

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

"Equal Rights, Human Rights - Women's Rights"

On 6th December 1989, a 25 year old male entered a university classroom in Montreal, Canada, where he separated the male and female students. He wielded his gun and hunting knife and in an attempt to "fight feminism," he shot all 9 women in the room. He then made his way through the university targeting women to shoot. He took the lives of 14 women and 4 men and injured a further 10 women before killing himself. His suicide note blamed feminism for ruining his life.

Since then, grassroots organisations and activists have established the 16 Days Campaign and utilised the initiative to put a local and international spotlight on the issue of violence against women within a political, social and domestic context. It is a time to galvanise action to end violence against women around the world.

The campaign runs from the 25th November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls) to 10th December (Human Rights Day) symbolically highlighting that gender-based violence is an abhorrent violation of fundamental human rights.

Women's Aid have been part of the movement for a number of years which gives us the platform to raise awareness of domestic abuse, challenge societal attitudes that perpetuate it here in Northern Ireland, hold perpetrators to account and promote the services we provide for women and children who have been affected. Our theme this year is 'Healthy Relationships' and is an opportunity for us to promote healthy relationships with young people and highlight issues and 'alarm bells' in relation to unhealthy relationships that they might encounter in the future. Preventative education is a pivotal part of our work and we believe education to be vital to move closer to our overall vision of the elimination of domestic abuse.

We will be joining universities, higher education campuses and girl's groups to raise awareness over the 16 Days and promote the message among younger people.

So what can you do to help? We will be taking to Belfast City Hall on Friday 1st December with our banner and petition for the public to show their support to the initiative. Women's Aid will also be taking to Social Media throughout the campaign with '16 Myths for 16 Days' to help dispel myths and common misconceptions around domestic abuse. Follow us on Facebook and twitter and help us spread the message far and wide!

One in three women worldwide face abuse, violence and rape every day. In no country of the world are women free from this fear, terror and torment. In Northern Ireland, the PSNI responded to 29,166 domestic abuse incidents in 2016/17. That's one incident every 18 minutes.

Violence against women is a scourge in our society, in our community and in our homes. It is not just a 'women's issue' - it is everybody's business. Join us in our campaign to stand up, speak out and promote healthy relationships in the lives of our young people and step further away from a world where women are unequal and targeted on the basis of their gender.

"Human rights are women's rights... and women's rights are human rights. Let us not forget that among those rights are the right to speak freely, and the right to be heard."

Sarah Bruce



women's aid

Belfast and Lisburn