

CONNECT FUND

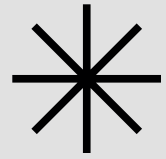
IMPACT REPORT



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 4 NATIONS



THE CONNECT FUNDING



AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF FUNDED ACTIVITIES

- Support the development of cultural, sports and people-to-people links;
- Facilitate positive and constructive dialogue on shared opportunities/challenges facing communities in the UK

INTENDED OUTCOMES FROM FUNDED ACTIVITIES

- Co-creation of a four nations strategy;
- In-person annual event held in Northern Ireland;s;
- Increase opportunities for Northern Irish young women to
- Engage in youth-led social action;
- Lay the groundwork for long-term sustainability committing to reconvene in 2027;
- Strengthen east-west connections;
- Increased leadership and confidence for young women.



THE W.I.S.E COLLECTIVE



Throughout the reporting period, the United Youth Alliance (UYA) as part of the W.I.S.E collective, has made significant progress in advancing our aims to strengthen cross-nation connections, amplify young women’s voices, and deepen understanding of ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG).

Building on four years of collaboration through the W.I.S.E Women 4 Nations partnership, with a particular focus on the East-West collaboration, this year’s project has resulted in strengthened relationships, meaningful youth-led learning and planning for future collaborations.

The cross-nation collaboration remained a core strength throughout the project. Young women from UYA worked alongside their counterparts from Youth Action NI, Newport Youth and Play Service and Dumfries and Galloway Young Women’s Network, fostering a strong sense of connection and shared purpose.

The event proved transformative—strengthening cross-nation partnerships, elevating youth voice, and offering young women a safe, inclusive space to learn, reflect, and build relationships that have continued through digital platforms and online socials. .

“We are one group, not 4 separate.”

– Zusanna

123

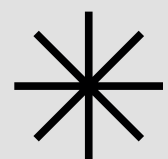
young people walked IWD Belfast Rally in Strength and Solidarity raising the voice and profile for young women.

65

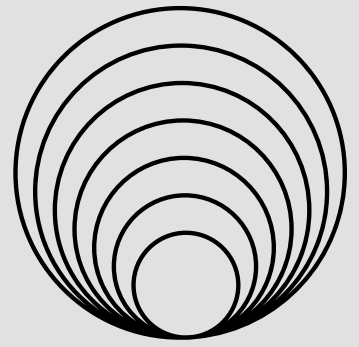
Young people made connections through “I am JAN E VAWG” murder Mystery raising consciousness and awareness of EVAWG.

30

young women from WISE consortium completed Baseline assessment on VAWG



THE CULTURAL BAGS



As a part of the ongoing partnership between the W.I.S.E. Collective, Cultural Bags were included to promote dialogue across the 4 nations. Each nation brought something to represent the culture from the area the young women came from. The young women worked within their groups to identify what resource to contribute towards the Cultural Bag as a stimulus for conversation and to identify synergies.



RESOURCES

From Blackpool, a coaster was bought with all key landmarks and stereotypes from the region, as well as different flavours of rock and a minute version of Blackpool Tower. The other nations contributed well being gifts, stationery and even resources on how to check their breasts effectively.

THE BELFAST EVAWG RALLY

A key highlight of the project was our participation in the Belfast International Women's Day (IWD) 2026 events. WISE took young women to the Women's Rights Rally, offering them a powerful opportunity to see how collective action can create social change. Most of the young people had never been to a political or rights-based demonstration before, and the experience will seemingly be a core memory for many. Activities leading up to the rally, such as banner and chant making, brought creativity into activism and helped young women build confidence in expressing their voices publicly and unapologetically.

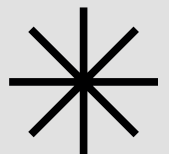


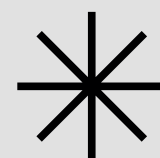
“This event has helped me understand more about ending violence against women and girls. Very informative!”

– Judy

“The rally was a fantastic experience... the community feeling was unmatched.”

– Scarlett





THE FINDINGS

Over two-thirds of participants increased their knowledge across core EVAWG themes. This demonstrates the programme's effectiveness in driving early-stage learning, challenging myths, and helping young women develop a confident, accurate understanding of EVAWG today.

Many participants reflected on how powerful it felt to recognise both the similarities and differences in their lived experiences across borders.

Every participant demonstrated either stable or improved wellbeing, with half the group showing noticeable increases in confidence. The cross-nations approach ensured young women felt part of a collective movement, rather than isolated local groups.

45

Young people engaged in Strategic planning workshop

15

young women increased their understanding of healthy relationships,

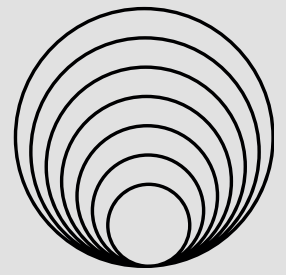


"I found it really informative and I enjoyed connecting with all of the other young women."

– Neve

REFLECTIONS

Written By Cerys, Aged 16



This year, for International Women's Day, we travelled all the way to Northern Ireland, and it was truly an unforgettable experience. We arrived on the 6th of March feeling excited and ready to reconnect with familiar faces while also meeting new people. From the moment we got there, the energy was positive and welcoming, and we immediately felt part of something special.

In the lead-up to the event, during our weekly sessions, we worked hard to prepare and collaborate. We created a Padlet filled with information to exchange with the four nations, allowing us to share ideas, experiences, and perspectives. We also planned our key themes to take forward, particularly around young women and VAWG, focusing on how we can unite as one nation to address these issues. Alongside this, we developed a podcast to be launched at the end of March, where we showcased young women's voices, highlighting both the issues they face and the solutions that can bring us together.

On the 7th of March, we took part in the march, proudly covered in face paint and wearing our biggest smiles. As we walked through the city, we held our handmade signs high and chanted at the top of our lungs. It was an incredibly powerful moment—one where we felt united, heard, and more empowered than ever.

At the end of the march, we gathered at the stage to listen to a series of speakers. Every single one was outstanding, delivering inspiring and impactful speeches that left a lasting impression on us all.

That evening, we came together to celebrate everything we had experienced and achieved. It was also a time to reflect on what had been a truly special trip. The room was filled with laughter, conversation, and a real sense of connection.



Throughout the trip, we especially enjoyed meeting both young women and workers, and making meaningful connections to help develop our W.I.S.E. network. We shared and exchanged our stories not only through online sessions beforehand but also face-to-face at the event, including through our cultural bags, which helped us learn more about each other's backgrounds and experiences. These moments of connection were incredibly important and added even more value to the experience.

For me, one of the most meaningful parts of the experience was the new friendships that were formed along the way. Throughout the trip, we built strong connections, supported one another, and created bonds that will last well beyond those few days.

The following morning, we said our goodbyes, knowing we had developed a true connection and feeling excited and ready for the plans for Blackpool 2027 and continuing to create a positive W.I.S.E. group. We left with a deep sense of pride, empowerment, and the knowledge that we had been part of something important. It was an experience that will stay with us for a long time.

NEXT STEPS

Overall, the project has delivered substantial benefits: increased youth confidence, strengthened cross-nation solidarity, deeper understanding of EVAWG, and lived experience driven learning opportunities. The project not only met its objectives, but it also strengthened the long-term commitment of young women across the UK to stand together against gender-based violence.

UYA is hosting the 4 nations for IWD 2027, we are already making a foundation for plans next year to ensure this work doesn't stop now and we continue to strengthen those long lasting civic relations.

The programme shows clear promise for national scaling. Key next steps include:

- Continued cross-nations collaboration
- Ongoing monitoring of learning progression
- Enhanced leadership pathways for young women
- Sustained focus on EVAWG awareness and prevention
- Annual cross-nations youth summit

Cross-Nation Work as a driver of change: This is not just about travel or talking; it is about momentum. When nations share learning and lived experiences, it creates a ripple effect. A win for girls' rights in one country becomes a blueprint for another.

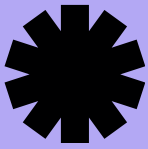
We just do not start a project; we are the empowerment of change. We are ready to take these four years of success and scale them up, ensuring that the next generation of young women does not just survive, but thrives in a world they helped design.



"It's good to see how different, yet how similar we all think as women."

- Aoife





We'd like to thank the
Connect Fund for
supporting this fantastic
opportunity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would also like to thank our long-standing
colleagues from Youth Action Belfast, alongside
our colleagues in Newport Youth and Play Service
and Dumfries and Galloway Young Women's
Network

**"IT'S BEEN POWERFUL,
IMPACTFUL,
INSIGHTFUL... WE WILL
NEVER FORGET THE
HOSPITALITY AND
KINDNESS IN BELFAST
2026." – LAURA**

