



Consultation response

The London Development Agency Draft Investment Strategy 2010-2013

Submitted to the London Development Agency

13th January 2010

Understanding and supporting
women and their organisations

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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 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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Introduction

As the LDA sets forward its strategy for economic recovery, it faces the difficult task of delivering results using limited resources. In its quest to obtain 'value for money' the LDA must focus beyond reducing unit costs and consider the social value of investment to maximise the money it spends. The LDA and the services it invests in should promote equality in commissioning processes and commission intelligently to allow flexibility in meeting needs.

The LDA's strategy lacks gender analysis and examination of the impact of its proposed plans on women. The document sets out a framework for achieving its economic aims, however it contains insufficient detail on how it intends to achieve them. Solely focusing on the supply of labour, the LDA strategy ignores barriers to women's entry into employment. To successfully achieve its objectives the LDA must demonstrate from the outset, a robust understanding of the diversity and complexity of women's needs, and address the causes of gender inequality. To assist women into employment and increase economic productivity the LDA must provide policy solutions that tackle both practical problems and the structural inequalities women face. Job opportunities must be accompanied by adequate wages in order to help improve the lives of women. Paid work must be supplemented by a combination of financial support through adequate benefits, good public services and affordable childcare to help lift women and their children out of poverty.

We believe that women's voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) can be a valuable partner in the delivery of the LDA's plans and we are disappointed the strategy does not acknowledge the crucial role of the third sector. Embedded in communities, women's VCOs have an unparalleled ability to access hard to reach groups and are experts at providing programmes that serve and are sensitive to women's needs. Women's VCOs can play a vital part in tackling the causes and consequences of poverty and provide routes into employment via volunteering and offering training and skills opportunities. As the cornerstone for a successful strategy, the LDA must seek to promote diversity and equality in all its programmes and conduct equality impact assessments at all stages.

Commissioning processes

Proposals to commission both fewer and larger projects present the problematic prospect of reducing the opportunities for the involvement of smaller VCOs in public service delivery. Embedded at grass roots level smaller VCOs cater to the diverse needs of communities and possess valuable knowledge and expertise which can be utilised by the LDA. Due to limited time and financial resources smaller VCOs often lack the capacity to compete for large contracts; to ensure that the LDA selects the best service provider it must foster opportunities for all organisations to compete for its funding. Suitable measures the LDA can take to remedy inequalities include allowing larger periods of time for expression of interest on contracts to allow smaller VCOs to mobilise themselves and form partnerships with other groups where necessary.

To provide innovative solutions to London's challenges the LDA must engage service users and VCOs in both planning and commissioning processes. Effective service delivery is dependent upon intelligent commissioning and the LDA should adopt a funding mix (an assortment of grants and commissioning) to allow flexibility and meet immediate need. Unconstrained by service specifications the use of grants gives community groups and service users a sense of autonomy and an opportunity to display creativity and design services that meet their own needs. Whilst the LDA's preference is to provide 'payment by results' this is not suitable in all instances as it may reduce the flexibility granted to community groups and their capacity to mould services to shifting needs.

Allowing smaller VCOs an opportunity to compete for funding is an important tool in promoting diversity and providing services which more effectively meet women's needs. Diversity is under threat as political bodies seek to save money during the recession; as they are more inclined to contract larger organisations to provide generalised services in an effort to promote savings. As the LDA seeks to put 'economic analysis at the heart of investment planning', we insist it must extend its outlook to ensure its consideration of the social contribution of services and adopt a broad concept of 'value'. As an important part of commissioning processes, we ask that the LDA provides an explicit definition of 'value for money' in line with Treasury guidelines.

As the LDA seeks to maximise value for money, it will need to invest resources where it has the most effect. Analysis of the social return on investment will allow the LDA to have a holistic understanding of the impact of investments through assessing social, environmental and economic costs and benefits. Contributions of organisations cannot be solely captured by rigorous monetary evaluations and examination of SROI will allow organisations to demonstrate the positive externalities of their work; such as cross departmental/cross portfolio savings. As shown by SROI research conducted by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) VCOs often yield greater value than the initial level of investment they receive. For example, analysis of the Asha Centre (an organisation which supports female offenders to fulfill their potential) has shown that 'for every £1 invested into alternatives to prison; £14 of social value is generated to women and their children, victims and society over 10 years.'

We are extremely pleased that the LDA has emphasised sustainability as a central theme of its strategy. Problems such as poverty can affect women throughout their lifecycles so sustainable solutions are an important component in taking and keeping Londoners out of poverty. In areas such as employment intended results will not be instant and soft outcomes such as raising individual's self esteem will play an important role in integrating individuals into the labour market. When examining the success of the strategy; the LDA should employ an assortment of indicators to signpost progression towards its goals.

Value of VCOs

The role of the third sector is unacknowledged in the LDA Investment strategy. The document briefly refers to forging partnerships with local organisations but fails to state the importance of VCOs as service delivery partners. For the future implementation of its plans, it is imperative that VCOs are embedded and explicitly named throughout the strategy.

As the LDA seeks to achieve its objectives of increasing entry into employment and extending opportunity to all Londoner's; women's VCOs can play a vital role in reaching those furthest away from the labour market. Women's VCOs are experts at meeting women's need and organisations that are led 'by and for' women are an effective model of service delivery. Organisations that are led 'by and for' women have higher levels of effectiveness in providing culturally appropriate programmes. Women's VCOs possess extensive knowledge and are a valuable resource in understanding the causes and consequences of female disadvantage. To successfully achieve its economic objectives the LDA must demonstrate, from the outset, a robust understanding of women's employment inequality. We strongly encourage the LDA to engage with women's VCOs. Equality and diversity should provide the centerpiece for the LDA strategy and women's VCOs are a vital way of understanding the diverse and complex needs of women.

In addition to being a service provider the voluntary sector is a major employer in London. Disproportionately focusing on the importance of promoting London's financial industry, the LDA has also ignored the third sector's contribution to London's economy. The third sector employs 10% of London's workforce and we recommend that the LDA also promotes the third sector as part of the global appeal of businesses investing in the capital and acknowledges that London has a world-class third sector.

Understanding disadvantage

A recurrent theme in the LDA's strategy is the use of objectives to help the most disadvantaged in London's population. Whilst we warmly welcome these proposals we believe that acknowledging the gendered nature of this issue and its disproportionate effects on women is an important part of allocating resources appropriately. To ensure effective service delivery the LDA must understand the causes and consequences of women poverty and design its strategies accordingly to address these problems.

The LDA strategy expressly mentions child poverty but fails to acknowledge that female poverty and child poverty is intertwined. Research conducted by the Fawcett Society estimates that mothers low incomes is the source of 70% of child poverty¹. Lone mothers in particular are more susceptible to deprivation due to a lack of financial support from a partner; and are more likely to be reliant on public benefits such as income support². Labelled the 'managers of poverty', women often shoulder the main effects of poverty and deny themselves basics to protect their children from its impact³. Women's increased financial responsibilities for family income may also mean that they are more likely to undertake informal work and be vulnerable to exploitation as a means to support children.⁴ Poverty can present an increased likelihood of social exclusion and stress created by financial strain can have detrimental effects on women's physical and mental health⁵. Individuals experiencing poverty can often become entrapped in a tautological cycle of the

¹ Fawcett Society, *Fawcett Launches New Campaign: 'Keeping Mum'*, 12th May 2008
<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=658>

² Greater London Authority, *Women in London's Economy*, February 2008, p14

http://www.london.gov.uk/MAYOR/economic_unit/docs/womenlondoneconomy2008.pdf

³ Women's Budget Group, *Women's and Children's Poverty: Making the Links*, March 2005, p3

<http://www.wbg.org.uk/documents/WBGWomensandchildrenspoverty.pdf>

⁴ TUC, *Women and the Recession, January 2009: How will the recession affect women at work?* TUC, p7

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenandrecession.pdf>

causes and consequences of poverty which hinder their lives and their ability to lift themselves out of financial hardship⁶.

Analysis of ethnicity is an integral feature in addressing and examining women's poverty, '40% of ethnic minority women live in poverty'⁷ and this is matched by corresponding experiences by their children⁸. Deprivation levels differ significantly between ethnic groups and indicate the diversity of the female experience. Compounded by racial and sexual discrimination, ethnic minority women experience disadvantage in the labour market and remain overrepresented in low skilled employment⁹. For many women cultural and language barriers can impede their access to public services to support them and their needs often remain unacknowledged by mainstream providers¹⁰. To successfully address women's poverty the LDA must acknowledge the diversity of the female experience and engage users in the design and delivery of services. To tackle women's poverty the LDA must seek to remove structural inequalities such as racial disadvantage and recognize the need for minority women to run their own specific services to meet their individual needs. Failure to address the causes of female underemployment promotes economic inefficiency due to the misuse of women's skills; promoting equality will help increase productivity and the overall competitiveness of London's workforce.

Women's VCOs are a vital gateway into accessing ethnic minority communities, and services that are led 'by and for' women are an effective way of increasing effective service delivery as staff have greater cultural sensitivity and greater success in reaching members of their

⁵ Women's Budget Group, *Women's and Children's Poverty: Making the Links*, March 2005, piii

<http://www.wbg.org.uk/documents/WBGWomensandchildrenspoverty.pdf>

⁶ Women's Budget Group, *Women's and Children's Poverty: Making the Links*, March 2005, p3

<http://www.wbg.org.uk/documents/WBGWomensandchildrenspoverty.pdf>

⁷ Poverty pathways: ethnic minority women's livelihoods, Zohra Moosa with Jessica Woodroffe, Oxfam and the Fawcett Society, June 2009. <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Povertypathways.pdf>

⁸ Poverty pathways: ethnic minority women's livelihoods, Zohra Moosa with Jessica Woodroffe, Oxfam and the Fawcett Society, June 2009. <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Povertypathways.pdf>

⁹ Poverty pathways: ethnic minority women's livelihoods, Zohra Moosa with Jessica Woodroffe, Oxfam and the Fawcett Society, June 2009. <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Povertypathways.pdf>

¹⁰ The provision of affordable childcare Problems in the delivery of benefits, tax credits and employment services, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 26 June 200, p16 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/problems-delivery-benefits-tax-credits-and-employment-services>

communities¹¹. Holistically addressing the sources of women's poverty; VCOs provide a supportive environment in which women can discuss more sinister causes of their financial disadvantage such as abusive relationships. Women's groups can provide a forum for the personal development and empowerment of females and provide routes into employment by raising women's confidence¹². Volunteering opportunities created by VCOs can also increase readiness for work; Women's Resource Centre studies have shown that 11% of Chief Executives in their member organisations started out as service users¹³.

As the LDA seeks to regenerate deprived areas, we believe that women's VCOs can play an important role as intermediaries bringing together local communities and the LDA. The LDA strategy states that they 'own and can purchase significant land assets and use them as leverage to drive wider development and create better places'. We would welcome further details on how the LDA plans to shape and support development of London's most deprived areas.

Extending opportunity to all

The LDA strategy seeks to give all Londoners the opportunity to take part in London's economic success, access sustainable employment and progress in their careers. To achieve its objectives the LDA must promote equality and seek to understand the diversity and complexity of women's needs. To increase the level of women in employment the LDA must directly address the following practical barriers to female participation in the labour market:

¹¹ Women's Resource Centre, Why Women? Report, March 2006, p47

http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/w/wrcwhywomenreport.pdf

¹² Women's Resource Centre, Why Women? Report, March 2006,

http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/w/wrcwhywomenreport.pdf

¹³ Women's Resource Centre, Why Women? Report, March 2006,

http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/w/wrcwhywomenreport.pdf

Access to childcare

Having children significantly affects women's labour market participation; women with children are less likely to be employed than those without children and the accessibility of affordable childcare can limit their employment opportunities¹⁴. In many households domestic duties such as child care and housework are still seen as women's responsibility and more women may choose part-time or flexible employment as a way of balancing paid work with domestic responsibilities¹⁵. This may limit the roles they will apply for and decrease the number of suitable jobs available to them¹⁶. To alleviate women of childcare responsibilities and promote greater equality; the LDA must encourage employers across all industries to extend their levels of flexible working practices to men and women. This action will allow parents to shape their work patterns to accommodate childcare and will be an important step towards tackling the inequitable division of labour within the home.

The Daycare Trust Child Cost Survey for January 2009 shows that the typical cost of a full-time nursery place for a child under two in Inner London is £226 a week; approximately a third more than the English regional average of £167¹⁷. For women with limited access to informal childcare resources such as extended family, incentives to enter work are often reduced by the high cost of childcare as well as the high cost of living within the capital.¹⁸ To increase the level of mothers in employment the LDA must address the disparity between the cost of living and level of wages within London to create significant change.

¹⁴ Office of National Statistics; Gender: Work and Family, 6 September 2008
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1655>

¹⁵ TUC, *Women and the Recession, January 2009: How will the recession affect women at work?* TUC, p8
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenandrecession.pdf>

¹⁶ TUC, *Women and the Recession, January 2009: How will the recession affect women at work?* TUC, p8
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenandrecession.pdf>

¹⁷ Daycare Trust, Child Cost Survey 2009,
http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/data/files/Policy/costs_survey_2009.pdf

¹⁸ Greater London Authority, *Women in London's Economy*, February 2008, p9,
http://www.london.gov.uk/MAYOR/economic_unit/docs/womenlondoneconomy2008.pdf

Benefits

Provision of adequate benefits plays an essential role in alleviating the poverty of families most in need. For women with limited access to informal childcare resources such as extended family, incentives to enter work are often reduced by the high cost of childcare as well as the high cost of living within the capital.¹⁹ Benefits can supplement women's wages and provide financial incentives for women to enter employment. Studies by the Daycare Trust have highlighted the importance of providing greater benefits to families whose children who have disabilities²⁰. Parents who care for a disabled child experience higher difficulty in securing suitable childcare for their children and due to increased care needs their childcare can effect their employment²¹. Women who have larger families also similarly experience the need for greater benefits as the same rate of child benefit is not received for all children, and younger children do not receive the same as the oldest child²².

Women's VCOs can play an important role in accessing hard to reach groups and dispensing information to women about financial assistance available to them. VCOs can help individuals to surmount problems such as language barriers and navigate them through the complex system of benefits to ensure they acquire the help that they need. Studies by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on problems in service delivery of benefits and tax credits indicates that new communities often face practical and personal barriers such as a lack of information, lack of time to participate due to working hours and barriers to their recognition²³. Women's organisations can play an important role in closing these gaps in knowledge and can assist the increased political participation of new communities to ensure acknowledgement of their needs.

¹⁹ Greater London Authority, Women in London's Economy, February 2008, P9,

http://www.london.gov.uk/MAYOR/economic_unit/docs/womenlondoneconomy2008.pdf

²⁰ Daycare Trust and London Development Agency, Listening to parents of children with disabilities and special educational needs,. http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/data/files/Research/Mayor_listening_to_parents_report.pdf

²¹ Daycare Trust and London Development Agency, Listening to parents of children with disabilities and special educational needs,. http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/data/files/Research/Mayor_listening_to_parents_report.pdf

²² Child Poverty Action Group, Make Child Benefit Count, <http://www.cpag.org.uk/press/171106.htm>

²³ The provision of affordable childcare Problems in the delivery of benefits, tax credits and employment services, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 26 June 2008 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/problems-delivery-benefits-tax-credits-and-employment-services>

To ensure that financial aid reaches its recipients, the LDA must consider the importance of the standards of its written communications and ensure that it engages with grassroots community organisations to ensure that this information is delivered. Studies by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on problems in service delivery of benefits and tax credits indicates that new communities often face practical and personal barriers such as a lack of information, lack of time to participate due to working hours and barriers to their recognition²⁴. Women's organisations can play an important role in closing these gaps in knowledge and can assist the increased political participation of new communities to ensure acknowledgement of their needs.

Problems within employment

As the LDA seeks to increase the productivity of London's economy, the entry of workless women into employment poses the largest potential increase of workers into London's labour force. Promotion of equality to facilitate female participation in employment is underlined by a clear business case for increasing economic efficiency by using an untapped resource of women's skills and providing London's employers with a broad range of skilled workers.

Whilst we support the LDA's emphasis upon sustainable employment it is vital to note that work is not always sufficient to lift families out of poverty due to low wages. Labelled as a 'poverty threshold wage'²⁵ by the GLA; almost half (47%) of all part-time staff working in London and 15% of full-time workers are still paid less than the London Living Allowance of

²⁴ The provision of affordable childcare Problems in the delivery of benefits, tax credits and employment services, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 26 June 2008 <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/problems-delivery-benefits-tax-credits-and-employment-services>

²⁵ GLA Economics Living Wage Unit, *A Fairer London: The 2009 Living Wage in London*, 2009 http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/docs/living-wage-2009.pdf

£7.60²⁶. Women are largely represented in part-time roles²⁷ and often work in areas of the service sector where the living wage is not in place²⁸. We encourage the LDA to campaign on this issue and stress to industry the social and business cases for paying the living wage and improving the quality of life of Londoners. The LDA should ensure that the London living wage is included in procurement practices and ensure contractors to pay employees an adequate wage.

In order to effectively assist women into employment the LDA must promote equality and provide policy solutions that tackle practical structural inequalities that women face within the workplace. To fully extend opportunity to all women the LDA must acknowledge the diversity of female experience and multiple forms of discrimination that compound women's disadvantage.

Skills training

A central component of the LDA strategy is to provide skills training to increase individual's access to employment and promote career progression. Whilst it is positive that the LDA plans to provide training its plans feature apprentice schemes which are particularly gendered and mirror larger trends of inequality found in the broader labour market²⁹.

The gender pay gap in apprenticeships is 26%, and women are more likely to be in lower level apprenticeships and receive lower pay³⁰. Women remain heavily underrepresented in professions involving manual trades and technology and in 2006/2007 accounted for just

²⁶ GLA Economics Living Wage Unit, *A Fairer London: The 2009 Living Wage in London*, 2009
http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/economic_unit/docs/living-wage-2009.pdf

²⁷ Office for National Statistics, 16 December 2009, Labour Market-Employment Statistics,
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?ID=12>
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenandrecession.pdf>

²⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Low pay, household resources and poverty, 17 November 2004, p13
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/1859352588.pdf>

²⁹ Still (more) better paid jobs for the boys, Apprenticeships and gender segregation. TUC 2008
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderreport.pdf>

³⁰ Still (more) better paid jobs for the boys, Apprenticeships and gender segregation. TUC 2008
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderreport.pdf>

2.5% of engineering apprentices whilst comprising 97.1 per cent of apprentices studying children's care³¹.

Traditionally apprenticeships have been catered towards males and 'while a significant number of apprenticeship places have opened up for women, this is not the case in the traditionally male dominated sectors, which also tend to be higher paid'³². The small levels of women entering science, engineering and technology exacerbate skills shortages in these sectors and diminish the productivity of organisations and reduce their competitiveness in the global market³³.

To enhance economic productivity the LDA must promote gender equality to ensure the supply of a skilled workforce to meet business demand. As the precursor to full paid employment the LDA should tackle gender inequality in apprenticeships. Occupational segregation in training programmes will perpetuate gender divisions in the wider labour market and unequal pay will reinforce the financial disadvantage of women.

The LDA states that it has room to innovate and improve the way employment and skills programmes are developed as it is not tied to national programmes or rigid delivery and procurement models. We encourage the LDA to demonstrate best practice and pro-actively promote and encourage women's engagement in apprenticeships across a more diverse range of industries and promote their entry into apprenticeships where women are particularly underrepresented. We recommend that the LDA utilises the opportunity provided by the Olympics to encourage the entry of women into apprentice opportunities available in construction.

Women's VCOs can play an essential role in providing training and employment opportunities for women who are on long term benefits. Integrating those who are furthest

³¹ Still (more) better paid jobs for the boys, Apprenticeships and gender segregation. TUC 2008 <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderreport.pdf>

³² Still (more) better paid jobs for the boys, Apprenticeships and gender segregation. TUC 2008 <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderreport.pdf>, p2

³³ National Skills Forum, Closing the gender skills gap, A National Skills Forum report on women, skills and productivity, February 2009. http://www.policyconnect.org.uk/docs/content/closing_the_gender_skills_gap-1.pdf

from the labour market, women's organisations can also provide a vital role in increasing women's skills and supporting them into employment³⁴.

Inequality in employment

Throughout the UK women are paid 16.4%³⁵ less than men and in sectors such as financial services the gap is far higher³⁶. Whilst women outperform men at all levels of education³⁷ they still remain largely clustered into a relatively narrow range of lower level (often low-paying) occupations³⁸. To enhance the city's competitiveness the LDA must harness female talent and close the gap between their educational attainment and achievements in employment. As London prepares to promote its self as a global centre for business the issue of occupational segregation and empowering women to promote economic engagement becomes ever more important.

At present the LDA's planned interventions to provide business support and encourage business growth within London stand to disproportionately and more directly benefit men. Nearly three quarters of the 3.8 million self employed people in 2008 were men, a proportion that has remained the same since early 1997³⁹. To extend opportunity to the entire population the LDA must ensure that women have a chance to share in this economic prosperity and that policies promote gender equality and create more opportunity for women to establish their own businesses.

³⁴ Women's Resource Centre, Why Women? Report, March 2006,
http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/w/wrcwhywomenreport.pdf

³⁵ Office for National Statistics, Gender Pay Gap, 12 November 2009,
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ccj/nugget.asp?id=167>

³⁶ Equality and Human Rights Commission 2009, Employment and Earnings in the Financial Sector: A Gender Analysis,
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/download__finance_gender_analysis_research.pdf

³⁷ Office for National Statistics, Gender-Education, November 2007
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/ccj/nugget.asp?id=434>

³⁸ TUC, *Women and the Recession, January 2009: How will the recession affect women at work?* TUC, p8
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenandrecession.pdf>

³⁹ Office for National Statistics, Gender-Working Lives, 26 September 2008
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=1654>

The promotion of equality has clear economic benefits and by addressing female underemployment women's existing skills can be capitalized upon. Refugees and asylum seekers in London are a key example of a pool of female talent that remains largely untapped. For women whom English is not their first language, language barriers may obstruct them from translating their existing skills into employment⁴⁰. For many migrant communities a lack of recognition of foreign qualifications in professions can also impede entry into their former fields of work⁴¹. To invest money most effectively the LDA must ensure that greater employment support is provided to refugees and that professionals such as doctors are granted the opportunity to qualify to practice in the UK. These women can be used to meet skills shortages in London's industries and allow businesses to select from a broader skilled workforce.

Studies by the Women and Work Commission have highlighted discrimination against women in recruitment⁴² and over 30,000 women every year lose their jobs as a result of pregnancy discrimination⁴³. For many women gender discrimination is compounded by intersectional discrimination due to additional parts of their identity such as age, race, disability and sexual orientation⁴⁴. TUC studies on race indicate that despite having high level of qualifications black women in particular experience discrimination throughout all stages of employment and are more vulnerable to dismissal than most groups.⁴⁵

Action against discrimination is essential to ensuring equality of opportunity for Londoners. As the LDA seeks to promote London as one of the world's most diverse cities, it is

⁴⁰ Mayor of London, Missed opportunities: A skills audit of refugee women in London from the teaching, nursing and medical professions, December 2002. Pi-pii
http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/refugees/docs/skills_rpt.pdf

⁴¹ Mayor of London, Missed opportunities: A skills audit of refugee women in London from the teaching, nursing and medical professions, December 2002. Pi-pii
http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/refugees/docs/skills_rpt.pdf

⁴² Recruitment Employment Confederation, 2005, cited in Women and Work Commission, 2006, *Shaping a Fairer Future*, p. 29.

⁴³ Fawcett Society, Pregnancy Discrimination, 2009 <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=644>

⁴⁴ Equalities Commission, 2007, Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of The Equalities Review, p64
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/28_02_07_equality.pdf

⁴⁵ Thiranagama, Narmada, 2009, The Single Equality Bill and Employment: What it Means for Racial Equality, inside ROTA, 2009, Policy & Race, Issue 2: The Single Equality Bill and Race Equality. September 2009.

imperative that all members of London's communities have equal opportunity to participate in employment.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The WRC welcomes the LDA's draft investment strategy although we have some key concerns. We recommend that the LDA:

- Commissions services intelligently and facilitates opportunities for smaller VCOs to compete for funding.
- Provides an explicit definition of 'value for money' in line with Treasury guidelines;
- Promotes equality and diversity throughout its strategy and conducts equality impact assessments at all stages;
- Recognises the diversity of female experience and the unique role of women's VCOs in meeting women's needs;
- Utilises the expertise of Women's VCOs and recognize their role in assisting women out of poverty and into employment,
- Assists women into employment by providing adequate wages and benefits, good public services and access to affordable childcare;
- Provides sustainable solutions to address the multiple forms of disadvantage which women face; and
- Addresses issues of female unemployment and underemployment, capitalise on their skills and encourage them to reach their full potential.

