



Briefing

London Councils Grants Consultation 2013-15

January 2012

Understanding and supporting
women and their organisations

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Introduction

What is the consultation asking us?

In December 2011, London Councils launched a consultation about the future of its funding programme. Specifically they want to know:

- Which of the 105 current commissions should be funded beyond the end of their fixed agreement and until the end of the 2012/13 financial year
- What principles and priorities will be applied in selecting commissions starting from 1 April 2013
- What the impact of a reduced grants programme will be on the different equalities groups

Why are they asking us?

This consultation is being undertaken within the context of a longer running exercise about the future of the grants programme in light of severe budget cuts. The amount of funding available to voluntary sector organisations is estimated to be approximately £8 million in 2013/14 – a drastic reduction of £4.5 million from the 2012/13 budget. In 2011/12 this was £20.767 million. In light of these alarmingly large reductions in sums of money, London Councils needs to reconfigure their grants programme.

An initial consultation exercise was run in autumn 2010. The way in which this exercise was conducted was criticised and brought to judicial review by service users at the Roma Support Group for what they believed to be an unfair decision-making process that meant that grants would be terminated early without proper regard to the impact on equalities groups. In February 2011, the High Court upheld their claim and stated that the consultative process was indeed unlawful because it failed to analyse the impact on equalities groups in line with their obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duties. A supplementary consultation was then published, the results of which were that those groups categorised as not A* (i.e. those organisations not meeting the principles for a London-wide programme and which did not address one or more of the Scheme's priority areas) would have their grants terminated. These grants have now been terminated.

These budget cuts are happening within the wider context of local authority cuts that are being imposed by the Government to counter the national budget deficit. These cuts have meant that while many boroughs across the country have had to impose budgetary restrictions, London boroughs have been disproportionately affected, with most having to cut over £125 per person. This is much more than other areas of the country.¹

Why do we need to respond?

London Councils is one of the largest funders of the voluntary and community sector in London. Importantly, just under £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 this consultation. VAW services need to remain on London Council's priority list otherwise they will run the**

¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/nov/16/local-authority-cuts-north-south>

risk of losing the grant opportunities that London Councils currently provides.

Consultation questions

Principles and priorities

The current priorities are:

- homelessness
- domestic violence
- poverty
- high impact crime
- specialist services
- generic second tier
- services that voice needs
- health- specialist conditions.

The current principles are:

- Commissioning services and not organisations
- Commissioning fewer services but resourcing them better
- Continuing a genuinely London-wide programme defined as: genuinely pan-London front line services; infrastructure support to service providers; capacity building service providers; voice and representation services; services where the mobility of clients is key to delivery (domestic violence, homelessness etc.); services that are particularly specialist.

The consultation asks:

- 1) Should any of these principles and priorities be amended and if so, how?
- 2) To rank the priorities in order of importance
- 3) For specific comments about the importance of each priority area
- 4) About transitional funding arrangements for those services whose grant funding ends in 2012 but their remit fits the newly determined priorities (London Councils anticipates that it will be able to fund approximately 80% of the current portfolio of commissions after the end of their fixed term agreements and until the end of the 2012/13 financial year.)
- 5) If the principles have a particular impact (positive or negative) with respect to any of the different equalities characteristics
- 6) To assess and expand upon London Council's summary of the [equality implications of any changes to the programme](#)
- 7) How the impact of a smaller grants programme on different equalities groups can be reduced
- 8) For any other comments.

Some things women's organisations should consider in their response

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

- Ranking priority areas pits different voluntary sector organisations against each other so while you would obviously rank your service area as the top priority, we would suggest further prioritisation is unnecessary and divisive (Question 3 of survey)
- What **clear evidence** do you have that demonstrates the benefit to Londoners of (VAW or other women's) services commissioned? (Questions 4-11 of survey)
- **Your own evaluation data** would be useful to demonstrate impact and value. (Questions 4-11 of survey)
- It is important to emphasis that how such **services are not replicated by existing service providers**² and your/the VAW sector's reliability on London Council's funding as part of your wider funding mix. (Questions 4-11 of survey)
- 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)?³ (Questions 4-11 and 15-23 of survey)
- What are the **cost savings**⁴ and implications for **service quality** of VAW services being funded by London Councils (i.e. pan-London), rather than individual boroughs? (Questions 4-11 of survey)

How can I get involved?

- *Complete the survey* (WRC will publish a **template response** that you can modify and use for your own organisation's submission which can be accessed from the website at the beginning of February).

Deadline for responses is **5pm, 23 March 2012**. For more information visit:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=zfiUZ%2fR4p1pFsX8SOFMI%2fxAvFD EOcEtkgbZHjLUHapc%3d>

² These resources may be useful to demonstrate how your service is not replicated by other and/or statutory services: EVAW's 2009 *Map of Gaps 2* research found that, over the last 12 months, investment in the VAW 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/data/files/map_of_gaps2.pdf

³ 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 and place local authorities under greater pressure if the voluntary sector does not fill the gap in servicing need.

<http://www.lvsc.org.uk/Templates/information.asp?NodId=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>

⁴ See WRC's 2011 report *Hidden Value: Demonstrating the extraordinary impact of women's voluntary and community organisations*

http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/h/hidden_value_wrc_sroi_report_2011_2.pdf

- *Attend WRC's event on 17 January 2012*

At this joint event we are holding with LVSC and Homeless Link we can discuss strategies to ensure that life-saving services are not threatened further by the changes to the grants programme. To book your place, please RSVP to Isabel Rodriguez Mora at IsabelM@wrc.org.uk or 020 7324 3030 with any dietary or access requirements.

- *Support WRC's additional submission*

As in the previous consultation exercise, WRC plans to submit an additional report that sets out the broader issues we feel London Councils needs to consider in terms of women's sector funding outside of the confines of the survey. This will be circulated prior to the deadline for organisations to put their name to. The more unity there is within the sector, the more weight it will hopefully carry.

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 and relevant priority areas.

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 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.

For more information about this briefing, contact:

Kiran Dhami
Policy Officer
Email: kiran@wrc.org.uk

Women's Resource Centre
Ground Floor East, 33-41 Dallington Street
London EC1V 0BB
Tel: 020 7324 3030
www.wrc.org.uk