

## **The importance of Pan-London funding for violence against women and children services in London**

In the 25 years since the start of the London Councils (LC) grants scheme, LC has become one of the biggest funders of London's voluntary and community sector (VCS). It is also a unique funder of the violence against women (VAW) and children sector, as it spends 12.7% (£3,349,997) of its annual £26.4m budget on frontline violence against women and children services for some of the most vulnerable in our society. In addition to this, policy and voice and second tier activities are also funded with a budget of £300,000 per year and these services enable front line services to better carry out their work through training, lobbying and other support.

The possibility of 'repatriation' of a substantial portion of the grants budget to local authorities is very worrying and has far-reaching consequences for the future of services for Londoners and the legacy of the grants scheme itself.

## **Why is Pan-London funding essential for violence against women and children services?**

1. **Violence against women holds no boundaries.** As women flee their homes and seek sanctuary in other boroughs, anonymity assists them and their families to rebuild their lives and escape abusive partners. In many cases, women fleeing violence access services in more than one borough before finally finding safety
2. **It is the most cost-effective way of funding co-ordinated, specialist and needs-driven services for all boroughs.** The economies of scale of employing workers to work across London, rather than in each individual borough are significant

In 2009/10, LC-funded violence against women and children services provided support to 95,769 women and children at a cost of £3,529,997 which works out as approximately £36.86 per client, per intervention

Much of the services from violence against women and children services work to lessen the future impact of violence on survivors

- The financial cost of sexual violence to UK society in 2003-4 was £8.5 billion<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government (2007), *Cross-government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse*, Home Office: London <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexual-violence-action-plan2835.pdf?view=Binary>

- The annual cost to the UK of domestic violence has been estimated at £20 billion<sup>2</sup>
- Each incident of rape and its ensuing problems cost the state £76,000<sup>3</sup>

Much of these baseline costs are related to lost economic output, cost to the health service, social services, housing and the criminal justice system<sup>4</sup>. Any work done by the women's sector to prevent instances of rape and to mitigate its devastating effects results in a direct saving for statutory services across London

3. **Pan-London funding provides access to specialist services for some of the most marginalised communities and these specialist services are available in all individual boroughs**

The Women Together Against Abuse Partnership, a ground-breaking multi-agency response to domestic violence, would not have been possible without LC funding as these organisations are based in a number of different boroughs. The partnership's range of specialisms means that it is able to respond to the individual needs of London's different communities in a co-ordinated and cost-effective way

4. **Local funding is unreliable and leads to a postcode lottery for the most vulnerable women and children**

5. **Pan-London funding has a significant positive impact on delivering VAW strategies at national, regional and local level**, as well as other strategies around child poverty and homelessness

6. **LC funds some of the most creative and innovative VAW services in the UK**. This investment means that best practice and innovation can then be shared, benefitting not just Londoners but the UK as a whole

7. **VAW services are stronger when boroughs act together and synchronisation creates greater impact**. Pan-London funding offers an opportunity to holistically address the causes and consequences of VAW and can facilitate partnership working to increase effectiveness

8. **London's VAW sector offers a vast wealth of expertise, which statutory services rely upon heavily**. A loss in these organisations and their services will leave statutory services without the referral pathways which they currently rely upon

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. and S Walby (2004), *The Cost of Domestic Violence*, Women and Equality Unit: London  
<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/papers/walby-costdomesticviolence.pdf>

## **What would be the impact of withdrawing funding from LC-funded VAW services?**

1. **Women and children who are victims of violence and abuse would find themselves unsupported**, caught between seeking safety and the constraints and variability of local funding
2. **Increased demand and cost for local statutory services**, as fewer women and children would have access to early interventions and instead will rely upon oversubscribed statutory provision
3. **Statutory services would no longer have the services they currently rely upon for referrals**
4. **Local authorities will have to pay more than they currently do for services**, to ensure that they have appropriate levels of service provision for their residents, but will have to provide this without the economies of scale of pan-London funding
5. **Local authorities will have to ensure that they fulfil their obligations under the Equality Act**, which will include funding adequate specialist service provision in their own borough
6. **Partnership working and innovation will be hindered**, the constraints of borough boundaries mean that multi-agency, specialist response will not be able to work as effectively
7. **Women's organisations may be forced to close or reduce in size significantly**, meaning that London's VCS will be reduced in size at a time when they are being relied upon for delivery of national strategy and whilst facing even greater demands for their services and expertise. The uncertain future of many other funding streams, including government and grant funding, means that the survival of the sector is at risk

## **The consultation process**

We have generally been satisfied with LC's approach to consultation. However, the current consultation on the future of the grants scheme is a great disappointment and extremely worrying. We urge London Councils to look once again at the fairness and legality of this process. We draw attention to the following problems in the deeply flawed consultation process (full details are available in the full response)

1. **There is no indication that adequate equalities impact assessments (EIAs) are being carried out on any decisions concerning the future of the Grants Scheme**
2. **The consultation period runs from 3 September to 10 November, and so is only 9 weeks long**

3. **There is evidence of predetermined decision making, despite the public consultation process**
4. **The designation of services into categories A, B and C (i.e. those best delivered regionally, sub-regionally and locally) does not appear to have been based on an open decision-making process nor any clear logic**

***For full details, please see the full interim consultation response.***