



Factsheet: Women and The Cuts

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Understanding and supporting
women and their organisations

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About the Women's Resource Centre

WRC is a unique 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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Women and The Cuts

This factsheet aims to provide an overview of the cuts and key policy changes that will affect public spending by the Lib-Dem/Conservative coalition government. These figures will highlight the impact of the cuts on the wider voluntary and community sector, women's organisations and individual women in the UK.

Key cuts – an overview

May 2010 - Emergency Budget:

- Child benefit rate frozen for the next 3 years;
- Housing benefit capped at £400 per week;
- Health in pregnancy grant abolished and Sure Start grant restricted to first child only;
- Child benefits cut to those who earn more than £44,000 annually.

October 2010 - Comprehensive Spending Review:

- An average 19% cut from central government departmental budgets;
- Yearly reduction of 7.1% in funding to local authorities;
- Removal of ring-fenced funding streams (except for education and health);
- At least 490,000 jobs to be cut from the public sector;
- A total of £18bn to be cut from welfare bill by 2015;
- Retirement age for women to rise to 66 by 2020;
- VAT increase from 17.5% to 20%.

Further cuts and policy changes:

- Legal aid reforms, including the restriction of eligibility criteria for legal aid, which is expected to save £350m;
- National Health Service reforms, including the planned closure of all Primary Care Trusts, to be replaced by GP commissioning consortia;
- Cuts to funding for free English as a second language (ESOL) lessons for immigrants claiming benefits;
- Abolition of the Women's National Commission as part of the 'bonfire of the quangos' in December 2010;
- Introduction of the Equality Act in April 2011, which brings together the Gender, Race and Disability Duties in to one piece of legislation.

Impact

Although a large number of the cuts have already been announced, many of the planned reforms have only been implemented since the beginning of the new

financial year. Therefore, it is hard to know what the final financial and social impact of the cuts on women will be, but there have been a number of reports and articles that indicate the following initial statistics:

Voluntary and community sector

- Acevo estimates that charities will lose up to £4.5bn due to public spending cuts.¹
- 55% of charities expect to reduce staff numbers in the next 12 months.²
- Many local authorities have cut more than 25% in voluntary sector support for 2012.³
- To date, over 480 organisations have submitted news of funding cuts to the voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk mapping project, totalling over £75m.⁴
- In Coventry, nearly 60% of voluntary organisations have reported a decrease in funding and 55.6% expect their funding to decrease over the next three years.⁵
- 78% of the public are concerned about how cuts to public services will affect vulnerable people.⁶
- 76% of the public believe that the majority of money to protect vulnerable people in society should come from government.⁷
- Liverpool City Council announced in March that it would cut its voluntary sector budget from £37m to £19m – a 48% reductions compared to a 22% cut in the council's overall budget.⁸

Women's voluntary and community sector

- Research by WRC has found that 1 in 5 women's organisations have closed and many more face an uncertain future⁹.
- Previous research showed that 70% of women's organisations felt that being women-only made it more difficult to access funding.¹⁰
- A survey of domestic and sexual violence services by Women's Aid published in March 2011 found that 60% of refuge services and 72% of outreach services have no funding agreed from 1st April 2011¹¹.
- A WRC survey found that 64% of women's organisations are 'very concerned' about funding for the next year.¹²
- 95% of women's organisations face funding cuts/funding crisis in the next year.¹³
- Research shows that 43% of women's organisations are small with an annual income of less than £100,000.¹⁴
- 52% of women's organisations believe the cuts will lead to a restriction on the services they can provide; 25% believe it will lead to the closure of their organisation.¹⁵
- Due to the effect of the cuts on domestic and sexual violence services, it is expected that over 70,000 women may not be able to access a service after April 2011, putting more lives at risk.¹⁶
- The number of domestic violence services that exist represent just 75% of the number recommended 35 years ago by a government select committee.¹⁷

- 51.4% of women's organisations surveyed are responding to the cuts by fundraising; 35.1% are lobbying local/national government.¹⁸
- Social Return on Investment research shows that women's organisations can generate as much as £14 of social value for every £1 invested in services.¹⁹

Women, welfare and poverty

- The House of Commons Library analysis of the Comprehensive Spending Review has found that women will suffer 72% of the tax and benefit cuts proposed by the Emergency Budget.²⁰
- It is expected that 60% of single women, many of whom are lone parents, will receive less housing benefit under the housing benefit cap, compared to 3% of single men.²¹
- Almost 2.1 million pensioners living in poverty are women.²²
- 930,000 households will be affected by reforms to housing benefit; around 450,000 of these households will be families with children.²³
- The National Housing Foundation has warned that benefit reductions could put 200,00 people at risk of losing their homes.²⁴
- By 2014/5, lone mothers will lose public services worth 18.5% of their income, compared to 6.8% for the average household.²⁵
- Lone parents will lose services worth £1900 each year due to the spending cuts.²⁶ 92% of lone parents are women.²⁷
- Cuts to housing benefits will have a disproportionate effect on women: in 2010 46% of housing benefit claimants were single women, compared to 20% couples and 33% men.²⁸
- 57% of those likely to be affected by proposed changes to legal aid are women, compared to 43% men.²⁹
- 65% of those who will lose legal aid for family law cases are women; this increases to 73% of education cases.³⁰
- The cuts will have a greater impact on Black and Minority Ethnic women: 40% of ethnic minority women live in poverty, twice the proportion of White women.³¹

Women's health

- 77% of GPs have reported that Primary Care Trusts are restricting access to IVF treatment, amongst other procedures, to save money.³²
- A survey of mothers using Sure Start centres, carried out in February by the Daycare Trust charity, found that 35% felt that the removal or reduction of services would leave them more socially isolated, and 32% felt it would be harder to see their midwife or health visitor.³³
- Cuts to carers allowance will disproportionately affect women: 58% of carers and 74% of current carers allowance claimants are women.³⁴

Women's education

- Cuts to funding for mature students will affect women disproportionately: 56% of learners aged 25 and over are women.³⁵

- 53% of students will no longer be eligible for free ESOL learning, of which 74% will be women.³⁶
- The London Economics Consultancy has estimated that with the new rates of university tuition fees, 70-80% of women students will not be able to pay off their student loans in the thirty years after they graduate.³⁷

Women's employment

- Nearly 40% of women's jobs nationally are in the public sector – in some regions this increases to as much as 50%.³⁸ The Office for Budget Responsibility have estimated that 600,000 public sector jobs will be lost by 2016.³⁹
- It is estimated that of the 500,000 public sector workers that will be made unemployed due to the spending cuts, 325,000 will be women.⁴⁰
- 45,000 jobs were lost in the public sector in the last quarter of 2010.⁴¹
- 73% of remaining positions in the public sector that are subject to a pay freeze are held by women.⁴²
- Over the past year, the number of unemployed women has risen by 71,000 compared to a fall of 31,000 for men.⁴³
- The number of women claiming Jobseeker's Allowance has risen to 474,000, the highest number for 15 years.⁴⁴
- Women are more likely than men to work part time, particularly if they have dependent children. Thirty eight per cent of women with dependent children worked part time, compared with only 4 percent of men.⁴⁵
- Lone mothers are less likely to be in employment than married or cohabiting mothers.⁴⁶
- Women account for 54% of the 1.4 million workers on temporary contracts, making them more vulnerable to unemployment.⁴⁷
- Ethnic minority women are more likely than White women to be in temporary jobs.⁴⁸
- Ethnic minority women are more likely to be unemployed than ethnic minority men and white women – 52.8% of ethnic minority women are unemployed.⁴⁹
- 30% of disabled lone mothers are in employment, compared to 65% non-disabled lone mothers.⁵⁰

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² NCVO (2011), Press release: 'Charity leaders' confidence levels hit rock bottom'
<http://tinyurl.com/3juyks9>

³ Guardian (2010), 'Redundancies begin as voluntary sector feels impact of the cuts'
<http://tinyurl.com/6jlqal9>

⁴ (2011) www.voluntarysectorcuts.org.uk

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- ⁷ Ibid
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- ⁹ Women's Resource Centre (2009), *Not Just Bread, But Roses, Too: Funding to the women's voluntary and community sector in England 2004-2007* <http://tinyurl.com/3h5sx2n>
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- ²² Women's Budget Group (2010), *A Gender Impact Assessment of the Coalition Government Budget*, <http://tinyurl.com/3ng7peu>
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- ²⁷ University of Warwick (2011), *Unravelling Equality? A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Public Spending Cuts on Women in Coventry*. <http://tinyurl.com/3b3powc>
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- ²⁹ Ibid
- ³⁰ Ibid
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- ³³ Guardian (2011), 'Women and the coalition: mother's and child benefits' <http://tinyurl.com/6z2j2m9>
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⁴⁴ The Guardian(2011), 'More women join dole queue as public sector cuts bite', <http://tinyurl.com/6bte7ay>

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