

Women's Resource Centre

Briefing

Public Service Agreements and National Indicators

November 2007

What are Public Service Agreements and National Indicators and why are they important?

The Government announced the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2007, which sets out its spending priorities for the next three years. Alongside this, 30 Public Service Agreements (PSAs) were also published, which comprise a list of the Government's priority outcomes for the following three years. Around 200 National Indicators (NIs) have also been announced and these will be used to measure local authorities' progress towards meeting the PSAs.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are currently developing their Local Area Agreements (LAAs), which are agreements with central Government for 2008-2011. LAAs are based on PSAs and NIs and are important because they will determine what issues will be prioritised in local areas, and, therefore, where funding is directed.

LSPs choose up to 35 NIs, from the list of around 200, to include in their LAAs. The NIs should be those which best reflect local needs and Sustainable Community Strategies will be at the heart of LAAs. Local authorities then negotiate targets for the chosen NIs with their Government Office for the region. Only those NIs selected for the LAA will have targets attached where the government expects a quantified and specific level of improvement (e.g. a number or %). There will also be 17 obligatory NIs on education and early years. However, the local authority and its partners can set additional targets for inclusion in the LAA. These carry no reporting requirements, other than those established locally.

Although the 'up to 35', obligatory and any additional indicators are the most crucial elements of LAAs, audit bodies (such as the Audit Commission, Healthcare Commission etc.) will also be monitoring local authorities on their progress on all of the NIs in their Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs), which may present opportunities for third sector involvement.

It is crucial that the women's VCS is aware of which PSAs and NIs are most relevant to their work as they provide an excellent opportunity to ensure that their priorities and those of the women they serve are included in LAAs. These are currently being renegotiated (negotiations must be completed by June 2008) so it is crucial that women's organisations are lobbying for their NIs **now** to ensure that local priorities for the next three years will include the needs of women in their area.

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How to influence LAAs – key actions

Identify the NIs that are most relevant

Look through the set of NIs to establish which are most relevant to your area of work. Remember, having relevant NIs included in LAAs, your organisation will have a stronger case when approaching local authorities and partnerships for funding.



Gather evidence

Once you have identified the relevant NIs, it is crucial to gather as much evidence as possible as to why the NI should be chosen. If the issue is already included in the Sustainable Community Strategy then this is a huge advantage as LAAs should place these plans at the heart of LAAs. Identify other initiatives and plans that support the inclusion of the relevant NIs. This could include central government plans (e.g. Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan), and particularly local and regional strategies such as Gender Equality Schemes. Look at local statistics and information about where local authorities have performed poorly (e.g. Audit Commission assessments). You should also identify how the NIs you would like to see included will support other PSAs and NIs.



Lobby LSPs and others on the NIs

Having identified relevant NIs and gathered your evidence, you need to identify and lobby your LSP and any other partnerships linked to the LSP such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). If you don't know who sits on your LSP, contact your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). You should also ask your CVS about what consultation work they have done with the local third sector and what NIs they will be advocating for.



Influence what the target will look like

The LSP will choose the 35 NIs and then negotiate with the Government Office for the region what targets will be used. The targets will need to be quantifiable and specific (e.g. a number or %). If the NIs your organisation has an interest in have been included in the LAA, you should try and influence the LSP about what the target will be.

Remember, LAAs will significantly influence the type of services local funding will be available for until 2011. (Weblinks to all relevant documents and organisations on page 10).

What else should women's organisations be aware of?

1. Influencing the technical definition of NIs

Currently, the NIs are short headlines. For example, NI26 reads "Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence" but doesn't provide detail on what this actually means. A consultation on the technical definitions of the NIs has recently been released but closes on 21 December 2007. It is worth looking at the proposed definitions and influencing local authorities and LSPs in their response to the consultation and/or submit your own response (although this consultation is not aimed at the third sector). Details about the consultation are on page 10 of this briefing.

2. Current funding climate

Local authorities funding will only rise by 1% in real terms over the next three years compared to an increase of 39% over the previous ten years. So there is less likely to be funding for the VCS from local authorities over the next three years. Three per cent efficiency savings for local authorities need to be put in place so funding cuts are likely, as well as commissioning at regional/sub-regional level instead of locally to reduce costs. Local funding levels are determined by population figures. A new calculating method means 95,000 less people have been allocated for, so local London authorities are facing even greater financial pressures. The funding received by local authorities from central government will undoubtedly impact on local third sector organisations.

3. Is your Sustainable Community Strategy also being updated?

Some LSPs are taking this opportunity to update the Sustainable Community Strategy, which will significantly impact upon LAAs and the NIs chosen. This represents an opportunity to influence the Strategy and therefore strengthen the case for NIs which are most relevant to your area of work. You can also ask how your LSP is performing on their current targets and use the opportunity as a lever for more action on underperformance.

4. Be aware of your Community Area Assessment (CAA)

Even if your lobbying is unsuccessful and your Indicator is not chosen, your local authority will be assessed on all of the NIs via the CAA. This provides another route for recognition of your organisation. Ask your LSP about how they plan to deliver on the 'non-35' NIs.

5. Keep abreast of commissioning and procurement plans

Even if your LAA doesn't contain the most relevant NIs, the third sector can still have a role in delivery. Start talking to officials now about your LSPs' commissioning and procurement plans.

6. Gender Equality Duty

In some instances, e.g. sexual violence, there is strong direction from central government on NIs that they recommend should be included in LAAs. If the LSP chooses not to include these NIs, despite the overwhelming evidence coupled with 'encouragement' by central government, you could request a Gender Impact Assessment (under the Gender Equality Duty) of the decision as it will clearly affect women. See the sexual violence briefing recently produced by WRC, NAVCA and Rape Crisis (England and Wales) for more information and examples of other tools to use (details on page 10).

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Important PSAs and NIs for women's organisations

Public Service Agreement	National Indicator/s	How is this Indicator relevant to the women's VCS?
<p>PSA9: Halve the number of children in poverty by 2010-11 on the way to eradicating child poverty by 2020.</p> <p>Strategic priorities here are to: reduce poverty through work; reduce poverty through raising incomes; tackling poor living conditions; and focusing delivery on 'at-risk' groups. These include: lone mothers, large families, BME families, and families with a disabled member.</p> <p>The third sector is mentioned specifically as partners to better engage service users and to ensure public services are delivered well.</p>	<p>NI116: Proportion of children in poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's organisations help alleviate child poverty because they tackle economic and social inequalities faced by lone mothers. • Women's organisations that increase employment opportunities, help women escape abusive and violent relationships, provide good quality, accessible childcare and empower women more generally, will greatly improve the poor financial situation of many families. • The PSA mentions the importance of focusing delivery on at-risk groups and women who experience domestic and sexual violence should be seen within this category. Especially as one in three child protection cases show a history of domestic violence¹. • 27% of the organisations participating in the WRC study gave examples of their work contributing directly to women securing employment².

¹ Women's Resource Centre 'The women's voluntary and community sector's stake in the social exclusion agenda' April 2007

² *Why Women?* p.39 www.whyywomen.org.uk

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<p>PSA 15: Address the disadvantage that individuals experience because of their gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief.</p> <p>The priorities of this PSA are to: reduce the gender pay gap, tackle barriers due to gender, disability or age that limit people's choice and control over their lives, increase participation in public life by women, ethnic minorities, disabled and young people, reduce discrimination in employment due to gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and to reduce unfair treatment at work, college or school, when using health services and public transport.</p>	<p>NI3: civic participation in the local area</p> <p>NI4: % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their local area</p> <p>NI140: fair treatment by local services</p> <p>NI128: User reported measure of respect and dignity in their treatment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research³ highlights the woefully low representation of women and the WVCS in LSPs. Not tackling women's under-representation on LSPs is not adhering to the stipulations of the Gender Equality Duty or this PSA. • This PSA calls for increasing involvement of local service-users in service delivery to meet specific and localised needs. This is what women's organisations do extremely well. • One of the priorities of this PSA is to tackle the barriers which are due to gender, disability or age that limit people's choice and control in their lives. Violence as a gendered and cross-cutting issue needs to be included here as one of the primary causes and symptoms of women's discrimination. • Indicator 4 though is about the participation in public life by women, ethnic minorities, disabled and young people. Public activities here include, amongst other things, activism and formal volunteering. Women's sector organisations are often heavily service-user led, with a large percentage of service users going on to become volunteers and even paid members of staff. Women's organisations working within feminist frameworks that

³ WRC, Urban Forum, and Oxfam 'Where are the women in LSPs? Women's representation in Local Strategic Partnerships', 2007

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		<p>empower women are invaluable in raising women's expectations and abilities to participate more fully in civic life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The measurement of dignity and respect, particularly in relation to health services in Indicator 128, can be shown by women's organisations providing specialist women-only services - not just for sexual or domestic violence, but also alcohol and substance misuse and mental health (see 'why women-only?' report).
<p>PSA 16: Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training.</p> <p>The PSA focuses on four at-risk client groups: care leavers, adult offenders under probation supervision, adults in contact with secondary mental health services, and adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities. Intervening at these transition points should make the difference in preventing persistent exclusion.</p> <p>Engaging the third sector in public service delivery, as set out in the 'Partnership in Public Services' document, is a crucial element in</p>	<p>NI140: Fair treatment by local services</p> <p>NI141: Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living</p> <p>NI149: Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation</p> <p>NI150: Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WVCS addresses the particular needs of vulnerable and disenfranchised women, many of which deliver 'women-only' services that cater for women's complex and multiple needs. • Women-only service provision for these groups (all of which have experienced higher than average rates of violence) have a proven track record in accommodating their specific and complex needs. • Women's organisations work with women with no recourse to public funds, asylum seekers and refugees. Some of these women have also been the victims of domestic and/or sexual violence. These 'hard-to-reach' groups do not access mainstream services and grassroots women's organisations do reach out to these highly marginalised and socially excluded groups.

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<p>helping socially excluded groups to hold services to account, helping public services develop innovative new approaches to tackling exclusion, and deliver user-focused needs.</p> <p>Effective commissioning is pertinent for the PSA.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is lots of evidence that women-only mental health, violence, offender and learning disability services are the most appropriate and 'successful' (socially and financially) methods of service provision (see 'why women-only?' report). • For further detail about the WVCS and social exclusion agenda, see our briefing in the policy section of our website.
<p>PSA 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities.</p> <p>Sustainable third sector organisations are vital in achieving the aims of this PSA.</p> <p>Sustainable funding will play a key role in this. Three year funding to the VCS will become the norm rather than the exception.</p> <p>Improving commissioning and procurement relationships is mentioned, alongside capacity building at the local level to reach out to the most marginalised communities.</p>	<p>NI7: environment for a thriving third sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an important NI, especially in light of the worsening funding crisis facing the WVCS. • The WVCS represents the voices of some of the most marginalised and socially excluded women in the UK. Their framework of empowerment and holistic approaches yield better results than mixed services. Our 'why women-only?' research shows that some women would not access support unless it was women-only. Therefore, many women in need of vital support services would not receive them. Without women-only services, there would be significant costs to the state as a result of increased demand and use of public services. • The current trend in commissioning regionally and sub-regionally, and to generic service providers, is having a detrimental effect on the future sustainability of the WVCS. • Women's organisations have a

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		<p>large part to play in delivering local services, have a history of advocacy and campaigning work, take on lots of volunteers, and consist of a dynamic staff with lots of expertise. This needs to be nurtured and protected by local authorities.</p>
<p>PSA 23: Make communities safer.</p> <p>Objective 1 of the PSA is to: “reduce the most serious violence, including tackling serious sexual offences and domestic violence”.</p> <p>This PSA clearly states that local CDRPs/Community Safety Partnerships, in partnership with Local Criminal Justice Boards, should be able to demonstrate to Government Offices for the Regions that they are taking action to tackle serious sexual offences.</p> <p>An effective local response to tackling serious sexual offences should include action to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and the provision of effective victim care pathways to minimise harm.</p>	<p>NI26: Specialist support to victims of a serious sexual offence</p> <p>NI15: Serious violent crime rate</p> <p>NI31: Re-offending rate of registered sex offenders</p> <p>NI32: Repeat incidents of domestic violence</p> <p>NI34: Domestic violence – murder</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For women’s organisations working in the fields of sexual and/or domestic violence, these are the most important Indicators to lobby for. Your work directly affects these outcomes and so puts your organisations in a much better financial position for the next three years. <p>(A more detailed assessment of PSA 23 and NI26 can be found at: www.wrc.org.uk in the ‘Briefing for Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) on the ‘crisis in Rape Crisis’ and sexual violence policy drivers’).</p>

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<p>PSA 24: Deliver a more effective, transparent and responsive Criminal Justice System for victims and the public.</p> <p>This PSA is directed at the CJS, rather than local authorities, and represents the high level measures of success for the CJS strategy.</p> <p>There are specific references to sexual violence in PSA 24, especially given that the conviction rates for rape are so appallingly low. PSA 24 states that the CJS should improve:</p> <p>"...the efficiency and effectiveness with which serious crime, particularly serious sexual offences, are investigated and prosecuted."</p> <p>Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) will be responsible for developing local delivery strategies which set out its plans to support the delivery of the crime strategy which will tackle serious crimes such as sexual offences.</p>	<p>There are five specific indicators for the CJS, but the following are particularly relevant to sexual violence offences, particularly Indicator 1: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in bringing offences to justice.</p> <p>This indicator has a focus on outcomes which reduce the harm caused, particularly "...offences where convictions rates are very low, for example rape".</p> <p>It goes on to state that there should be:</p> <p>"...enhanced services to support victims (particularly in relation to rape offences) and witnesses, (particularly vulnerable and intimidated witnesses) to ensure that they engage with the criminal justice process and receive better access to justice".</p> <p>Other indicators are: Improve public confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of the CJS. Improve victim satisfaction with the Police; and victim and witness satisfaction with the CJS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's organisations focus on victims needs. Enhanced support services for victims of rape and sexual abuse however should not be limited to Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), with their emphasis on gathering evidence for raising conviction rates. While this is important, women's organisations have a different role, centred more on women's needs, especially if dealing with a case of historic abuse. Women's organisations have a vital role to play in securing confidence and specialist support services in women-only settings.

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Glossary of terms and resources

CSR2007 (Comprehensive Spending Review): The Chancellor's economy forecast, Government's priorities and spending plans 2008-2011.

LAA (Local Area Agreement): LAAs are a three year 'contract' between a local area and central Government to deliver particular priorities agreed by the LSP. The local authority negotiates the LAA on behalf of its LSP. LSPs can choose up to 35 National Indicators to include in their LAAs (there are also 17 obligatory indicators on educational attainment and early years).

LSPs (Local Strategic Partnerships): these Partnerships bring together local people, the public sector, voluntary and community organisations and business to set out local priorities and develop a Sustainable Communities Strategies. They are also responsible for developing the LAA. To find out more about your LSP, contact your local CVS. To find your local CVS visit www.navca.org.uk.

PSA (Public Service Agreement): Government departmental priorities and outcome targets. To see the PSAs, visit www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr/press/pbr_csr07_press03.cfm

NIs (National Indicators): There are around 200 National Indicators and LSPs can choose up to 35 to include in LAAs. Targets for these NIs will then be negotiated and these will be used to measure whether local areas are meeting the PSAs. Local authorities will be responsible and accountable for delivery on these targets, which are now the only indicators that central Government will use to monitor local Government, superseding other methods such as the Best Value Performance Framework. To see all of the NIs, visit www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/505713

NI technical definitions: To see the proposals on the technical definitions of the NIs, and for more information about the consultation, visit www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/543055

Sexual violence briefing: Together with Rape Crisis (England and Wales) and NAVCA, WRC has written a briefing for local infrastructure organisations on the crisis in rape crisis and the sexual violence policy drivers that they can use to get sexual violence on their local government agendas. It looks particularly at the relevant PSAs and NIs. This briefing can be downloaded from www.wrc.org.uk

Women in LSPs: Together with Urban Forum and Oxfam UK, WRC has co-written a report entitled 'Where are the Women in LSPs?', which goes into more detail about the problems of under-representation of women and women's organisations at local level. To download this, and for more information, go to www.wrc.org.uk

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About the Women's Resource Centre

The Women's Resource Centre (WRC) is a 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 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.

Contact us

Please let WRC know what comes of your engagement with local decision-making bodies. Your experiences of trying to influence local government for the future sustainability of the sector are incredibly important and will help with ongoing lobbying efforts. Please get in touch with any feedback.

Ms. Kiran Dhami

Policy Officer

Women's Resource Centre

Ground Floor East

33-41 Dallington Street

London EC1V 0BB

Direct line: 020 7324 3046

Switchboard: 020 7324 3030

www.wrc.org.uk

kiran@wrc.org.uk

Generating, promoting and sustaining voluntary action that improves the status of women.
Reg. Charity 1070606 Limited Company 2462336