

Update from the project team working on “Support for Rural Women” for DCRF meeting July 2019

Please refer to the meeting notes from last time – extract below

a) *The FCN, Mothers Union (MU) and Women’s Institute (WI) have held a “familiarisation” meeting to get to know what each other do and share concerns and ideas about how we can better support rural women together. One idea is to write an “open letter” to reach out directly to rural women and help link them with support and friendship that would work around their busy but often very isolated working lives.*

Post meeting note: *The working group (Joanne Jones, Sylvia West and Heather Sayle) met again after the main Forum meeting today with the following outcomes:*

- *The joint open letter for rural women is being prepared (drafted by Jo) to let them know about opportunities available through the FCN, WI and MU.*
- *Joanne can contact Sylvia for WI and Heather or Nickie Johnson for MU for information on local WI or MU groups and to refer any ladies she becomes aware of who may like to come along to a MU or WI meeting. The MU or WI could offer home visits or arrange for people to accompany new members to meetings for the first few occasions so they don't have to walk in alone.*
- *Heather is well placed to link with the WI contacts Sylvia has identified for the South & West Devon area when organising joint WI and Church community Dementia Friends sessions.*
- *The WI has their Annual Spring Council Meeting in April and the joint letter will be available on their International & Public Affairs stand. Rural isolation, mental health and dementia all feature as WI campaigns at present. A supply of FCN Helpline brochures/cards will also be available on the stand. Joanne will send Sylvia and Heather information about FCN to go into their County Newsletters.*

The working group is considering putting on a joint event with a speaker with reference to an area ladies might find useful - perhaps something on computer skills. FCN would be happy to attend other meetings to talk about their work.

Follow up report from Sylvia West...

Of the 24 letters addressed to fellow women in farming available on the stand at the DFWI (Devon Federation of Women’s Institutes) Spring Council Meeting in Torquay on Saturday 27th April, I am pleased to report 23 were picked up.

Alongside the letters were FCN leaflets and cards of which several were also picked up.

The letter mentions our intention to hold a meeting in Devon with representatives from the NFU & Defra with the opportunity to meet up with other ladies in the area.

DFWI are now in the process of organising a 'Link Together' day on Saturday 5th October at the Younghayes Centre, Cranbrook. 10.30am - 3.30pm

The event seeks to inspire WI members to take action and raise awareness of loneliness within our own communities.

There will be a selection of short presentations from Home Start, FCN, Westbank, local transport providers plus ourselves [DCRF] and more.

Those present will have the opportunity to join in a conversation on how we can make a difference & share creative ideas for helping people connect with their own communities.