

Good Relations Initiative

International Women's Day 2021

Event Report

#ChooseToChallenge



Louth Volunteer Centre

Enriching our community through volunteering



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council

ABOUT LOUTH VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Louth Volunteer Centre was established in 2003 as Drogheda Volunteer Centre, becoming Louth Volunteer Centre in 2010. We are a registered charity and company limited by guarantee.

Our vision is that our community will be enriched by the benefits of volunteering and our purpose is to advance the practice, processes and benefits of volunteering.

ABOUT THE GOOD RELATIONS INITIATIVE (GRI)

The GRI is a project supported by the European Union's PEACEIV Programme, managed by the Special European Programmes Body (SEUPB) and supported locally by Louth County Council and Louth Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The GRI was launched on 5th December 2019, International Volunteers Day, in the Dolmen Centre Omeath. The goal of GRI is to build community connections; to empower participants to become leaders in their own communities, leading the way through volunteerism to promote inclusiveness and reduce inequalities; creating more peaceful, cohesive societies.

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY 2021

A number of women's groups from across Louth and South Armagh had been participating in the GRI programme since early 2020.

To celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) we hosted an online event for these groups with the dual goal of celebrating the role of women in the border region and looking towards what women can achieve as community volunteers and leaders now and into the future

The event also expanded on the IWD #ChooseToChallenge theme with attendees encouraged to leave the event with their challenge action for the year, whether it is in the home, in their community or further afield

EVENT SCHEDULE

- Roles of Women in the Border Region, a talk by Local Historian, Úna Walsh

Exploring, acknowledging and celebrating the role that women have played in border communities over time

- #ChooseToChallenge round table discussion
- Celebration of the GRI Women's Groups

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WHAT ROLES HAVE WOMEN PLAYED IN THE BORDER REGION?

- Difficulty in identifying specific roles as women have so many.
- Holding society together
- They have very practical roles
- Educate children in values
- Women and resilience
- Protecting family and welfare
- Supporting other women
- Locally - craft work, good neighbourliness, women mostly worked in unpaid roles that were essential, going to the markets and having stalls.
- Feel we have done so much for so long; it is taken for granted.
- There is lots of work being done and it is still not recognised e.g., voluntary groups.
- Perception - role of men/women still quite distinct.
- Children with disabilities - it is primarily the role of women, women not acknowledged in these roles, men's careers continue.
- Easier to get women involved in voluntary work.
- Women have the perception that they have to do everything, that they have to achieve perfection however with the pandemic that's all not possible, people have more time to connect and to have the opportunity to realise that family and nature is what is important.
- Women come together in crisis situations, funerals, births, family gatherings
- People can feel disconnected from own role beyond that of mother and wife.

#CHOOSETOCHALLENGE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS



Women's Roles



WHAT ROLES HAVE YOU PLAYED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

- Supporting families when they needed it
- Fighting for your community – standing up for a cause
- Caring and giving roles
- Made connections with other women
- Build strength of women – supporting other women
- Civil rights and women's rights
- Volunteering using work skills for health and wellness
- Volunteering in listening and anti-suicide initiatives
- Young women volunteering in new social groups especially support
- Community groups, women's groups.

#ChooseToChallenge

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES/ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN THE BORDER REGION?

- Equality not achieved because necessary structures in the workplace did not happen
- The border was dangerous and movement of people south to north stopped
- Border not relevant now to younger people post conflict
- Will Brexit make the border relevant again?
- Bringing people together is important to address isolation but the border creates problems with this.
- Crossing the Border/Meaning of the border
- Uncertainty
- Division between North / South
- Over coming perceptions
- Young women no longer have choices to achieve better life balance
- Women are now too busy to connect again
- Loss of community spirit
- Invisibility of women over 70 - women need to stay active in communities into retirement
- Border not a challenge in physical terms but the mental barriers of border harder to address
- Dundalk a more vibrant ethnic culture than Northern Ireland

#CHOOSETOCHALLENGE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS



WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES/ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN THE BORDER REGION?

- More Northern people working in the south than people in the South working in the North -pay is better, children's allowance is better etc.
- Disparity in pay between men and women.
- Workplaces are still overwhelmingly not looking at women's roles
- No matter what work you do, you should be trained i.e. paid or voluntary work.
- Barriers to community groups setting up -Support and opportunity are key to overcoming this challenge
- Is there political will to effect real change? Without this funding issues will continue to impact the community work that women do

Challenges



#ChooseToChallenge

#CHOOSETOCHALLENGE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS

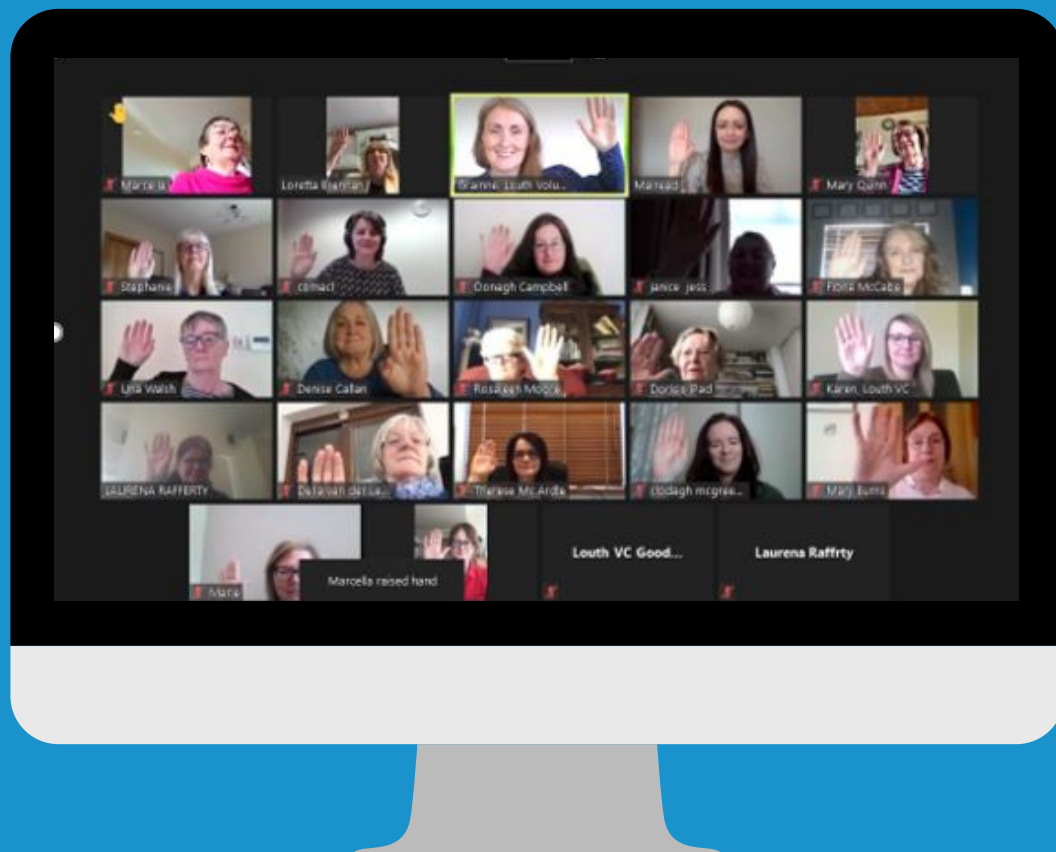
WHAT DO YOU CHOOSE TO CHALLENGE IN THE COMING YEAR?

- Young women's perception of themselves
- The division of youth / older people - cross generational perception
- Racial abuse
- Climate change
- Mental Health
- Work/family balance in the workplace
- Pay disparity

WHAT SUPPORTS MIGHT YOU NEED TO ACHIEVE YOUR CHALLENGE

- Political willingness to support community
- Changes at political level to support community groups
- Funding and more programmes - social and educational
- Women need to be part of something, to have companionship with others, and the importance of getting reconnected for positive mental wellbeing - supports for this to happen
- Leadership - realising values

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY 2021



Our thanks to all the Good Relations Initiative participants at this event for their generosity in sharing their experiences, opinions and goals.

Our thanks also to Louth County Council, the Special European Union Programmes Bodie and Louth Local Community Development Committee for their support for this programme

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volunteer centre

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