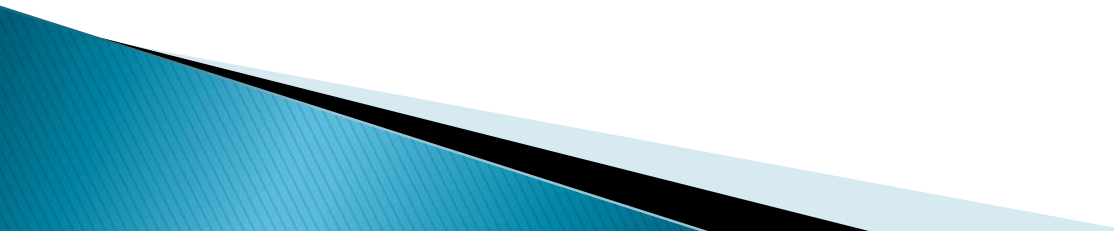


# Gender budgeting in NI

Lynn Carvill

NI Women's Budget Group  
ICTU Joint Women's Committee Seminar  
September 2017

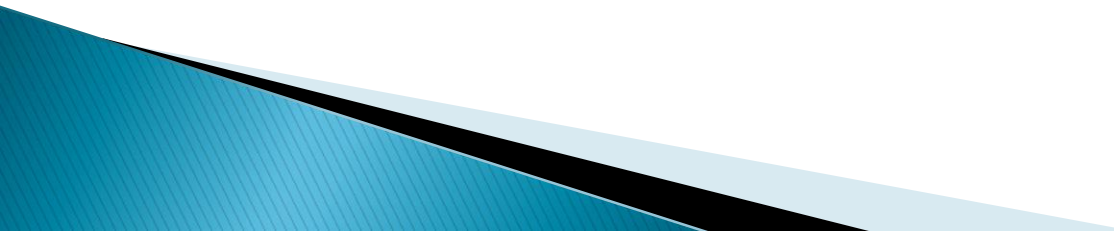
# Overview

- The NI Women's Budget Group
  - Northern Ireland – the Devolution context
  - Protecting women and children in Welfare Reform
  - The future....
- 

# Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group

**The NI Women's Budget Group consists of individuals from various backgrounds who want to ensure that the gender implications of budgets and spending plans in NI are fully scrutinised. We will examine how taxpayers money is spent and highlight the differential impacts this has on men and women.**

**The NI Women's Budget Group aims to encourage the NI Executive and Assembly to ensure a proper and transparent budgetary process is in place and that gender analysis is used to improve its policy making and spending plans.**



# Northern Ireland – the Devolution context

- 1998 Peace process
  - A society emerging from conflict – an ongoing process and journey
  - Parallel issues with other societies moving from conflict – gender equality is not high on the agenda.
- D'hondt system of government
  - all main parties in government and no official opposition – this changed for a short time in the last mandate.
- Implications for gender equality
  - Gender Equality Strategy devised during direct rule period (2005)
  - Previously housed in the The Executive Office... where decisions need to be agreed jointly by the two largest parties with opposing views
  - In last mandate GES has moved to the Department for Communities – decisions will be made by 1 Minister.

# Northern Ireland – the Devolution context

- All Party group on Women, Peace and Security
  - Examining issues affecting women in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – secretariat provided by NI Women's European Platform
- Women's Caucus
  - Prior to the collapse of the Assembly, a cross-party Women's Caucus was established.
- UK gender equality architecture
  - Other 3 nations have single architecture of the Gender Equalities Office
  - NI equality mechanism is not GEO but the Department for Communities.
  - GEO still responsible for CEDAW and CSW

# Stop – Start – Stop Government

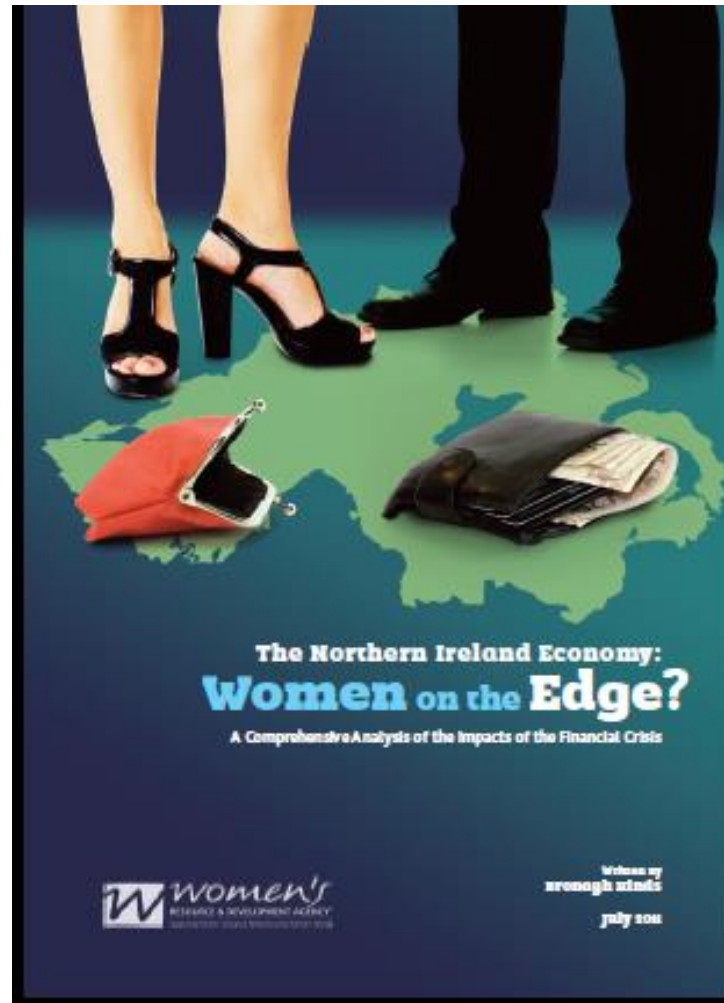
- NI government is not functional
  - (Previously) Coalition government requiring consensus leading to delays and vetos
  - Major hold-up on agreeing a budget in 2015 due to irreconcilable differences in relation to welfare reform decisions.
  - Currently, no Assembly, no Programme for Government and no budget
- NI budgetary process:
  - 2011 Budget  
Budget – PFG – EQIA (rather than) EQIA – PFG – Budget
  - Very difficult for NIWBG to intervene in budgetary processes.
  - Main obstacles are a lack of political commitment, current constraint on public finance and absolute lack of transparency in the budgetary process

# NIWBG – welfare reform

- NIWBG was reinvigorated in 2011 in response to the clear and disproportionate impact of welfare reform proposals on women
- Key welfare reform issues:
  - Recognition that the aim was to reduce the social security and welfare safety net.
  - Particularly concerned about the gendered impact of the implementation of Universal Credit proposal
    - a) paid into bank account of one person in the household
    - b) paid monthly rather than fortnightly
    - c.) calculated to incentivise work at household level and therefore disincentivised second earners (women)

# Protecting women and Children (WR)

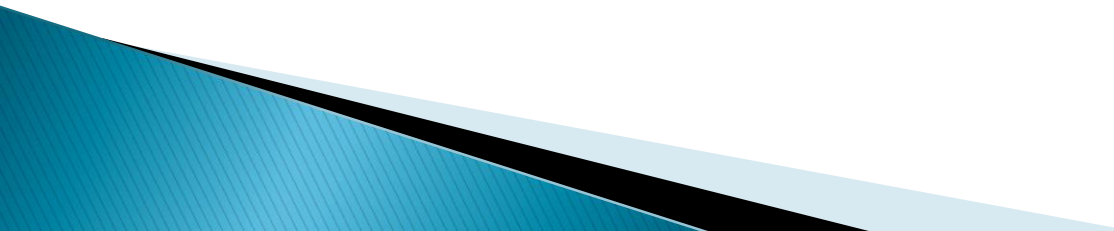
## Evidence base...





# The Northern Ireland Economy: Women on the Edge?

“Women have never been in the same economic position as men and while the recession and its aftermath are difficult for everyone, women are less well positioned than men to weather the crisis both in relation to its immediate pressure and in the longer term”



# Women on the Edge?

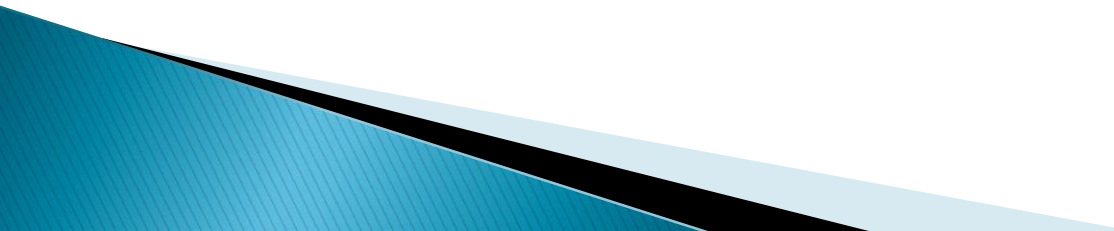
This report examined the impact of the financial crisis and austerity measures on groups of women:

- Young women
- Older women
- Lone parents
- Migrant women

It also examined in-depth the impact of welfare reform proposals on women – providing a robust evidence base for mitigation advocacy



# Advocacy...

- Members of the NI Women's Budget Group and Women's ad hoc Policy group presented strong evidence twice to the Committee on Social Development
  - Attendance at all political party conferences
  - Preparation and dissemination of accessible policy papers on the issues to all MLAs and councillors
  - Raising the issue on political media programmes
  - ...finally, through the Reclaim the Agenda group ... women protested on the streets
- 

# Political party conferences



# Reclaim the Economy workshops



# Empty Purse Campaign

**Hands off  
our purses...**

**Support the 'Empty Purse Campaign' - Stop our politicians shifting money from the purse to the wallet!**

The Welfare Reform Act consolidates a range of benefits into a single Universal Credit to be paid to one person in the household. This will result in a substantial shift of money from the woman's purse to the man's wallet.





# Empty Purse Protest at Stormont



# Protecting women and children in welfare reform

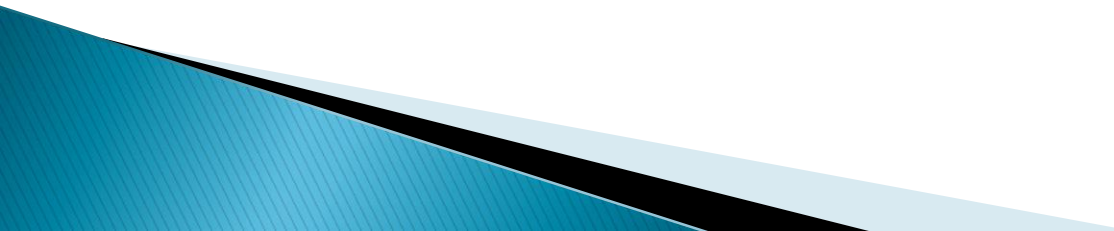
The result of all the overall campaign was:

The DSD Minister initiated a range of mitigations including:

- Universal Credit can be paid as a split payment
- Universal Credit will be paid fortnightly rather than monthly




# Campaign lessons...

- Having a robust evidence base
  - A wide range of service providers/advocates lobbying
  - Direct access to politicians
  - Grassroots involvement
- 

# NIWBG looking forward...

## Key issues:

- Introduction of reduced corporation tax
  - Childcare provision
  - Apprenticeships and training
  - Social care
  - Commissioning research on the changing nature of work and advocating for a 'Women's Employment Strategy'
- 

Thank you for listening .....