



# Briefing

## **Consulting the Capital: London Councils voluntary sector commissioning programme 2011-15**

17 November 2009

Understanding and supporting  
women and their organisations

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## Introduction

London Councils has recently started its consultation process on its funding priorities from 2011.

The consultation is being undertaken within the context of prospective cuts in public sector expenditure at the same time as the effects of the recession have brought increased need for services from both local authorities and the voluntary and community sector (VCS). This is important because the funding for the London Councils grants scheme is made up entirely of contributions from local borough councils which are facing possible cuts in public expenditure.

London Councils is one of the largest funders of the voluntary and community sector in London. It currently distributes approximately £28 million worth of grants to 360 organisations per annum. Importantly, over £3 million per annum of funding is spent on violence against women (VAW) and children services, making London Councils one of the single largest funders of London's VAW sector.

For these reasons, it is **crucial that women's organisations engage in the consultations and have their say.**

## What is the vision and overall objectives of the commissioning programme 2011-15?

The London Councils Leaders' Committee has agreed a vision for the 2011-15 programme:

"Londoners enabled to live better and healthier lives, enjoying economic, housing, educational and cultural opportunities in a safer and more sustainable environment; through improved services delivered by the voluntary sector working in partnership with London's local authorities".

Six overarching 'challenges' (objectives), which are taken from London Narrative<sup>1</sup>, have been identified:

1. Helping Londoners live longer, healthier, more independent lives
2. Reducing crime – including violence against women and children, supporting preventative approaches, and helping victims to rebuild their lives
3. Creating an environmentally sustainable London
4. Increasing prosperity and helping the poorest Londoners lift their lives out of poverty
5. Ensuring everyone, especially young people, achieve their full potential

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<sup>1</sup> The London Narrative was produced by London Councils and Government Office and is a document which sets out the pledges made through Local Area Agreements by public sector partners across the capital to tackle six key challenges facing the city. It is available at <http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/economicdevelopment/publications/thelondonnarrative.htm>

6. Creating stronger, more empowered and cohesive communities; and increasing levels of participation in London's public life and cultural activities

**Questions from London Councils about the challenges:**

- Do you agree that these are the most appropriate challenges?
- If not, what others might be better and why?

**Are the currently funded services the right ones, or should other/different services be funded in the future?**

In its consultation, London Councils is asking specifically about the 59 service areas it currently funds and to what degree these services are still priorities.

To see the full list of services, visit:

[www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/grants/aboutourfunding/consultingthecapital.htm](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/grants/aboutourfunding/consultingthecapital.htm)

**Questions from London Councils about currently funded services:**

- What priority do you think should be given to continued support of these services?
- Are there other services to meet the challenges you think should be funded?
- Are there any services you feel are less of a priority for London Councils funding because, for example, they are now covered by statutory provision etc?
- Do you consider that any of the service areas duplicate work of London boroughs, Metropolitan police, NHS and other statutory services?
- Are there any services where you consider the current level of funding to be too low to have a real impact? Should there be a minimum level of funding for a prioritised service?
- Do you think there is any scope to merge any of the 59 service areas and if so, which ones?
- Are there any services that you consider have particular access issues for the following groups: age, gender, disability, race/ethnicity, sexuality or religion?
- What do you think might be the adverse impacts of withdrawing funding from any services on key equalities areas of age, gender, disability, race/ethnicity, sexuality or religion?

- What services do you think result in cost savings because they are funded at a London-wide rather than single borough level? What is the extent of those savings?
- Are there services we should prioritise to meet the challenges posed by the longer-term impact of the recession on Londoners?

## **What particular issues could VAW organisations raise in their consultation responses?**

When completing your response to the consultation, it's worth bearing in mind the following things when answering the questions:

- What **clear evidence** do you have that demonstrates the benefit to Londoners of VAW services commissioned?
- What would the **impact** be of withdrawal of funding from VAW services i.e. on beneficiaries (especially equalities groups), impact on VCS and implications on local authorities (especially financial)?
- What are the **cost savings** and implications for **service quality** of VAW services being funded by London Councils (i.e. pan-London), rather than individual boroughs?

Below is some more detailed analysis of the key questions and issues in the consultation, with some suggestions of the kind of answers which might give the biggest impact:

### ***1. What additional services should London Councils consider funding?***

There are many emerging needs for communities within the capital and as a pan-London funder, London Councils wants to address as many of these needs as possible. Have you got evidence of needs which are not currently being met by this funding? It is important to bear in mind, however, that in the current economic climate, the total amount of funding will not increase, so any new funding will mean taking funding away from currently funded services.

### ***2. Are there any London Councils funded areas which have too low a level of funding to have any real impact?***

Again, while London Councils seeks to fund as many services as possible, the amount of money available for particular services might not be enough to make much of a difference. It is important to provide evidence for this additional need, i.e. if you think that a currently funded service does not receive enough funding for it to have an impact. Again, you need to remember that any additional funding to one area will mean a reduction in funding to another area.

### ***3. Is there scope for merging any of the 59 service areas?***

London councils commissioned SQW Consulting to review its commissioning process. One of the key recommendations was that London Councils should reduce the current 59 service areas to 40 and there is a real possibility that this will happen. This is your opportunity to suggest services which could be merged (rather than scrapped altogether) in order to minimise the harm done by possible funding cuts or changing priorities.

#### ***4. Which particular equalities groups should be targeted by London councils funding?***

This is an opportunity to make the case for the importance of a VAW budget and why pan-London funding for the women's sector is so key to its survival. London Councils is unique in the way in which it ring-fences funding for the women's sector and this is the chance to argue for why it should stay that way.

#### ***5. How do London councils funded services add value to the work of the boroughs and statutory agencies such as the Police and the NHS? Do they result in cost savings for these agencies?***

This question of added value is really key, as London Councils funding needs to be shown to be complementing the work of other agencies. Any partnership working you do with these agencies is worth mentioning here, to show to what extent statutory and voluntary services across London are integrated. Saving money is also key, so if you feel that particular services save statutory agencies money and time, for example through providing services which prevent pressure on statutory services in the future, then make this case and back it up with any evidence you may have.

#### ***6. Why should these services be commissioned on a London-wide or sub regional basis rather than locally (i.e. by boroughs)?***

Borough Councillors need to be persuaded that they should spend their money on London-wide funding rather than just spending it in their own boroughs, where they have more control over how the money is spent. How does working cross-borough or pan-London make your work more effective? Would your work be as effective if confined to just one borough, for example if a woman needs to be moved to a refuge in a neighbouring borough, would this be possible if you weren't funded to work in the neighbouring borough? Again, cost savings are important here – for example, does this pan-London funding save money for the boroughs, in comparison with the cost of funding individual services in each borough?

#### ***7. What would be the impact of withdrawing funding from any of the services which London Councils now supports?***

This is the opportunity to make clear the essential, often life-saving nature of the services which are currently funded. You should be as stark as possible, making clear that without London Councils funding, many of these services would not exist and as a result women and children would be without support at crucial and often life-threatening times.

It's also worth setting this in the context of the impact on particular equalities groups, particularly women, but any other groups which you feel would be disproportionately affected by a withdrawal of funding.

### **8. How will the recession affect the demand for women-sector services?**

The recession will be the key political factor of the foreseeable future and the argument needs to be made for why funding should not be diverted away from VAW services to those seen as being more directly related to the recession, for example those around employment and homelessness. If you feel that VAW services are being put under increased pressure due to the demand as a result of the negative impacts of the recession, such as impacts on mental health and increased cases of domestic violence, then this is the time to say it (along with any evidence you have for this increased pressure).

### **9. How should the current wider funding environment influence London Councils' considerations when setting future priorities?**

This is an opportunity to set in context the wider funding crisis for the sector; a move away from grants to commissioning, reduced budgets all round, a lack of appreciation of the need for specialist services and a reluctance to provide core funding. The VAW budget from London Councils is essential for providing specialist services to London's women and children.

## **Examples of evidence that might inform your response**

Providing evidence to back up your response is **key**. Here are a few ideas for where you might find this evidence:

- LVSC's 2009 **Big Squeeze** report identified increases in demand for advice, volunteering and infrastructure support services as a result of the recession. As the social impacts of the recession will be long-lasting, it is likely this increased demand will continue for several years.  
<http://www.lvsc.org.uk/Templates/information.asp?NodeId=100050>
- The Young Foundation's 2009 report **Fixing the Future** has predicted that there will be increasing demand for health, education, care and environmental services at least until 2020.  
<http://www.youngfoundation.org/fixing-future>
- WRC's 2009 report **Not just bread, but roses, too** maps funding to the women's VCS in England 2004-7  
[http://www.wrc.org.uk/resources/wrcs\\_research\\_and\\_reports.aspx](http://www.wrc.org.uk/resources/wrcs_research_and_reports.aspx)
- EVAW's 2009 **Map of Gaps 2** research found that, over the last 12 months, investment in the violence against women sector has been focused on statutory services and criminal justice based responses - 60% of all new services are working in these areas.

<http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/pages/resources.html>

- Your own **monitoring and evaluation data** – including information on who you deliver services to, who you have to turn away but would like to deliver services to, which equalities groups you offer most services to etc.

## **How can I get involved?**

There will be 2 consultations stages:

1. A scoping stage which will gauge the 'lie of the land' and inform the formal consultation (survey and events)
2. A formal stage of consultation.

Both stages will have the statutory 12-week consultation periods.

## **What should I do in the stage 1 consultation?**

- *Complete the survey*

Deadline for responses is **29 January 2010**. Visit:

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/grants/aboutourfunding/consultingthecapital>

- *Attend WRC's sector-specific consultation for London's VAW sector*

WRC will be hosting a consultation for VAW and other women's organisations at London Councils on **Tuesday 24 November, 9.30am - 1pm**.

To book your place, please RSVP to Ellen Storarr, WRC Development Officer, at [ellen@wrc.org.uk](mailto:ellen@wrc.org.uk) or 020 7324 3030 with any dietary or access requirements.

The consultation will cover the following key questions:

1. Given the current pressures on funding, would it be preferable to have more services provided, with the money stretched more thinly, or to have fewer services with each service receiving a bit more money? Or are the current funding levels preferable?
2. What evidence do we have for the importance of preserving the VAW budget, especially in the face of increased competition for funds from areas such as youth crime and employment?
3. What evidence do we have for the importance and benefit of pan-London funding, as opposed to borough-by-borough funding?

The results of these discussions will then be compiled by WRC and presented to London Councils.

- *Attend London Councils public events throughout London*

Organised by London Councils and happening throughout November and December 2009. For details, visit:

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/grants/news/pressdetail.htm?pk=812>

## **Why is it important to be involved in the consultation process?**

There are serious financial pressures on local authorities that may affect the Grants budget – no funding is safe.

**London Councils has indicated that the number of priority areas may decrease** – there are currently 59 under 12 themes<sup>2</sup>. **Some service areas may merge, others may be lost. If new areas for commissioning are identified, current priorities are likely to be lost**

This is an opportunity for the sector to make the case for prioritising a VAW budget, in the face of competition from other issues that maybe higher up the political agenda, such as addressing the employment impacts of the recession.

It is vital that London's women's sector delivers a strong response throughout all stages of the consultation so that we can try and influence key decisions about future funding.

Also, it's important that London Councils hears from as wide a range of organisations as possible about the added value of London Councils commissioning

## **Who should be involved in the consultation?**

- Organisations that are already commissioned – you can help to inform the process by providing evidence of the value of the work currently commissioned
- The wider sector (including organisations looking to be commissioned in the future) – identifying gaps in service provision, as well as areas for new and continued work

## **About 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

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<sup>2</sup> Children and young people; Crime reduction; Culture, tourism and London 2012; Environment, planning, transport and sustainability; Generic second tier; Health and social care; Health and Safety; Homelessness; Legal and advice; Policy and voice; Poverty and European Social Fund; Violent crime

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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