



IWD 2026 Newsletter



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Welcome to this special mini-edition newsletter, dedicated to celebrating International Women's Day and the remarkable achievements of young women across all four nations. In this issue, we honour their hard work, their voices, and the powerful impact they make every single day.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026



International Women's Day is celebrated each year on March 8th, and recognises the social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of women around the world. It also highlights the ongoing work needed to achieve true gender equality and encourages everyone to play a part in that progress. This year, young people across the 4 nations, (Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England) celebrated the achievements of women everywhere alongside addressing the ongoing fight for equality and safety. It was a day to recognise the importance of women's voices and contributions, and to stand together in solidarity. Because when women support each other, real change happens. Reminding us that together, we can keep moving forward towards a world that values and uplifts every woman equally.





Collaborative Creativity in Preparation for IWD



In preparation for International Women's Day, young women at the UYA dedicated time to developing social media content tailored to their own organisation. They collaborated with peers from Youth Action NI, Newport Youth and Play Service, and the Dumfries and Galloway Young Women's Network through a series of online sessions designed to share ideas and strengthen communication across groups.

While each nation created their own social media plan, the cross-nation meetings played a key role in building strong relationships among participants. Icebreakers, open discussions, and shared experiences helped foster a supportive and engaging atmosphere, which quickly became one of the most valuable aspects of the project. These sessions concluded with focused conversations to refine each group's individual content. The young women's enthusiasm, creativity, and collaborative spirit contributed to a positive and connected lead-up to International Women's Day.





Strength in solidarity

IWD: Making connections



When the young women across the 4 Nations met in Northern Ireland, the Cultural Bags became a highlight of the day. With each nation bringing cultural gifts to add, choosing items that reflected their local identity and sparked curiosity. As they shared the stories behind their choices, the gifts opened up conversations, helped the young women compare traditions, and revealed surprising similarities across the four nations, further strengthening their bonds and solidarity.



After greeting one another and exchanging their cultural gifts, the young women began the Hack, engaging in focused discussions on the key issues affecting women and girls. Their commitment to addressing violence against women and girls was evident, with many demonstrating a strong desire to contribute to meaningful change.



The Hack



RIGHTS. JUSTICE. ACTION.
FOR ALL



IWD BELFAST 2026



In a mini hackathon style, the 4 Nations came together and discussed common issues that women and girls face. Discussing sexualisation, gender norms and stereotypes, reinforcing their strength as a community and cementing solidarity.



As the evening unfolded, that energy then shifted into creativity. The four Nations channelled their ideas, frustrations and hopes into designing meaningful banners to showcase at the rally. Each banner became a visual expression of their voices, resistance, and pride, capturing the spirit of the group and the message they were ready to bring into the world.





"The rally was a fantastic experience... the community feeling was unmatched."

-Scarlett

The highlight of the visit came on Saturday, March 7th, during the Reclaim the Agenda march and rally. Thousands gathered, men, women, elders, and infants, united in calling for an end to Violence Against Women and Girls and in demonstrating the strength of collective action. Beginning at Writers' Square, the march grew in momentum as people from all walks of life came together to mark International Women's Day and demand meaningful change. As the crowd moved through Belfast City, voices rose, banners lifted, and a phenomenal sense of unity swept through the streets. You could feel the emotion in the air: anger at injustice, pride in standing together, and a deep belief that change is not only possible but necessary. For many, it was more than a march; it was a moment of collective resolve that will stay with them long after the day ended.





Strength in solidarity

IWD Rally: Key Speakers



Key Speakers:

Mary Robinson-

Former president of Ireland

Azadeh Sobout-

Iranian activist, writer, educator, and Post-doctoral Research Fellow at Queen's University Belfast.

Deirdre McKenna-

Artist, organiser, and disability rights activist.

Maggie Ronayne-

Speaker from the Global Women's Strike.

Sharon Coyle-

Speaker from Surviving Economic Abuse.

Aoife Nic An Tuile-

Young women representative from youth action Northern Ireland.



Once the march had come to an end, everyone gathered to listen to the selected key speakers and gain insight into the ongoing work, challenges, and achievements shaping the fight for gender equality and women's safety, highlighting the everyday actions and collective strength that drive long-term social impact.

The Speakers featured at the rally created a powerful and moving line up for the young women. Former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, discussed pressing issues that women and girls are currently facing. Maggie Roanye gave us all new eye opening perspectives that encouraged everyone to think differently. Aoife Nice An Tuile from Youth Action Northern Ireland then delivered a moving speech on stage, standing side by side with her sisters from the other nations. Her words reflected on the impact of Violence Against Women and Girls on the younger generation and highlighted the importance of cross nation unity.





Strength in solidarity

IWD post Rally: Murder Mystery



Following the rally our young women enjoyed a youth led, specially designed murder mystery that combined creative engagement with critical learning, developed over several months of hard work by Youth Action Northern Ireland.

While this event was a fun and interactive, the scenario explored serious and complex issues, including abuse, coercive control, grooming and the impact of harmful behaviours portrayed by men. Our young women examined a fictional case involving a woman named Jane, and six potential suspects, analysing behaviours, motivations and boundaries to understand how abusive dynamics can manifest in real life.

Through discussion and reflection, the activity encouraged young women to think critically about power, control, and the warning signs of male violence. It also opened their eyes to the different kinds of violence, diving into areas such as alcohol, grooming and coercion, offering an immersive way to learn about violence against women and girls while facilitating open communication. The exercise not only highlighted the seriousness of these issues but also demonstrated the four nations commitment to providing youth led educational, and impactful experiences that equip young people with knowledge and tools to advocate for safety, respect and equality.



Feedback and Quotes

IWD post Rally: Feedback

Cery's



"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."

Olivia

'More like a team effort'



Eszme

'Helps us to educate others'

Aoife



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

"Together, these reflections captured a shared sense of purpose and highlighted the power of collaboration in advancing women's rights across communities and borders."

Tasha





VAWG Training

*Ending violence against women
and girls (EVAWG)*



Ending violence against women and girls doesn't stop at the rally but needs to be implemented into everyday life. To continue ending VAWG, the UYA carefully developed and delivered training around EVAWG to a variety of schools, youth groups and clubs. This training, has given young people the opportunity to learn about the ways in which violence can present itself, how to recognise it, respond to it and how to be part of the solution.



Through these sessions, young people were encouraged to challenge harmful attitudes, explore the roots of gender inequality, and understand the importance of consent, respect and healthy relationships. They also learned how everyday behaviours such as language, jokes, or peer pressure can contribute to a culture where violence is normalised, and how small, consistent actions can help dismantle it.

By putting the lessons from the VAWG training into practice, young people are challenging harmful norms, uplifting their peers, and refusing to let violence remain unspoken or unseen. The training has shown just how passionate and determined young people are to be part of the solution: building a world where violence isn't the norm and respect isn't something to be fought for but something everyone is entitled to.

