

Comments on Choice

Comments by organisations, groups and individuals listed alphabetically under each of the headings identified as the main issues raised in the responses to the consultation.

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland - We are also concerned that the concept of choice within the document does not recognise the context of women's lives.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland . concerned that the strategy, especially in paragraphs 1.6, 2.1 and 4.5 argues that the cause of much gender inequality is not in actual fact inequality or discrimination but the choices people make. It is important that the strategy recognised that the lack of good quality accessible childcare, lack of family friendly employment opportunities, employment options, differential education attainment and the gendered division of labour constrains the choices that women make. It is also important that the impact of these 'choices' is taken into account and the price that women pay for these 'choices' is alleviated through various policy avenues such as changes to the tax and benefit system. .. Somewhat misleading in that the concept of reconciliation of work and family life is seen as a 'women's problem' .. The Commission stresses the need to put the concept of choice in the structural context in which 'choices' are made.

Family Planning Association - References to respecting women's choices to undertake the burden of caring responsibilities suggests that women are victims of their own weakness. The strategy document should be asking why the need to nurture children; care for adult dependents or elderly relatives is treated as an optional extra for men, and a 'choice' for women.

INGAGE - Inter-Agency Group - choice is not always affordable. Addressing the caring role issue, will require a recognition to the economic value of caring and a moving away from the category of economically inactive...

UNISON. issues such as women's 'choices' without analysing whether the 'choice' to work part-time, for example, is in fact a result of lack of access to good quality, affordable childcare.

Wise Men of the East Network - pro-choice and right to life challenge men who have no choice when it comes to the most hazardous jobs or territory in the home. How does the framework developed by the voluntary and community sector supposedly account for choices working class men make about work which is not the same as women's work?

Women's Resource and Development Agency and the Rural Women's Networks - The suggestion that women in unpaid caring roles. or . in low paid part-time jobs have a 'choice' is absurd and ignores the reality of their financial and individual living situations.

Women's Support Network - The issues of 'choice' (p.68) ignored this reality and failed to consider the structural barriers that limit women's access to employment. much more consideration needed (re) flexibility in work, so that men could be positively encouraged to take more responsibility for children.