women's resource centre

Factsheet: Women and The Cuts 2012

October 2012

Understanding and supporting women and their organisations

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About the Women's Resource Centre

WRC is a unique charity which supports women's organisations to be more effective and sustainable. We provide training, information, resources and one-to-one support on a range of organisational development issues. We also lobby decision makers on behalf of the women's not-for-profit sector for improved representation and funding.

Our members work in a wide range of fields including health, violence against women, employment, education, rights and equality, the criminal justice system and the environment. They deliver services to and campaign on behalf of some of the most marginalised communities of women.

There are over ten thousand people working or volunteering for our members who support almost half a million individuals each year.

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About this briefing

This briefing is an update of the 2011 Women and the Cuts Factsheet (http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/f/factsheet_women_and_the_cuts.pdf). Aimed at women's right activists and supporters of the women's voluntary and community sector, this document acts as a resource of statistical data that can be used to highlight the continued impact of the cuts on women. As there is a growing amount of research on this issue, we will continually update this document to ensure that we have the most current information.

This briefing will review research that demonstrates the impact of the cuts within a number of themes, including the voluntary and community sector, women's welfare and poverty, violence against women and girls, health, education and employment. Each themed area begins with findings that demonstrate the general impact of the cuts on this area, before listing statistics that highlight more specific issues within the topic.

Introduction

Since the 2010 General Election, the Coalition government has introduced an unprecedented austerity package of cuts to public spending in order to tackle a national deficit of over £120bn. Within a context of global and acute European financial crisis, many people in the UK are facing unemployment, cuts to benefits, and financial hardship. Areas of the UK that were previously struggling, such as the North East, have fallen further into poverty and deprivation. The media is increasingly reporting news of a housing crisis, a 'lost' generation of young and long-term unemployed and the potential return of a 1920's era Great Depression.

However, it is women who are at the sharp end of the effects of austerity: as the statistics in this briefing demonstrate, it is women who are increasingly unemployed or taking underpaid work; women who are losing money for childcare and other basic needs through welfare cuts; and women who are losing vital support from voluntary and community organisations which have closed due to lack of funding. With 88% of the cuts still to be implemented[1], it is clear that we are only experiencing the beginning of the impact of the cuts.

Many of the reforms that have been announced are yet to become legislation and will be phased in over the next two or three years. There are a number of key issues that will affect women's equality which will be introduced this year:

Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs)

From the end of November 2012, new locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will be responsible for local policing priorities and outcomes. It will be in the PCC's powers to distribute grants to fund community safety initiatives. The Community Safety Fund, which will no longer be ring fenced, will be transferred from the Community Safety Partnership to the new PCC. *Existing funding streams to address violence against women and girls will be diverted to this new fund, so the PCC will determine if and how this money gets spent.* PCCs will act as commissioners for all local victim support services. You can find out more information on PCCs at www.wrc.org.uk/pccs

Welfare reform and Universal Credit

The Welfare Reform Act became law in March 2012. Large-scale changes within the Act to how people in the UK receive their benefits will be introduced from October 2013. Universal Credit will replace all the different benefits that people can currently claim, consolidating them into one monthly payment, which will be mainly managed online. Controversial reforms are also being made to the way disability payments are paid, with all Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance claimants currently being reassessed.

These reforms have sparked public protests and opposition from many experts within the public and voluntary and community sector. Introducing monthly payments would particularly affect refuges, as a substantial proportion of refuge income is based on benefit payments, which cover rental charges. After extensive campaigning by Women's Aid and violence against women support services, the government have confirmed that rent payments for refuges will be exempt from Universal Credit reforms.

Gingerbread, an organisation that supports single parents, has argued that these reforms undermine the increase in personal tax allowance. As Universal Credit will be assessed on post-tax income, Gingerbread have calculated that low earners who are eligible for Universal Credit payments will receive £130 less from their tax allowance increase than those who do not receive benefits[2]. Critics have also raised concerns at plans to pay benefits to only one member of the household, which could create or exacerbate an imbalance of power within a family or relationship dynamic.

Closure of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)

As part of the NHS reforms, PCTs will be abolished from April 2013. Many PCTs are already closing down or transferring their responsibilities, while Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are being developed in preparation to take over next year. Almost half of available budgets have already been delegated to emerging CCGs and this will increase over the next year. They will take an active role in planning strategies and budgets for 2012/13 and begin to develop relationships with local partners in social care and the voluntary and community sector.

Health & Wellbeing Boards and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs)

Health & Wellbeing Boards and JSNAs are a key part of broader plans to modernise the NHS. Made up of democratically elected representatives, patient representatives, Clinical Commissioning Groups and councils, these boards will have strategic influence over commissioning decisions in health, public health and social care. Boards will be under a statutory duty to involve local people in the preparation of JSNAs and the development of strategies. JSNAs will be used to analyse the health needs of a local population, based on a wide range of data including patient, service user and community views. The JSNA will inform and guide decisions made at all stages, from identifying health priorities to providing services. It will be a public resource for commissioners, local authorities and service providers. Since April 2012, Health and Wellbeing Boards have been acting in shadow form, with all boards due to take on full statutory functions from April 2013.

Review of Equality and Human Rights Commission

In May 2012, the government announced that the Equality and Human Rights Commission would have its budget and staff numbers cut from 455 in 2010 to 180 by 2015 and the chair of the Commission, Trevor Phillips, will be replaced. There will also be review of the Commission's remit, structure and core functions as part of the government's Red Tape Challenge work on equality. The government have proposed cutting £10m of grants from the EHRC budget, which had previously been used as funding for local equalities groups. Critics of the review have suggested that the EHRC may lose its status as a UN-accredited National Human Rights Institution after these cuts.

Impact

Voluntary and community sector

- Acevo estimates that charities will lose up to £4.5bn due to public spending cuts[3]
- Over 490 organisations have submitted news of funding cuts for the 2011-12 financial year to the voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk mapping project, totalling over £75m[4]
- Many local authorities have cut more than 25% in voluntary sector support for 2012[5]
- Liverpool City Council announced in March 2011 that it would cut its voluntary sector budget from £37m to £19m – a 48% reduction compared to a 22% cut in the council's overall budget[6]
- 33% of organisations surveyed in the 2010 National Survey of Charities and Social Enterprises received some form of local statutory funding, whereas only 19% received national statutory funding[7]
- Statutory funding is more likely to be an important source of income in deprived areas which have a much higher proportion of publicly funded organisations. Statutory funding was the most important source of income for 30% of organisations in Knowsley and Nottingham, against a national average of 13%.[8] Statutory funding is also an important source of income for many women's organisations, who are typically more dependent on fewer sources of income than other charities[9]
- In Coventry (2011), nearly 60% of voluntary organisations have reported a decrease in funding and 55.6% expect their funding to decrease over the next three years[10]
- 55% of charities expected to reduce staff numbers from March - June 2011 [11]

Regional impact – North East

The North East is an area of the UK that has been hardest hit by the cuts to public spending. Their impact has been keenly felt by charities in the North East; a 'perfect storm' of increasing demand for services and falling charity income means many organisations are struggling to survive.

In Feb 2012, VONNE, a support body for the North East voluntary and community sector, surveyed 120 organisations (www.vonne.org.uk/news/news_article.php?id=1582) and found that:

- **73%** have seen a decrease in funding
- **40%** have lost staff
- **59%** have experienced an increase in demand for their service
- **64%** are using reserves
- **48%** expect to, or are considering closing a service
- **28%** will be, or are considering reducing the number of beneficiaries they support
- **23%** may close in the next 12 months
- **81%** of respondents are sourcing some, or all, of their income from public sector grants. **64%** are now using reserves. This is almost **double** the amount reported in November 2009.
- VONNE calculate a loss of £3.5 million in funding to organisations and job losses of **257** staff members from the results of this survey alone.

Women's voluntary and community sector

Women's organisations are a vital part of the voluntary and community sector, providing much needed support to women, their families and the wider community. The women's sector has always needed to be creative in a climate where they are less likely to be funded than other groups; previous research has found that 70% of women's organisations felt that being women-only made it more difficult to access funding.[12] Funding to women's organisations is sometimes seen as an easy target for savings and is often one of the first areas of spending to be cut.

- 43% of women's organisations are small with an annual income of less than £100,000[13]
- 95% of women's organisations face funding cuts or a funding crisis in the next year (2011/12) and 25% said that further cuts would result in closure[14]
- Women's organisations with smaller budgets have experienced more substantial budget cuts than larger ones: among those with local authority funding of less than £20,000 the average cut was 70% as compared with 29% for those receiving over £100,000, between 2010/11 and 2011/12 [15]

- 31% of the funding to the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector from local authorities was cut between 2010/11 to 2011/12, a reduction from £7.8 million to £5.4 million[16]
- Essex County Council has cut funding by 24% for five charities that focus on domestic abuse[17]
- A survey of domestic and sexual violence services by Women's Aid published in March 2011 found that 60% of refuge services and 72% of outreach services have no funding agreed from 1st April 2011[18]
- Due to the effect of the cuts on domestic and sexual violence services, it is expected that over 70,000 women may not be able to access a service after April 2011, putting more lives at risk[19]
- 78% of perpetrator focused violence against women services have reduced the number of clients they were able to assist. 44% of services have lost specific projects and 16.7% of services are at risk of closure due to financial cuts[20]
- 51.4% of women's organisations surveyed are responding to the cuts by fundraising; 35.1% are lobbying local/national government [21]

Women's employment

Women have increasingly become a significant part of the workforce and given the opportunity, have the potential to bring at least £15bn of value to executive and managerial roles.[22] However, many women are still struggling against inequality in the workplace, pay gaps and barriers to gaining positions of power. Furthermore, rising unemployment caused by the cuts has led to more women than men losing their jobs and taking on more temporary or part-time work. BME and disabled women have been even further affected by the cuts and are more likely to be unemployed than white and non-disabled women.

- Women still do not hold key positions of power in the job sector. Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) found that more than 5,400 women are missing from Britain's 26,000 most powerful posts.[23]
- In March 2012, the unemployment rate for men stood *almost exactly where it did at the end of the recession in 2009* at 1.54 million, an increase of only 0.32%, whereas female unemployment has *increased by almost 20%* to 1.13 million - *the highest figure for 25 years*[24]
- 282,000 women have been out of work for more than a year – the highest number since 1995.[25]
- In the final quarter of 2011, total unemployment had risen by 38,000, 21,000 of whom were women. This a much higher number of unemployed women than a predicted 17,500 rise based on women's participation rate in the labour market.[26]
- 40 per cent of redundancies in the last quarter were among women, up from just over 30 per cent.[27]
- The number of women claiming Job Seekers Allowance has been increasing month-on-month for the last 13 months and currently stands at 512,700.[28]

- Women account for 54% of the 1.4 million workers on temporary contracts, making them more vulnerable to unemployment.[29]
- There are 754,000 women working part-time as they cannot find full-time work – the highest level since comparable records began in 1992.[30]
- Women are more likely than men to work part time, particularly if they have dependent children. 38% of women with dependent children work part time, compared with only 4% of men.[31]
- ONS labour market figures for February 2012 revealed that the number of women in part-time work increased by 45,000, compared with a 38,000 increase for men.[32]
- 59% of those with no earnings and 67% of those with earnings below the current personal allowance are women, so will not benefit from the increase in personal income tax allowance[33]

Women working in the public sector

- Nearly 40% of women's jobs nationally are in the public sector (compared to 11% of men)[34] – in some regions this increases to as much as 50%.[35]
- 65% of public sector jobs are done by women.[36]
- It is estimated that of the 500,000 public sector workers that are expected to be made unemployed due to the spending cuts, 325,000 will be women.[37]
- Women account for 76% of the drop in the number of employees in local councils in the South East and in 19 councils in England and Wales women account for 100% of those losing their jobs.[38]
- 73% of remaining positions in the public sector that are subject to a pay freeze are held by women. [39]

Women from marginalised groups in employment

- Ethnic minority women are more likely to be unemployed than ethnic minority men and white women – 52.8% of ethnic minority women are unemployed.[40]
- In February 2012, a UNISON survey found that BME women are being disproportionately hit by job losses in 12 London councils: for example, in one council BME women constituted 5% of the workforce but 23% of redundancies.[41]
- 30% of disabled lone mothers are in employment, compared to 65% non-disabled lone mothers.[42]

Women, welfare and poverty

Rising unemployment, falling wages and cuts to benefits are pushing many women from a situation of being able to just about make ends meet into financial hardship and poverty. Early research and the reported experiences of women around the UK have demonstrated that the recession and austerity are disproportionately impacting on women. Changes to welfare are particularly affecting already

vulnerable groups, such as older and BME women and single mothers, who make up 92% of all single parents.[43]

- The House of Commons Library analysis of the Comprehensive Spending Review has found that women will suffer 72% of the tax and benefit cuts proposed by the Emergency Budget[44]
- The cuts will have a greater impact on Black and Minority Ethnic women: 40% of ethnic minority women live in poverty, twice the proportion of white women[45]
- Almost 2.1 million pensioners living in poverty are women[46]
- 3,700,000 women are to be negatively affected by the proposed changes to pension reforms[47]
- Within four months from May-August 2011, there was an 8% drop recorded in women's incomes from £1,935 (May 2011) to £1,777 (Aug 2011)[48]
- The Fawcett Society estimates single mothers will lose an average 8.5% of their income after tax by 2015. This is in stark contrast to the loss of income of 7.5% for single fathers, 6.5% for couples with children and 2.5% for couples without children[49]
- The National Housing Foundation has warned that benefit reductions could put 200,000 people at risk of losing their homes[50]
- Cuts to housing benefits will have a disproportionate effect on women: in 2010, 46% of housing benefit claimants were single women, compared to 20% of couples and 33% of men[51]
- It is expected that 60% of single women, many of whom are lone parents, will receive less housing benefit under the housing benefit cap, compared to 3% of single men [52]
- By 2014/5, lone mothers will lose public services worth 18.5% of their income, compared to 6.8% for the average household [53]
- Lone parents will lose services worth £1900 each year due to the spending cuts.[54] 92% of lone parents are women [55]
- Women have a lower percentage of all other types of wealth-building products. They have fewer ISAs (35% vs. 41% – men), stocks and shares investments (12% vs. 22% – men) and premium bonds (21% vs. 28% – men)[56]
- 22% of single parents list 'being unable to keep up debt repayments' as one of their biggest concerns over the next six months[57]
- Due to lower incomes and higher financial insecurity, 54% of single parents, who are mostly women, are not saving money monthly, compared to 38% of couples with two children and 31% of couples who are not planning to have children[58]

Women and childcare

Childcare is one of the biggest expenses within a family budget; the average yearly expenditure for a child under two now stands at £5103 and is rising at a rate above inflation.[59] At the same time as rising childcare costs, the government has cut

childcare tax credits and reduced the number of available Sure Start centres across the UK. Many women have calculated that it makes more financial sense to quit work so they can stay at home to look after the children; single parents, the majority of whom are women, are often unable to do the same.

- 45% of single parents are worried about how the benefit reforms and cuts will affect their cost of living. They are the most fearful about benefit cuts compared to other family groups, such as couples with children and couples not intending to have children[60]
- The percentage of household income spent on schooling and childcare is significantly higher for divorced people (40% of £1,175) or single parents (48% of £995) with two children of a similar age, compared to a married couple (20% of £2,246) [61]
- For parents who use full-time childcare, they pay on average £546 (up to two years old), £203 (two to 11 years old) and £117 (secondary) each month for this service which significantly increases the amount they spend per child. It boosts monthly average spend to an average of £400 per child - up to two years old (£625), two to 11 years old (£345) and secondary school age (£234)[62]
- Before the cuts families could claim up to 80% of their childcare bills. Now they can only claim up to 70%. This will affect nearly half a million families with the average family losing £436 a year and some losing as much as £1,300 annually[63]
- In 2010, 30% of working mothers depended on paid childcare. This included 56% of lone mothers with a child under 5 and 34% of mothers with partners[64]
- 63% of Sure Start Centres are facing changes, including cuts to staff and services[65]
- In November 2011 The Department for Education found that there had been a *"net reduction of 124 children's centres since April 2010. [This] includes 6 closures with the remainder of the reduction being accounted for by local reorganisations such as the merger of two or more centres."* [66]
- 35% of mothers using Sure Start Centres felt that the removal or reduction of services would leave them more socially isolated, and 32% felt it would be harder to see their midwife or health visitor[67]
- By 2014, a family with one child will be around £130 a year worse off than if Child Benefit had been increased each year in line with inflation. A family with three children will be £285 a year worse off[68]
- Compared to a year ago (2011), 44,000 fewer families are receiving any help with childcare costs[69]
- One in four mothers has had to give up work because of the rising costs of childcare[70]
- Workingmums.co.uk found that 24% of mothers have had to quit work, while 16% had reduced their hours due to the reduction of childcare tax credit and the increasing price of childcare[71]

- A recent survey conducted by Netmums of 2,000 of their members found that, as a result of reduced incomes, one in five mums are missing meals so their children can eat[72]
- Single parent families with one or more children are most likely to feel unprotected financially (71%) in the current economic climate.[73]
- Single parents (92% of whom are women), with one or more children are significantly more likely to rely on benefits (56%) than couples with plans to have children (4%).[74]

Women's education

- Cuts to funding for mature students will affect women disproportionately: 56% of learners aged 25 and over are women. [75]
- 53% of students will no longer be eligible for free ESOL learning, of which 74% will be women. [76]
- The London Economics Consultancy has estimated that with the new rates of university tuition fees, 70-80% of women students will not be able to pay off their student loans in the thirty years after they graduate.[77]

Women's health

Women and girls have greater health and social care needs than men across their lives and face significant barriers to both good mental and physical health.[78] Women and girls' lives are shaped by biological factors and social experiences that negatively impact on their physical and mental health, including poverty, women's reproductive and caring roles, and experiencing violence. Carers, 58% of whom are women, are more likely to suffer from physical and mental health problems.[79] An increase in women's unemployment and poverty, combined with current health reforms, could exacerbate existing health inequality between men and women.

- 77% of GPs have reported that Primary Care Trusts are restricting access to IVF treatment, amongst other procedures, to save money. [80]
- Cuts to carers allowance will disproportionately affect women: 58% of carers and 74% of current carers allowance claimants are women.[81]
- People caring for 50 hours a week or more are twice as likely to be in poor health as those not caring. 27% of those caring for more than 20 hours a week reported mental health problems.[82]
- Cuts in mental health services may particularly impact on women, who are between one and a half and two times more likely than men to suffer from anxiety and depression.[83]

Violence against Women and Girls

Each year across the UK up to 3 million women experience violence, including domestic violence, rape and sexual violence, sexual harassment, forced marriage, crimes in the name of honour, female genital mutilation, trafficking and sexual exploitation. Apart from the physical and psychological damage that the

perpetrators of these crimes cause, violence against women and girls costs society £40 billion a year, including criminal investigation costs, housing and social services support, and statutory services that support survivor's physical and mental health needs.[84]

Voluntary and community organisations that support women who have experienced violence could save the State a significant amount of money in supporting survivors. For example, each rape case is estimated to cost £74,000 each year, which is slightly less than the average income of a Rape Crisis Centre (£81,500).[85] It is unknown what the exact impact of the cuts has been on the occurrence of violence against women and girls, but we anticipate that reducing the amount of support and prevention services available due to lack of funding will lead to an increase in violence and demand for support.

- In 2011, of the 8 major IDVA service providers supporting 13,180 clients, 2 faced funding cuts of 100%, 3 of 50%, 3 of 40% and 2 of 25%.[86]
- 230 women, just under 9% of whom were seeking refuge, were turned away by Women's Aid on a typical day in 2011 due to lack of space.[87]

Women's access to justice

The changes to legal aid within the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Bill passed this year have undoubtedly restricted women's access to justice in the UK. Areas such as social welfare law and the majority of private family law cases will no longer be eligible for legal aid, or claimants will have to pay higher contributions. This means that many support organisations that rely on legal aid, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau, will be unable to provide legal advice services that women rely on when challenging unfair benefits decisions or resolving family issues through the courts.

- 57% of those likely to be affected by proposed changes to legal aid are women, compared to 43% men.[88]
- 65% of those who will lose legal aid for family law cases are women; this increases to 73% of education cases.[89]
- Community Legal Service show that more women than men apply for civil legal aid. For example, in 2005/2006, 62.2% of applications for civil representation in family matters were made by women.[90]
- A recent survey by Rights of Women and Welsh Women's Aid found that 54.4% of women suffering from domestic violence would not qualify for legal aid under these criteria.[91]
- Rights of Women research found that 89% of individual women and 97% of legal professionals did not think that women who had experienced violence should represent themselves in court.[92]

Women's perception of the coalition

- 78% of the public are concerned about how cuts to public services will affect vulnerable people.[93]

- 76% of the public believe that the majority of money to protect vulnerable people in society should come from government.[94]
- The proportion of women aged 18-24 who support the Conservative party has declined from 30% at the general election, to just 18% in 2011 (support for the Lib Dems among the same group has fallen from 34% to just 8%).[95]
- Just 13% of women feel the Tory party is the party closest to women; only 7% believe the Lib Dems are.[96]

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