



**Women's Resource Centre – note of oral intervention to CEDAW Pre-sessional working group for the United Kingdom & Northern Ireland, 23 July 2018**

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**England Priorities: Brexit, Austerity, Intersectionality, Capacity of women's organisations**

**Brexit**

1. The Government has been unable to assess the potential impact on women if the economy shrinks.
2. Women are overrepresented at the bottom end of the labour market, in the national minimum wage, part time work, and zero hours contracts.
3. Women working in low-skilled service sectors, especially in temporary or casual employment, are most at risk if employment protection and minimum wage regulations are lost.
4. The Government has no progress to report on the dismal employment rate of 48% for disabled women.

**Austerity**

5. Austerity measures are diminishing women's rights.
6. As the primary users of public services, women lose most from cuts: they are the majority of public sector workers and the main providers of unpaid work when public services are cut.
7. The projected budget deficit in 2019-20 as a result of the economic impacts of Brexit will be an additional £20-40 billion.<sup>1</sup>
8. If tax and spending remain constant as a proportion of GDP, public spending will be up to **£48 billion** lower by 2030.
9. If the Government **cuts** public spending in response to a fall in GDP, in the way that Governments since 2010 have done, this will widen inequality between women and men.
10. Working age welfare benefits have been **frozen** since 2015, so their real value continues to fall.
11. There is now a 'family cap' meaning that families who claim tax credits or universal credit, can no longer claim for a third or subsequent child. They have lost up to £2,780 per year.<sup>2</sup>
12. This two-child limit means up to 200,000 additional children in poverty.
13. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people of working age to help with the extra costs arising from ill health or disability from April 2013. From the outset the 2010 Government made it clear that a key aim for the new benefit was the need to make savings and reduce the working age caseload for disability benefits and expenditure by 20%,<sup>3</sup> giving expected savings of around £1.5 billion a year by 2016-17. By 2017 only around 70% of former DLA claimants were successful in claiming PIP.

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<sup>1</sup> Analysis by the IFS, quoted by WBG/Fawcett

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/71000-families-hit-two-child-limit-policy-its-first-year>

<sup>3</sup> Para 37, UK Parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee - Seventh Report

Government support towards the additional living costs of working-age disabled people  
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmworpen/1493/149305.htm>

## Intersectionality

14. The UK report fails to record routinely the impact of its policies on specific groups of women - eg those who are disabled, or BME.
15. Because they lack the **disaggregated data** to do so, or to record trends over the last four years.
16. The UK Government does not routinely publish sex equality impact assessments of its policies nor otherwise monitor progress between its examinations under CEDAW.
17. Civil society research shows that black and minority ethnic women are, on average, even more likely than white women to be vulnerable to cuts in benefits and public services and less likely to benefit from tax changes.
18. Since austerity measures were introduced in 2010 the poorest 20% of households have suffered most - with losses of up to £6,526 for BME households and £3,316 for white households.
19. The Government announced a 'hostile environment' for those with insecure migration status - this must not bar women from protection and justice. Reported hate crime increased after the Brexit referendum - by, for example, 400% in the Northumbria Police area.
20. We support Step Up Migrant Women UK's call for a firewall separating victims' rights from immigration enforcement, so that migrant women victims of violence and exploitation with insecure legal status are able to report those crimes safely, without fearing deportation. End detention of migrant women.

## Capacity of women's organisations/front line services/gender architecture

21. There is no effective gender architecture - no standing platform for consulting women across the UK, as the UK Women's National Commission was abolished in 2010.<sup>4</sup> The GEO has been ineffective in reaching out. The State Report admits that no platform is funded in England (where around 85% of UK women<sup>5</sup> live). Concluding observations (para 29) asked for Government to assess impact.
22. The funding cuts to second tier organisations that campaign for front line women's services and the gagging clauses that prevent charities speaking out freely have weakened women's voices in civil society.
23. Women's organisations are disappearing or weakened, mainly due to underfunding.
24. This disproportionately affects specialist organisations (eg disability, BME-led).
25. Example: Rape Crisis England and Wales: 179,000 clients last year but still 6,000+ on waiting lists, including more than 100 children. Out of 211 local NHS commissioning groups covering the whole of England, only 8 fund Rape Crisis services.

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<sup>4</sup> Engagement with Women across the UK Next steps, December 2010, Women's National Commission, [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110818090901/http://wnc.equalities.gov.uk/publications/doc\\_details/475-wnclegacydocumentdec10.html](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110818090901/http://wnc.equalities.gov.uk/publications/doc_details/475-wnclegacydocumentdec10.html)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>