setting-up process and have remained so since. Particular thanks are due to Judith Blake, Jane Thomas and Ruth Redfern, as well to Anastasia Jackson, who cheerfully worked as an unpaid intern until we could afford to pay her!

In addition, we have during the year received funding from a number of sources, but thanks are particularly due to Yorkshire Forward, the Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Assembly, the Equal Opportunities Commission (now subsumed by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission), and the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd..

Thanks are due to all these people, as well as to our subscribers and supporters. Even in 'advanced' western democracies, the representation of women in public life is astonishingly low, and it will not increase unless there is constant pressure to create the conditions in which change can occur. These changes may involve the adoption of quotas, but they certainly require cultural changes, changes in the way women in politics are treated in the media, and more support for women both entering and remaining in political life. The Centre for Women & Democracy is making its own small contribution to creating and sustaining that pressure, and the fact that it is able to do so, and able to grow, is due to the support and assistance of many people. Thank you to all of them.

This is the story of what happened in our first year - our second will be even better!

Pictures from our Events



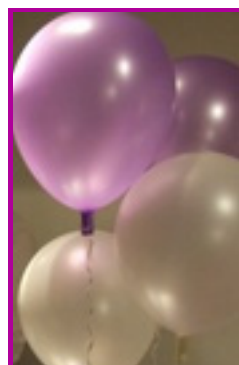
The Launch Event
31 March 2007
Leeds



Engaging Women in Public
Life
11 September 2007
Leeds



cfwd 
www.cfwd.org.uk



2008
WOMEN +
THE VOTE
www.womenandthevote.com

The Centre for Women & Democracy (CFWD) was set up in March 2007 to:

- work with partners and others to address the under-representation of women from all backgrounds and communities at all levels of public life.
- raise awareness of the issue of women's representation amongst the public, political parties and institutions, and other relevant bodies and organizations.
- support women already in public life, and encourage others to enter it.
- work with others to support and develop good democratic practice, and to promote positive change in the culture of politics, both nationally and locally.

It was established as a not-for-profit company registered in England; an application for charitable status will be considered in 2008/9.

The Centre started work on 15 February 2007 with a Director (Nan Sloane) and an intern (Anastasia Jackson), in a small office near the centre of Leeds.

The first task was to organise a launch event - this was held at the Park Plaza Hotel in Leeds on 31 March. The speakers were Rt Hon Hilary Armstrong MP, Dr Jill Liddington, and Nan Sloane, and the proceedings were chaired by Ruth Redfern, Deputy Chief Executive of Yorkshire Forward, which sponsored the event.

To mark the launch, CFWD published its first report, *'Leadership & Gender in Local Government in England'*, which examined the numbers of local authority leaders and chief executives, and broke these figures down into various areas. Both the report and the launch received some media coverage regionally, and the event was well attended.

Publication of the report was made possible by a grant from the Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Assembly.

Subscribers and Supporters

Supporters of the Centre for Women & Democracy are able to become Subscribers for an annual fee of £15. Subscribers are entitled to free (or reduced price) places at CFWD events, and to free hard copies of all reports and published papers.

Subscribers are able to sign up through the website, at events or by post. The initial target of 50 Subscribers in the first year was exceeded, and there is now a target of 150 for the year 2008/9.

Supporters - or those merely interested in what CFWD is doing - are able to sign up free for the weekly email newsletter.

Communications

The Centre for Women & Democracy communicates with its Subscribers and supporters using a number of methods:

1. A website was launched in Spring 2007, and has been developed in a number of ways since. It provides visitors with information about CFWD and its activities, the opportunity to download documents and order hard copies of reports, and to find out more general information through Factsheets about the representation of women. It is also possible to book places at events, sign up as a subscriber, and register for the weekly newsletter.
2. The e-newsletter is sent weekly, and provides information about CFWD's activities, information about issues around the representation of women generally, and links to sites and articles which may be of interest. The registration list has grown - and continues to grow - steadily, it has attracted a number of favourable comments.
3. Subscribers receive occasional mailings with hard copies of reports and updates on activities.

In addition, CFWD has press released a number of publications and events and received some coverage in regional papers. However, this was limited, and a more pro-active press strategy is one of our key activities for 2008/9.

1. Leadership & Gender in Local Government in England: Part 1

This report was published in March 2007 and looked at the representation of women as council leaders and chief executives. It was mainly statistical in content, and did not make recommendations as to how the situation could be rectified. It is intended to update the figures and publish Part Two of the report in 2008.

2. Local Elections

Research was carried out on the 2007 local elections in the North East, the North West and Yorkshire & the Humber, and the resulting report was published in September of that year. Work on local elections will continue in 2008, when it will be extended to include the East and West Midlands regions.

3. Councillors' Commission Submissions

The Centre for Women & Democracy made two submissions to the Councillors Commission set up by the Government to examine the barriers and obstacles to people becoming councillors. The main report looked at the principal issues affecting women, and a second report, (based on research carried out by Anastasia Jackson, CFWD's Intern, and written by her) considered the relationship between young women and local government. Both reports are available from CFWD's website, and both were quoted from in the Commission's final report.

All reports are available from the website.

Events

Two events were organised during the year.

The launch event referred to above was held on 31 March in Leeds.

The second event was titled 'Engaging Women in Public Life' and was held on 11 September, also in Leeds. Keynote speakers were zohra moosa (Senior Policy Officer, Race and Gender, at the Fawcett Society), Helen Wollaston (Director of Campaigns, EOC), Christine McCartney (Women's Officer, Electoral Reform Society), and Dame Jane Roberts (Chair, Councillors' Commission). Workshops examined the involvement of BAME and young women, and looked at ways of making opportunity accessible. The day was well attended, and feedback from it was good.

Partnership Working

During this year, the Centre for Women & Democracy worked in partnership with other organisations on the following projects:

- **The Fawcett Society** - as a member of the Advisory Panel of Fawcett's *Seeing Double* project, which is campaigning to raise awareness of the double discrimination faced by women in ethnic minority communities.
- **The Councillors' Commission** - as a participant in round table events on key issues raised by the inquiry
- **Changes** and the **Government Equality Unit** - as part of the *Women Take Part* project which reported in 2008, and 'produced models, approaches and resources which can be used to encourage, equip and support women who are currently under represented, to become more active, formally and informally, in governance structures and other aspects of both community and public life'.
- **2008 - Year of Women & the Vote** - a group of civil society organisations (CFWD, the Electoral Reform Society, Engender, the Fawcett Society, the Hansard Society, and Unlock Democracy) to mark the 90 years since women got the vote, and the 80 years since universal suffrage was finally achieved. Various activities have been undertaken, and more can be seen at www.womenandthevote.com

Partnership working will be further developed during 2008/9.

Staffing

CFWD's staff during its first year consisted of Nan Sloane (Director) and Anastasia Jackson, who started as an intern but was employed for 2 days a week as a Project Officer after August 2007. Staffing levels are strictly dependent upon funding, and extra assistance for events and other activities has been provided by volunteers, to all of whom we are grateful.

Finance

The Centre for Women & Democracy is funded by subscriptions, by project-specific funding, and by a small start-up shareholder's loan. Unsurprisingly, this means that it operates on a shoe-string, and a considerable amount of time is spent in developing,

writing and submitting funding bids. At the end of its first year CFWD just about covered its costs, and one of the key activities for 2008/9 is to ensure that the financial base is secured, and that income is generated in as steady a way as possible.

CFWD's accounts for 2007/8 will be lodged with Companies' House as required by law.

The Future

The Centre for Women & Democracy will continue to develop its work in line with its strategic objectives outlined above. We will also work to secure financial stability, to increase the number of subscribers, to develop partnership working further, and to launch a partnership scheme.

We intend to publish the second part of *'Leadership & Gender in Local Government in England'*, and to develop more work on leadership issues. We will also be planning the publication of a *'Handbook of Women & Democracy'* as well as a book of essays to be published in 2010.

We will continue to monitor candidates and elections, and to publish reports and papers on them.

We will develop our communications in terms of our website, newsletter and mailings, and will also work to a more effective press strategy.

We will develop both training and campaigning programmes, and will examine the pros and cons of registration with the Charity Commissioners.

The majority of our work will continue to be based in the north of England, although we will also take part in national projects and activities.

The representation of women in our public life continues to be significantly lower than it should be, and only in the devolved parliaments and assemblies (where it has been the subject of clear and effective quotas) does it come near to approaching parity. The Centre for Women & Democracy will continue to work with others to keep this issue on the wider political agenda, and to campaign for women of all backgrounds and communities to have equal access to the decision-making processes of democracy.



Centre for Women & Democracy

2 Blenheim Terrace
Leeds
LS2 9JG

www.cfwd.org.uk

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