

Appendix 5: Funding for specialist violence against women and girls services **(See Article 3 and General Recommendation 19)**

Services which provide women and girls with support to disclose sexual violence or leave violent and abusive relationships, navigate the criminal justice system and to recover and rebuild their lives, receive only a tiny fraction in funding of the estimated cost of VAWG (£37.6bn annually¹). Cut backs in national budgets have led to reductions in the provision of local services and the loss of specialised expertise, despite the introduction of some new national funding streams. However, the full impacts of these changes for the VAWG service sector and the women and children it supports will take some time to become clear and by then many organisations and services would have been forced to close or reduce services.

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).² It is unknown what the exact impact of the recent cuts has been on the occurrence of VAWG, 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 support³ and there is already some evidence of this.

Services to protect against and prevent gender-based violence are largely provided at local level, where the need is based, budgets to fund the services are set using local and national commissioning processes. The Government has committed £28m for funding for specialist VAWG services, a further £10.5m over the next three years for new rape support centres and £900,000 for domestic violence helplines until 2015.⁴ Approximately £5m per year (April 2011 – March 2015) has been ring-fenced to provide a range of specialist sexual abuse support services in England and Wales, delivered in the main by a network of Rape Crisis Centres. Three year contracts have provided a degree of sustainability to Rape Crisis Centres and the Government has announced that centralised funding is set to continue.⁵ This is welcome, but apart from services supporting victims of trafficking, rape and murder, the Government is ending central funding of support

¹ Government Equalities Office (2010) *The Equality Strategy – Building a Fairer Britain*. GEO: London <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/equality-strategy-publications/equality-strategy/equality-strategy?view=Binary>

² Women's Resource Centre and Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (2008) *The Crisis in Rape Crisis*. WRC: London http://www.thurrock-community.org.uk/sericc/pdf/wrc_crisis_full.pdf

³ Women's Resource Centre (2012) *Factsheet: Women and the cuts 2012* <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/women-and-the-cuts.pdf>

⁴ Government Equalities Office (2012) *The Equality Strategy – Building a Fairer Britain: Progress report*. GEO: London <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-equality-strategy-building-a-fairer-britain-progress-report>

⁵ Ministry of Justice (2012) *Getting It Right for Victims and Witnesses: Government Response* <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/victims-witnesses>

services and instead devolving responsibility for funding most services to local authority level in England and Wales. VAWG services are under threat and it has been reported that the sector has lost £7.8m to £5.4m (31%) of funding from local authorities.⁶ It is also virtually impossible to secure spaces in refuges for women with 'no recourse to public funds' who are some of the most vulnerable victims of VAWG.⁷ (See Appendix: 8)

Some agencies have already lost significant funding while others face an uncertain future.⁸ For example, freedom of information requests revealed that local authority spending on VAWG services in the North East has decreased by 9.2% and in North Tyneside by a staggering 40.6%. Yet demand for these services is increasing and one domestic violence organisation reported a 27% increase in crisis cases.⁹ One of the main sources of funding for women's refuge services has been the Supporting People programme, which is paid from central government via local authorities. Supporting People has been cut by 11.5% and is no longer ring-fenced. This has resulted in councils in some parts of the country making cuts of up to 50% in their spending on Supporting People projects.¹⁰

The ring-fence has been removed from funding for domestic violence services in England and the annual £1.6bn programme has been reduced by 3% over four years, an estimated reduction of 14% by 2014. Decisions about where to allocate these funds are now at the discretion of the local authorities, at a time when their grants from central government are being cut and there is at present no secure funding for domestic violence refuges and services which are under severe pressure. Therefore, it is becoming a 'postcode lottery'.

Rape Crisis support

The Rape Support Fund (RSF) from the Ministry of Justice provided for the first time, three years of core funding for Rape Crisis centres in England and Wales, a minimum of £30,000 per annum. In 2011/12, half of Rape Crisis (England and Wales) member groups (25) and nine new and emerging groups were awarded funding from this fund and for most centres this is their only source of core funding. This central government commitment has provided much needed stability, and has reversed a previous pattern of closures.

The Government Victim and Witness General Fund (VWGF) is likely to be devolved to local commissioning. Localised commissioning is fraught with danger: few if any

⁶ Baird, V. QC (2012) *Everywoman Safe Everywhere: Labour's commission on women's safety – First interim report* <http://www.labour.org.uk/uploads/455bf616-f048-b184-e903-c9629a67745a.pdf>

⁷ Women's Resource Centre, No recourse to public funds <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/our-work/no-recourse-to-public-funds/> Accessed: 16/04/13

⁸ Stephenson, Mary-Ann (2011) *TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women*. TUC: London <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>

⁹ North East Women's Network (2013) *The Health of the Women's Sector in the North East of England: Findings from annual online surveys from 2009 to 2012* http://www.newwomens.net/images/stories/January_2013_-_Health_of_the_Womens_Sector_in_the_North_East_report.doc.pdf

¹⁰ Women's Aid (2011) 'Women's Aid's Survey reveals Fear that over Half of Refuge and Outreach Services could face Closure.' *Women's Aid*, 7th March 2011 <http://tinyurl.com/3wvpuw>

commissioners have knowledge about the gendered dynamics of sexual violence. Almost half of (46%) of Rape Crisis Centres surveyed in 2012 reported being challenged by local commissioners about providing women-only services.¹¹ A number of reports¹² have documented this continuing misinterpretation of equality legislation. A trend towards fragmented commissioning frameworks which favour generic large providers offering lower unit costs, but lack expertise on VAWG,¹³ has intensified under the Westminster Government's localism agenda.

There is currently only one Rape Crisis Centre in Wales, covering the north, although the RSF will support a new service in mid-Wales to open within the next three years. The majority of women and girls in Wales still do not have access to specialised support from Rape Crisis, despite the Welsh Assembly Government publishing an integrated VAW strategy in 2010¹⁴ and consulting on a VAWG Bill in 2013.¹⁵

Rape Crisis services are distinct from Sexual Assault and Referral Centres (SARCs), which are usually jointly funded by the police and health services. SARCs offer support to women and men survivors, usually of recent sexual assault, provide health and medical checks and crisis intervention, short-term counselling and aim to improve the forensic response to survivors of sexual violence. SARCs are an important element in the (limited) range of service provision available but should be viewed as complementary to Rape Crisis Centres as opposed to an alternative.¹⁶ This is often not the case as SARCs are prioritised over Rape Crisis Centre non-statutory service provision by local statutory funders/commissioners, who do not understand the difference between the two services.

¹¹ Rape Crisis (England and Wales) members survey 2012

¹² Coy, M., Kelly, L. and Foord, J. (2009) *Map of Gaps 2: The postcode lottery of violence against women support services in Britain*. Equality and Human Rights Commission and End Violence Against Women Coalition: London <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/map-of-gaps/>;

. Women's Resource Centre and Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (2008) *The Crisis in Rape Crisis*. WRC: London http://www.thurrock-community.org.uk/sericc/pdf/wrc_crisis_full.pdf

¹³ Women's Resource Centre and Rape Crisis England and Wales (2008) *The Crisis in Rape Crisis*. WRC: London http://www.thurrock-community.org.uk/sericc/pdf/wrc_crisis_full.pdf

; Coy, M., Kelly, L. and Foord, J. (2009) *Map of Gaps 2: The postcode lottery of violence against women support services in Britain*. Equality and Human Rights Commission and End Violence Against Women Coalition: London <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/map-of-gaps/>;

Coy, M., Lovett, J. and Kelly, L. (2008) *Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations: A Template for an Integrated Strategy on Violence Against Women for the UK*. End Violence Against Women Coalition: London. <http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/resources/38/realising-rights-fulfilling-obligations>

¹⁴ Welsh Assembly Government (2010) *The Right to be Safe*. Cardiff: WAG <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/safety/domesticabuse/publications/besafe/?lang=en>

¹⁵ Welsh Assembly Government (2012) *Consultation on legislation to end violence against women and domestic abuse (Wales)* <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/vawwhitepaper/?lang=en>

¹⁶ End Violence Against Women, Rape Crisis (England & Wales), the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit and the Fawcett Society (2008) *Not either/or but both/and: Why we need Rape Crisis Centres and Sexual Assault Referral Centres*. Fawcett: London. <http://www.devonrapecrisis.org.uk/images/Why%20we%20need%20Rape%20Crisis%20Centres%20and%20Sexual%20Assault%20Referral%20Centres.pdf>

The welfare reforms (See Article 13) 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 VAWG support services, the Government have confirmed that rent payments for refuges will be exempt from Universal Credit reforms.¹⁷

Why specialist services are important

Women's organisations have developed a theoretical model which acknowledges the links between VAWG and power and control. This has led to specific ways of working with women, which is acknowledged by VAWG experts as best practice. Furthermore, they plug the gap in mainstream services which cannot or will not address women's complex needs often arising as a result of violence and abuse.¹⁸ Research has found that women's organisations share a number of characteristics which make them a distinct and innovative part of service provision.¹⁹ These characteristics are part of what makes these organisations unique (and difficult to replicate), as well as in high demand. Women-only space is highly valued and many women would not attend a mixed gender service.²⁰ (See Appendix: 4)

A large proportion of domestic and/or sexual violence remains hidden and as such, women's organisations can offer valuable data into the prevalence of the problem because they are often the first and only port of call for women leaving abusive relationships or seeking help after traumatic experiences. However, organisations providing VAWG services continue to need to make the case to funders and the Government for their specialised services, and continue to struggle for survival. For example, it has been found that organisations with smaller budgets from local authorities have had more substantial cuts than larger ones²¹ which will certainly impact on specialist providers.

Women's organisations often work with the most marginalised groups in society, and are often created because mainstream services are non-existent or inappropriate or are unable to reach a certain group of women. In addition, the experience and historic knowledge gained by the women's sector needs to be promoted as an important characteristic of women's organisations and why their services are most appropriate. Unfortunately, commissioners' lack of knowledge about women's organisations and the emphasis on 'efficiency savings' means that these valuable services, particularly women's health organisations and Black,

¹⁷ Lloyd, T. (2012) 'Refuges win exemption from direct payment', *Inside Housing website*, 6th November 2012 <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/care/refuges-win-exemption-from-direct-payment/6524537.article>

¹⁸ Women's Resource Centre (2008) *Briefing: Violence Against Women, Health and the Women's Voluntary and Community Sector*. WRC: London

¹⁹ Women's Resource Centre (2006) *Why Women? The Women's Voluntary and Community Sector: Changing lives, changing community, changing society*. WRC: London

²⁰ Women's Resource Centre (2007) *Why Women-only? The values and benefits of by women, for women services*. WRC: London <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/whywomenonly.pdf>

²¹ Towers, J. and Walby, S. (2012) *Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls*. Trust for London: London <http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/FullVAWGReport.pdf>

minority ethnic and refugee (BMER) VAWG organisations, are struggling to survive. There is a very real danger of losing the knowledge and skills of the women's voluntary sector as it is further marginalised within these policy agendas.

BMER specialist services

Case study:²²

The Angelou Centre in Newcastle has seen a 100% increase in demand for support and advocacy in its Domestic Abuse Support services for Black and minority ethnic women and children, yet there have been no increases to staff due to public sector cuts.

BMER specialist services have been historically under-funded and require dedicated grant-based funding by national governments, local authorities and other local bodies to prevent further closures. Funding for specialist provision within mainstream organisations is also needed, particularly in rural areas or where there is no existing or potential for specialist BMER women's services.²³ 100% of BMER VAWG organisations surveyed in 2011 had experienced funding cuts within the last three years and were having to consider ways of meeting the shortfall in funding.²⁴ This survey showed a shift towards super-providers and the difficulty that specialist organisations have in presenting themselves as cost effective when pitted against much larger providers. There was also a move away from a BMER focus and the funding climate for BMER women's services seems to have worsened. They don't have any more grant schemes from government and are having to meet the shortfall where grant funding does not cover the full costs applied for as well as dealing with a lack of resources dedicated to fundraising in the first place. This is happening at the same time that BMER services are taking on the majority of the most complex cases including women with 'no recourse to public funds', requiring additional time, resources and specialist support.²⁵

Therefore these services are experiencing increased demand at the same time that they are facing funding cuts and there is a growing challenge in responding to this situation. Overall Government policies have not had any direct benefit on these organisations and their clients – the negative impact of the Gender Equality Duty, a move towards commissioning in place of grant-based contracts, the Compact²⁶ and removal of Supporting People ring-fencing have all exacerbated

²² North East Women's Network (2012) *Findings and recommendations from interim case study: The impact of austerity measures upon women in the North East of England*, October 2012 and updated April 2013. NEWomen's Network and Women's Resource Centre <http://www.newwomens.net/index.php/research-leftmenu-56>

²³ Southall Black Sisters and End Violence Against Women Coalition (2011) *Ending Violence Against Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Women and Girls: What BME women want - 10 key actions for a safer world*. <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/10-key-actions-for-a-safer-world/>

²⁴ FORWARD and Imkaan (2011) *The Road to Sustainability: A review of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee organisations working with women on health and gender based violence in England*. A study commissioned by the Women's Health and Equality Consortium. WHEC: London <http://www.whec.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/07/TheRoadtoSustainabilityExecSummary2011.pdf>

²⁵ Imkaan (2010) *Vital Statistics: The Experiences of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee Women and Children Facing Violence and Abuse*. Imkaan: London <http://imkaan.org.uk/resources>

²⁶ See Compact Voice (2012) <http://www.compactvoice.org.uk/about-compact> Accessed: 21/03/13

the crisis that these organisations face.²⁷ It has been reported that already six specialist BMER refuges have closed and two more have had their local authority funding cut.²⁸ Without these services many women will put their lives and their integrity at risk without approaching mainstream services.

Case Study:²⁹

“At the Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) a BMER women-only organisation, our statistics tell us that approximately 90% of the women that approach us feel unable, unsafe and fearful of approaching mainstream services. This responds to gender, cultural and language barriers, the difficulties in understanding and negotiating the system in the UK, fear of being discriminated against and fear of statutory services including the police due to previous negative experiences in Latin America.”

BMER VAWG provision has been further undermined by the Community Cohesion policy, introduced to tackle Muslim extremism, which encouraged local authorities against the funding of ethnic minority groups. .

Case Study:³⁰

In 2008, Southall Black Sisters, successfully legally challenged a local authority decision to cut funding for their specialist domestic violence services for BMER women in favour of a generic service. The authority argued that under its social cohesion strategy, it could not provide single group funding. The Court decided that the authority was failing to address race inequality.³¹ However, despite this positive judgement, many commissioners have continued to cut BMER services or divert funding to generic provision, and/or prioritised resources for faith based groups or initiatives instead.

Recommendations:

- **There is a need for better collection of data to ensure that changes in service forms and levels and in their impacts on levels of VAWG can be effectively monitored and analysed**
- **The Government should ensure that specialist services providing vital support to women survivors of VAWG and their children are properly funded. Particular attention needs to be paid to the funding of service provision for particular groups of women who may face additional barriers**
- **Commissioning structures need to encourage small providers to work together (like for like), and retain the specialism and expertise of the**

²⁷ FORWARD and Imkaan (2011) *The Road to Sustainability: A review of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee organisations working with women on health and gender based violence in England*. A study commissioned by the Women’s Health and Equality Consortium. WHEC: London

<http://www.whec.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/07/TheRoadtoSustainabilityExecSummary2011.pdf>

²⁸ Towers, J. and Walby, S. (2012) *Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls*. Trust for London: London

<http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/FullVAWGReport.pdf>

²⁹ Latin American Women’s Rights Service <http://www.lawrs.org.uk/> Accessed: 22/03/13

³⁰ Southall Black Sisters <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/> Accessed: 22/04/13

³¹ Southall Black Sisters (2012) ‘Campaign celebrates victory for victims of domestic violence’ Southall Black Sisters, 30th March 2012, <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaign-celebrates-victory-for-victims-of-domestic-violence/>

sector, as opposed to one that assumes that smaller providers should only partner with larger providers as this begins to shift the power dynamics

- **Commissioners should have a level of understanding with regard to domestic violence. However, their employing authority should have a responsibility to ensure commissioners undertake training to embed an understanding of other forms of VAWG leading to more informed commissioning processes**