

# Women's Aid open new refuge

Foyle Women's Aid opened a new purpose-built refuge on Wednesday. The first of its kind in Northern Ireland, it will provide shelter for almost twice as many women as before.

The refuge, which has been under construction since early 1991, was the outcome of negotiations between Foyle Woman's Aid, and the Derry Housing Association to provide accommodation for women in need.

The new accommodation in the Foyle Road area is of the highest standard, with a total of 18 bed spaces, and large indoor and outdoor play areas. The major feature of the new refuge, however, is its accessibility for women and children with disabilities.

Mr. Michael Mc Cafferty, Chairman of the Derry Housing Association expressed his thanks to the Housing Executive and the Council for providing the Association with the land which has proved to be both acceptable to both sides of the river as well as being convenient to the City Centre for shopping.

Patsy Gallagher, Refuge Worker for Foyle Women's Aid said: "Our group have been greatly encouraged by the support and financial assistance received from the statutory agencies, in particular the Western Health and Social Services Board and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

"Foyle Woman's Aid have worked hard at developing their relationship within the community in which they are situated. This new refuge will allow us to double our bed

spaces and ensure that as many families as possible who require refuge accommodation in our area will be catered for."

Arrangements have also been made for a local artist to help resident families to decorate the playroom during the school summer holidays.

Karen Mc Minn, Regional Co-ordinator for Women's Aid in Northern Ireland said: "The opening of this refuge is further evidence of Women's Aid continuing commitment to increasing standards of care and support for abused women and children in Northern Ireland.

"The existence of the refuge such as the one which Foyle Woman's Aid is opening makes it easier for women and their children to find solutions to their situation.

"There are no quick or simple solutions to domestic violence. Whilst refuges are only part of the solution, they are a major force in transforming victims into survivors of domestic violence."

Attending the opening of the Refuge was the Mayor of Derry, Councillor Mary Bradley. She congratulated everyone involved with the construction of the building and wished the women many happy hours there.

The refuge, which cost £350,000 to build, was officially opened by Mr. Sean Mackie, Regional Housing and Planning

Manager, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and Mr. Dominic Burke, Director of Social Care, Western Health and Social Services Board.

Their next step will be to build short stay units for the women with follow up after-care so that the women can gradually move into total independence.