

Cutting Women Out in Bristol

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A Report of the Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Public Sector Spending Cuts on Women in Bristol

Fawcett Society Bristol Local Group (Bristol Fawcett) October 2011

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This report is available online at

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/Economy/BristolCuttingWomenOut.pdf>

We would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed to this report, which draws extensively on the work done for the report “Unravelling Equality?” by Mary-Ann Stephenson and Dr James Harrison of Coventry Women’s Voices and the Centre for Human Rights in Practice, School of Law, University of Warwick.

Many organisations and individuals were consulted for this report. Some wish to remain anonymous. Organisations consulted include:

Awaz Utah, Bristol Advice Network, Bristol Partnership Equalities Action Group, Bristol Rape Crisis, Bristol Citizens Advice Bureau, Bristol Violence and Abuse against Women and Girls Strategic Group, Child Poverty Action Group, Bristol & Avon Chinese Women’s Group, Dhek Bhal, FOSBR, Kinergy, Learning Partnerships West, Next Link, One25, Platform51, Shelter, Trades Union Congress, Unison, University of Bristol Students’ Union, Volunteer Bristol, Voscur, Wish for a Brighter Future



We are grateful to UNISON South West for contributing to the costs of printing and distributing this report.

We are grateful to Bristol City Council Women’s Issues Network for contributing to the costs of printing and distributing this report.

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This is a summary of the key findings of the human rights and equality impact assessment (HREIA) carried out by Bristol Fawcett. The assessment is an analysis of the public spending cuts that are currently underway and their potential human rights and equality impacts on women in Bristol.

This assessment examines nine broad areas where spending cuts are likely to have an impact on women. These areas are based on the priorities identified by individual women and women's voluntary organisations with whom we consulted during the drafting of the report.

The format of this assessment is based on the report 'Unravelling Equality?' published in May 2011 by the University of Warwick and Coventry Women's Voices. 'Unravelling Equality' assessed the impact of the spending cuts on women in Coventry and highlighted human rights issues created by local changes. We are very grateful to the authors for permission to use their work and for their help and advice in developing our report.

Bristol Fawcett concludes that:

- Many of the spending cuts underway in Bristol will have a disproportionate impact on women.
- Other cuts will affect both women and men equally but will have a potentially damaging impact on certain groups of women; (for example changes to benefits for disabled people which will affect both disabled women and disabled men).

- Taken together, this will lead to greater inequality between women and men in Bristol.
- For some women the combination of cuts may have a negative impact on their human rights.

Based on this conclusion Bristol Fawcett recommends that:

- **Public authorities** have legal obligations to promote equality and not to breach human rights. In order to do this effectively they need to consider the potential impact of all budget cuts on equality and human rights, and carefully monitor the actual impact.
- **Public authorities** should take account of the combined impact of different cuts on particularly vulnerable groups in their assessments and monitoring.
- **Public authorities** should ensure that they co-ordinate their policies and practices where multiple agencies have an impact on a particular issue.
- **Public authorities** should also pay due regard to the role played by women's organisations and voluntary organisations providing services to women in tackling discrimination and in promoting women's human rights.
- **Other actors** can play important roles in monitoring impacts, campaigning, and bringing cases to courts.

The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading campaigning organisation for equality between women and men and traces its roots back to 1866, to Millicent Fawcett's peaceful struggle for women's right to vote. Fawcett's vision is of a society where women and our rights and freedoms are equally valued and respected and where we

have equal power and influence in shaping our own lives and our wider world. Bristol Fawcett has been active in the city for over a decade, campaigning and lobbying for improved services for women and girls, and bringing an informed gender equality perspective to local decision making bodies.

2. Employment

Background: Women in Bristol are more likely than the national average to be in paid work¹. The pay gap between women and men in Bristol is slightly higher than the national average pay gap.² Women form the majority of public sector workers in Bristol; for instance, 63% of City Council staff are women.³ The public sector has, so far, experienced the most severe job cuts.

The Cuts:

- Budget cuts are leading to public sector job losses in Bristol, including at Bristol City Council, Avon and Somerset Police and the MOD.
- There is a two year pay freeze across the public sector.
- The childcare tax credit is being cut from 80% to 70% of childcare costs.
- Some providers are cutting childcare provision.

The Impact: Women are likely to suffer disproportionately from job cuts and public sector pay freezes since they form the majority of public sector workers

Together with increased child care costs, this may lead to lower rates of employment for women and an increase in the pay gap. This will exacerbate overall inequality between men and women in Bristol.

3. Housing

Background: Single women (including single parents) are the main recipients of housing benefit. In Bristol around 5,097 single women compared with 3,324 single men and 2,216 women in couples are claiming Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for private rented accommodation.⁴ There is also a shortage of accommodation for single homeless women in Bristol.

The Cuts: From April 2011 there have been a number of changes to LHA including:

LHA cut to cover the bottom 30% of rents rather than bottom 50%.

LHA will be linked to Consumer Prices Index rather than local rents, meaning its value is likely to go down over time.

The Impact: Cuts to LHA will have a disproportionate impact on women since women are the main recipients.⁵ In the short term these changes will cost those affected in Bristol between £10 and £15 a week.⁶ This will lead to increased pressure on women's finances. Together with changes to other benefits and tax credits, this will increase the income gap between women and men and may push some women into poverty, raising human rights concerns.

Over time the value of LHA is likely to fall relative to actual rents, reducing the number of properties that people claiming LHA can afford. Housing in Bristol will become 'very unaffordable' to those on LHA by 2021.⁷

4. Incomes and Poverty

Background: Women in Bristol (as in the rest of the country) are poorer than men⁸ and receive on average a higher proportion of their income from benefits.⁹ 38,080 households in Bristol receive tax credits¹⁰ and 44,460 receive out of work benefits.¹¹

The Cuts and Changes: The changes to the tax and benefit system that will impact on women include:

- Cuts to benefits to pregnant women and families with new babies, freezing of child benefit, cuts to childcare tax credit and cuts to those eligible for tax credits.
- Lone parents will be required to seek work once their youngest child is 5, rather than 7 as it is now.
- Disabled people are being moved from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance and will have to be re-assessed.
- Disability Living Allowance is being cut by 20%.
- Someone caring for a person who loses Disability Living Allowance will also lose carer's allowance.
- Sanctions for people the Job Centre believes are not seeking work will become more severe.
- There has been an increase in the rate of Child Tax Credit.
- There has been an increase in the personal tax allowance.

The Impact: Although the increase in Child Tax Credit and the personal tax allowance will benefit many women, taken together the

benefit and tax changes in the 2010 budget will cost women in Bristol £44million.¹² The cost to men will be less than half of this.¹³ This will further increase inequality between women and men in Bristol. For some women this could lead to a significant loss of income, pushing those women into poverty and raising significant human rights concerns.

Lone parents, disabled women, carers and BME women are likely to be particularly badly hit by the changes.

5. Education and Training

Background: Women are likely to be disproportionately affected by some of the changes in education funding. Women's life time earnings are on average lower than men's making it harder for women meet the increased costs of studying. Women also tend to be the primary carers for children so are likely to be disproportionately affected by cuts to school budgets.

The Cuts:

- The grant received by Bristol from the Department for Education to pay for schools and colleges in Bristol has been cut by £2.6 million.
- Further education colleges are facing a 17% cut in funding.
- Education Maintenance Allowance is being replaced by a bursary scheme and funding cut from £560 million to £180 million.
- Tuition fees for higher education are set to rise. Fees at the University of West of England and Bristol University will be £9000 a year.

The Impact: The removal of EMA from 2,819 students in Bristol may discourage women,

especially teenage mothers, from continuing their education. In Bristol less than 26% of young people currently participate in Higher Education and there are areas where participation is less than 16%.

Cuts to further and higher education may:

- act as a barrier to women obtaining educational qualifications **because of increased fees for higher education and reduced support for further education courses.** This particularly affects those women who have children, are from poorer backgrounds, don't speak English and/or are mature students.
- have negative impacts on women in later life: women who are unable to obtain educational qualifications as a result of increased fees and reduced support may see their earning potential and job prospects reduced as a result.

6. Violence Against Women

Background: Violence and or abuse against women is a widespread, but often hidden, abuse of women's human rights:

- 43,340 women in Bristol are likely to be raped or sexually abused at some point in their lifetime.¹⁴
- 55,000 women in Bristol are likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime.¹⁵

The Cuts: Women experiencing violence and abuse in Bristol will be affected by a number of cuts to funding of services as well as changes to welfare benefits and legal aid funding which will affect many of them. These cuts include:

- **Services for women** experiencing violence in Bristol are under threat. Some

agencies have already lost significant funding and funding for other services is currently under review.

- **The police and Crown Prosecution Service** are both facing budget cuts which may reduce the support available to victims and survivors of violence.
- **The National Health Service** is facing a budget cut, which may reduce their capacity to respond quickly and effectively to victims of violence.
- **Cuts to legal aid** will reduce the ability of women suffering violence to get the legal help and support they need.
- **Cuts and other changes to welfare benefits** risk increasing women's financial dependency on men, making it harder for women to leave violent relationships.
- **Cuts to housing benefit** may make it harder for women to move area to get away from their attacker.

The Impact: As a result of the cuts there is a high likelihood of significantly worse outcomes for women in terms of the violence they suffer and its impact upon them. The most obvious impacts include:

- Less successful investigation and prosecution of offenders.
- More ongoing mental, physical and sexual health problems for women.
- Fewer options available from statutory and voluntary support services.
- More women trapped in violent relationships.

7. Health, Social Care and Other Support Services

Background:

- Women in Bristol are more likely than men to need adult social care and also more likely to be carers.
- Women are two and a half times more likely than men to suffer anxiety and depression.¹⁶

The Cuts and Changes:

- Bristol's £153 million health and social care budget will be cut by £7.3 million.¹⁷ Bristol City Council argues that efficiency savings can meet any shortfall in funding. Others are concerned that services will be cut.
- Carers' Organisations are finding that funding from other sources such as charitable trusts is harder to obtain, putting support services at risk.
- Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) has to make efficiency savings of £19 million on its 2011/12 budget¹⁸ which include savings of £7 million from University Hospitals Bristol and £6 million from North Bristol Trust.
- Bristol PCT, along with all other PCTs across the country are having to prepare to close down, to be replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who will be responsible for commissioning services from April 2013.

The Impact: Women in Bristol will be disproportionately affected by any cuts in social care and support services leading to greater inequality between men and women.

The full impact of the health cuts and move to GP led commissioning is not yet clear.

There are however concerns about services which are more used by women (e.g. mental health) and about funding for services addressing violence against women.

8. Legal Advice Services

Background: Women rely disproportionately on state-funded legal advice services for civil law cases; for instance, 62.2% of applications for civil legal aid are made by women, with higher percentages in areas like education and family law.¹⁹

The Cuts:

- **Legal aid** will be cut for welfare benefits, education and medical negligence advice and severely reduced for debt, employment, family law, housing, and immigration advice.
- There will also be changes to eligibility criteria (who will be able to receive legal aid), access to legal aid (how you get legal advice) and how much legal advisors are paid for doing the work.

The Impact: These cuts will have a significant impact on advice services and those seeking advice in Bristol which will disproportionately affect women. The changes could lead to negative human rights impacts including:

- Violations of the right to fair trial where there is no legal advice in particularly complex cases.²⁰
- Removal of advice on complex welfare benefits issues, housing issues and immigration issues may also amount to human rights violations under Article 3 of the Human Rights Act.²¹
- Significant restrictions on the local availability of services, effectively creating

‘advice deserts’, could lead to no effective remedy for any abuses.²²

- Women in violent relationships will be particularly vulnerable to removal of legal aid – despite the partial exemption of cases involving domestic violence - and current proposals may lead to breaches of their human rights.

9. Women’s Voluntary Organisations

Background: Women’s organisations and voluntary organisations providing services to women in Bristol play vital roles in tackling discrimination and in promoting women’s human rights.

The Cuts:

- A number of funding streams from central Government for voluntary organisations have ended or are due to end.
- Although the Council has sought to protect grants to voluntary organisations agreed for 2011/12 some grants have been cut, and the future of others is under review and currently uncertain.
- Other sources of funding such as grants from charitable and non-charitable trusts and donations from individuals are becoming harder to obtain.
- Many voluntary organisations are facing increased demand from the communities they serve as a result of the recession and the impact of other public spending cuts.

The Impact: All voluntary organisations in Bristol are vulnerable to budget cuts. At a time when other cuts are having a negative impact on equality and in some

cases women’s human rights the role of the women’s voluntary sector is more important than ever.

10. Transport

Background: Public transport within Bristol is expensive relative to other areas and the patchy bus routes can leave women isolated and unable to get to work, to further education centres or to reach support organisations. Because transport connects women to the workplace and to their support network, transport has an impact on their life chances and social mobility.

The Cuts:

- Bristol’s bus fares are already amongst the highest in Europe.²³
- Cuts will be made to Bristol Transport budget of £2.2 million for 2011/12.²⁴
- The Easyrider Bus Service which was dedicated to helping the elderly and less-abled get to the local shops and central areas has been scrapped from end of August 2011.²⁵
- Cuts to several bus services have already been announced which will result in fewer evening services, no subsidised bank holiday services and removal of the commuter ferry.²⁶

The Impact: Women use buses more than men; therefore, changes in these areas will have a disproportionate effect on women.²⁷ Women living in isolated areas and disabled women will be particularly affected. Fawcett concludes that the cumulative effect of changes to benefits and support (e.g. in addition to the removal of EMA and reduction in LHA) will negatively impact Bristol women’s human rights.

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- 12 Based on an average national cost for women across the UK of £229.88 (see <http://www.yvettecooper.com/women-bear-brunt-of-budget-cuts>) and 194,995 women over 16 in Bristol <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadKeyFigures.do?a=3&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=15&g=398712&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1309897971963&enc=1> .
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- 21 See case of R (ex parte Adam) v Secretary of State for the Home Department [2005] UKHL 66 Lord Bingham (para 7) "... the threshold [for a breach of Article 3] may be crossed if a late applicant with no means and no alternative sources of support, unable to support himself, is, by deliberate action of the state, denied shelter, food or the most basic necessities of life ..." Baroness Hale commented that to have to endure the indefinite prospect of rooflessness and cashlessness in a country where it was not possible to live off the land, was inhuman and degrading (para. 78).
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1. Introduction

1.1 The Assessment

This report records the human rights and equality impact assessment (HREIA) carried out by Bristol Fawcett. It analyses the public spending cuts which are currently underway and how they will potentially impact on women in Bristol.

Some of the cuts identified in this report have already occurred. Others are planned in the future or are potential cuts that may take place (for example funding streams that are under review). The report represents a snapshot of the overall potential cuts in September 2011. There will inevitably be changes.

1.2 The Rationale for the Assessment

This report focuses on the human rights and equality impacts of the spending cuts on women in Bristol. There is a strong rationale for such an assessment.

Bristol is a diverse city with areas of wealth but also significant poverty and deprivation.²⁸ It has high levels of inequality.²⁹ It also contains large numbers of the people potentially hardest hit by the cuts – e.g. public sector workers, lone parents, carers and the unemployed.

Women in Bristol (as in the rest of the county) will be disproportionately affected by the cuts in public spending. Women in Bristol:

- are more likely to lose their jobs.³⁰
- will also be hit hardest by cuts in services.³¹

- will be hardest hit by cuts in welfare benefits and other changes to the tax and benefit system.³²

Many of the issues raised in this report are not exclusively faced by women – many men will also suffer a drop in income or experience a negative impact on their rights as a result of the cuts. Some groups of men, for example disabled men, refugees and asylum seekers, single parents and the poorest men, are particularly vulnerable.

However, the cuts will not only disproportionately impact on women; they take place in a context of existing inequality between women and men. Women are on average poorer than men. They earn less both as a result of the pay gap and because they are more likely to work part-time because of unpaid caring responsibilities.³³ They are more likely than men to rely on benefits and tax credits.³⁴ The spending cuts are likely to widen the equality gap between women and men³⁵ and may have a serious impact on women's human rights.

This Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment therefore focuses on cuts in public spending that will disproportionately affect women and/or potentially affect their human rights. For example the chapter on Incomes and Poverty highlights some changes to the tax and benefit system that will have a disproportionate impact on women and others which will affect equal numbers of women and men, or in some cases more men than women, but where there is likely to be an impact on the human rights of particular women (such as disabled women).

Women are half of the adult population and are over-represented in a number of the most vulnerable groups. So focusing on women allows the assessment to focus on a range

of other groups who, as this report will show, are disproportionately affected by potential cuts, including disabled women, carers, lone parents, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, older women and refugees and asylum seekers.

1.3 The Structure and Scope of this Report

The report is split into nine chapters each of which each focuses on a particular issue of concern to women. These issues were identified by women and women's organisations as being of particular concern in relation to the impact of the cuts.

The report focuses primarily on the potential negative impacts of the cuts on women. At the same time, it also identifies some positive changes, such as the new funding available for Rape Crisis Centres (see chapter on Violence Against Women). It also highlights a number of situations where public authorities have taken measures to mitigate negative impacts on women, such as Bristol City Council's decision to prioritise domestic violence services and children's services.

Each chapter of the study contains the following elements

1. Description of the public sector spending cuts for the issue under discussion (e.g. violence against women, employment etc.).
2. Analysis of who will be affected in Bristol.
3. What the human rights and equality issues of the cuts will be.
4. What monitoring should take place in order to assess the ongoing impacts of the cuts.

5. Hypothetical scenarios at the end of each chapter which demonstrate how cuts detailed throughout the report might cumulatively affect particular women.

A final chapter of the report presents conclusions on the overall human rights and equality impacts and the potential accountability mechanisms for dealing with those issues.

28 *Bristol ranked as the 79th most deprived local authority area in 2010. The number of people living in the 32 most deprived areas of Bristol is approximately 60,655, constituting 14% of all Bristol residents. Bristol Partnership, 2010. Bristol: State of the city 2010. [Online] at p. 4. Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36498092*

29 *Some of the most prosperous areas in the UK sit side by side with some of the most deprived. Ibid. p.4.*

30 *65% of public sector workers are women – Trades Union Congress. 2010. The gender impact of the cuts. [online] Available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderimpactofthecuts.pdf>*

31 *Women will be harder hit by cuts to public services. In particular, lone parents and single pensioners will be hit hardest. Over ninety percent of lone parents are women as are the majority of single pensioners. UK Women's Budget Group., 2010. The impact on women of the coalition spending review 2010. November 2010. [online] Available at: http://www.wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports_4_1653541019.pdf. [Accessed 5 July 2011].*

32 *Nearly a third (30% of women) but only 15% of men rely on state support for at least 75% of their income. Fawcett Society., 2005. Who benefits? A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system at p.5. [online] Available at <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Benefits%20final%20copy.pdf> [Accessed 5 July 2011]. It has been calculated that the costs of the benefit and tax changes in the 2010 budget will cost women across the UK £5.76 billion pounds. The cost to men will be lower - £2.295 billion. Cooper, Y. 2010. Women bear the brunt of budget cuts. 5 July. [online] Available at: <http://www.yvettecooper.com/women-bear-brunt-of-budget-cuts> [Accessed 21 April 2011].*

33 *Women working full time in Bristol earn on average £11.13 per hour compared to £12.93 per hour for men. see Office for National Statistics, Labour market profile Bristol 2009-10. [online] Available at: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431894/report.aspx?town=bristol#tabearn>*

34 *A third (30%) of women but only 15% of men rely on state support for at least 75% of their income. See Fawcett Society, 2005. Who benefits? A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system at p.5. [online] Available at <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Benefits%20final%20copy.pdf>*

35 *Fawcett and Women's Budget Group, The Impact on Women of the Budget 2011, available online at <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/The%20Impact%20on%20Women%20of%20Budget%202011.pdf>*

2. Employment

2.1 Overview

Budget cuts are leading to public sector job losses and pay freezes in Bristol. Women are likely to suffer disproportionately since they form the majority of public sector workers. More women than men are likely to become unemployed, and more women than men will experience pay freezes. This will increase the already larger than average pay gap between men and women in Bristol. This will worsen existing inequalities in the workplace for women in Bristol.

Gender impact assessments of job loss programmes must be made by Bristol employers undertaking such programmes. Monitoring actual job losses and the impact of pay freezes in Bristol according to gender is required. This will allow assessment of the extent to which existing inequalities in terms of pay and jobs are affected. Our evidence suggests that existing inequalities are being

Unemployment among men and women

The recession has led to more men losing their jobs than women. Since the start of the recession in early 2009 the proportion of men of working age in employment has fallen by 3.3 points from 79% to 75.7%. The proportion of women in employment has fallen by a smaller amount – 1.7 points, from 67% to 65.3%. Unemployment among men has increased by 3.1 points during the recession to 8.6% while unemployment among women has increased by 2.3 points to 7.1%. However, since the start of the recovery, women have done far worse than men. Over the past year the number of unemployed women nationally has risen by 71,000 while the number of unemployed men has fallen by 31,000.³⁶

exacerbated by job losses and pay freezes. This must be addressed to improve equality in Bristol.

2.2 What is Changing?

As a result of budget cuts, public sector employers are cutting posts in order to keep within their tightened budgets.

In Bristol public sector employers who will cut staff include:

- Bristol City Council - plans to cut 240 posts during 2011/12.³⁷
- MOD - Ministry of Defence has confirmed 2,000 jobs could be lost at its Abbey Wood centre.³⁸
- Police - Nearly 200 civilian jobs and 40 officer jobs are expected to be lost over the next year at Avon & Somerset Police.³⁹ Bristol police community support officers (PCSO) reduced funding will mean decreasing a team of 132 PCSO's to 123 PCSO's.⁴⁰

Women are under-represented amongst police officers (25.7%), but are over-represented amongst police support staff. Police officers cannot (by virtue of the regulations which cover their employment terms and conditions) be made redundant. Therefore, where reorganisation of a police service takes place, those staff that can be compelled to leave will most likely be support staff. In this way, women are generally disproportionately affected by staff reductions taking place in a police service. For example, it is apparent that the abolition of the PSCO Support role and the closure of the Communications Centre in Taunton have disproportionately affected female support staff in the Avon & Somerset Constabulary.⁴¹

Bristol Homecare Services – an example of privatisation and loss of employment rights

Bristol City Council currently has 15% of homecare provision delivered by an in-house team of Homecare Assistants. However, the council is putting these women out of work, despite them being the most well-qualified, experienced and necessary team of care workers in the City. The whole service is to be privatised. Women⁴² (because it is an almost exclusively female workforce) working for private sector homecare agencies have some of the very worst terms and conditions of employment of any workers in the UK. The vast majority of women working for private sector homecare companies are employed on contracts that deny them the employment rights which many other workers take for granted - like the right to take unpaid time off work in a family emergency, or maternity pay, sick pay or the confidence that accompanies a regular income and stable hours of work. The very basic rights they do have, such as entitlement to the national minimum wage or basic holiday leave, are routinely violated. Official statistics show that 10% of all homecare workers are paid below the National Minimum Wage, and these are only the reported cases. However, council employed care workers, although not highly paid (in Bristol they get a basic wage of £7.11 per hour), do have employment rights, do have a trade union to represent them, would receive sick pay and have much greater economic security than their private sector counterparts.

Reproduced from : <http://bristolhomecare.blogspot.com/>

There is also a two year pay freeze across the public sector. This means that:

- Any public sector worker earning more than £21,000 will see their pay frozen for 2 years.
- Any public sector worker earning less than £21,000 will receive a flat £250 annual pay increase.

“The pay freeze is worrying. The cost of my food shopping and energy bills have gone up massively and my childcare and travel costs have gone up too whilst my wages remain frozen.”
*Environment Agency employee,
Environment Agency Head Office,
Bristol*

Women in Bristol will also be hit by cuts to childcare funding:

- Childcare tax credit will be cut to cover 70% of childcare costs rather than the current 80% (see chapter on incomes and poverty).
- Cuts to funding for services to children have already led to some providers cutting services.⁴³
- Cuts to school budgets have led to a reduction in after-school and holiday club provision.⁴⁴

2.3 Who is Affected by This?

Women will be the main losers as a result of public sector job losses and pay freezes because of:

- lower rates of employment for women as the public sector sheds jobs;
- public sector pay freezes increasing in the pay gap between men and women;

- an impact on women working part-time where they move from the public to the private sector to find employment;
- increased cost and decreased provision of childcare services which affect women more than men.

2.3.1 Lower Rates of Employment for Women

Women will be hardest hit by public sector job cuts. 40% of women's jobs are in the public sector compared to 11% of men's jobs. Nationally, 65% of public sector jobs are done by women. This trend holds true in Bristol where 63% of Bristol City Council staff are women.⁴⁵ Job losses by all public sector employers in Bristol are likely to affect women disproportionately.

“Changes are worrying for all staff in Bristol City Council. Women are concerned about job losses, wage freezes, the difficulty with getting flexible working to suit, and so it goes on. Staff are at breaking point. As women make up the largest section of the lower graded workforce it has become really disproportionate.”

Jo Wall, Bristol City Council Women's Issues Network

The TUC has estimated that 325,000 of the 500,000 people who will lose their jobs as the result of public sector pay cuts will be women.⁴⁶

In Bristol, 63% of Bristol City Council staff are women.⁴⁷ Job losses by all public sector employers in Bristol are likely to affect women disproportionately.

These job losses take place against a difficult employment situation in Bristol more generally. In August 2011 there were 5.7

people claiming Job Seekers Allowance for every vacancy at the job centre in Bristol.⁴⁸ Women losing public sector jobs may therefore face difficulties in finding jobs in the private sector.

Unemployment in Bristol stands at 7.0%, slightly lower than the national average of 7.7%, but this still results in 11,000 men and 4,700 women in Bristol being unemployed.⁴⁹ 4.2% of women in Bristol are unemployed compared to a national average of 6.6%, and 8.3% of men are unemployed compared to 8.5% nationally.

The proportion of women in paid work in Bristol is slightly higher than the national average. 74.4% of women of working age in Bristol are employed or self-employed compared to a national average of 69.9%.⁵⁰

2.3.2 Increasing the Pay Gap Between Men and Women

The pay gap for women in Bristol is already larger than the national average. Women working full time in Bristol earn on average £11.13 per hour compared to £12.93 per hour for men.⁵¹ This is a pay gap of 18 points and is 3.1 points higher than the national pay gap between women and men.⁵²

Despite this figure, employers in Bristol and Bristol's local strategic partnerships have consistently failed to take strong action on the gender pay gap and few employers undertake or release gender pay gap analyses.

Pay gaps are likely to increase as a result of pay freezes because more women work in the public sector so more women than men will be hit by the public sector pay freeze. This could lead to a widening of the pay gap between women and men in Bristol.

2.3.3 Impact on Women Working Part time

Women working part time in the private sector will be particularly badly hit by job losses as part time jobs in the private sector tend to be less well paid. The national average pay for women working part time in the private sector is £6.78 an hour compared to £9.34 in the public sector.⁵³ Women who have been working part-time in the public sector who lose their jobs may have to take a significant pay cut in order to take a part time job in the private sector.

Women are more likely than men to work part time, particularly if they have dependent children. 38% of women with dependent children worked part time, compared with only 4% of men.⁵⁴

2.3.4 Cuts to Childcare

The cost of childcare for parents claiming childcare tax credit will increase. At the same time levels of childcare provision may be reduced – there are already examples in Bristol of both nursery and after-school places being cut. This will have an impact on all working parents, but will cause particular problems for lone parents who do not have another parent with whom to share childcare. 92% of lone parents are women.⁵⁵

An increase in childcare costs and a reduction in the amount of childcare available may have an impact on the number of women in Bristol in paid work. Although in theory childcare is an issue for all working parents, women are more likely to be ‘second earners’ in couples and the cost and availability of childcare is a far more significant disincentive to them to enter or stay in the labour market than it is for men.⁵⁶

The cost of childcare is so high that nearly half of all families living in poverty have cut back on food to afford childcare and 58% said they were or would be no better off working once childcare is paid for.⁵⁷

2.4 Impact on Particular Groups

There is also likely to be a disproportionate impact on particular groups of women, including Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and disabled women:

- At least 13.5% of Bristol's population is BME.⁵⁸ This is slightly higher than the national average of 12.5%.⁵⁹ BME women living in Bristol already face an increased risk of low paid and insecure employment, leading to poverty. National research by the Fawcett Society showed that BME women are disproportionately represented in routine or semi routine and insecure temporary jobs.⁶⁰ As the number of public sector jobs decrease as a result of the spending cuts there is a real risk that BME women will suffer disproportionately.
- Disabled women are far less likely to be in employment than non-disabled women and suffer widespread discrimination in the job market.⁶¹ Disability organisations nationally have raised serious concerns about the move from Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). (See chapter on incomes and poverty). The expressed aim of this change is to move disabled people off benefits and into paid work. However, with a tightening labour market, the effects of this change need to be carefully monitored.

2.5 What are the Human Rights and Equalities Issues?

Women's employment is central to women's long term financial independence. The pay gap, combined with time out of the workplace for caring responsibilities means that women are less able to save than men and therefore more likely to suffer poverty in old age.⁶²

Women in Bristol are more likely than the national average to be in paid work but suffer a larger pay gap. Budget cuts are predicted to lead to both lower rates of employment for women and a further increased pay gap. This will exacerbate overall inequality in Bristol between men and women.

2.6 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights issues described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to employment.

In order to assess the potential and actual human rights and equalities impact of job losses, pay freezes and cuts to childcare the following areas needs to be assessed and monitored both by individual employers and public authorities, and at a city-wide level:

- Level of job losses among women and men in Bristol.
- Overall employment rates among women and men in Bristol.
- Pay gap between women and men in Bristol.
- Childcare provision in Bristol.

- Effects of change to move disabled people off benefits and into paid work through move to ESA.

The Bristol Partnership will need to take responsibility at a city-wide level for this monitoring, working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

2.7 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Loveday is a lone parent with three children aged 16, 12 and 8. She works full time in a civilian role for the police and receives occasional maintenance from her former husband. She and her children rent a four bedroom house at a cost of £280 a week.

Loveday is made redundant from her job. (1) She tries hard to find another job and eventually finds a part-time position. She starts to claim tax credits and housing benefit. She discovers that she will only be entitled to support with rent up to the Local Housing Allowance rate of £219 and will have to make up the difference herself. (2) She decides that she will have to arrange more regular maintenance payments from her ex-husband. However, he refuses to discuss the matter, will not speak on the phone or reply to any contact from Loveday.

She approaches the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC)

and has to pay £100 for them to start action against her former husband. Her husband contacts her and agrees to start making payments. She agrees to a private arrangement to avoid the charge that the CMEC would make if they enforced payment. He makes a few payments, and then stops again. She contacts the CMEC again and is told she will have to make another £100 payment. (3)

Loveday has used up her savings and is starting to get into debt. She starts to look for a smaller three bedroom house. It is hard to find something suitable as many landlords have stopped letting to tenants receiving LHA. (4)

Eventually she finds somewhere on the other side of Bristol. Her eldest daughter now has to take two buses to get to college every day. The college say they cannot give her a bursary as they have a limited fund and are prioritising people whose parents are unemployed. (5)

(1) MOD is expected to lose up to 2000 staff

(2) The rate for a three bedroom house since April 2011, (see Housing Chapter).

(3) The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission will charge resident parents £100 plus 7-12% of money recovered to enforce payment (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter).

(4) A 2010 survey of landlords showed that 43% said they were likely to scale back on accepting Local Housing Allowance tenants (see Housing Chapter).

(5) Education Maintenance Allowance would have been worth £30 per week. The new bursary fund is up to colleges to distribute but is only worth £180 million compared to the £560 funding for EMA (see Education Chapter).

36 TUC analysis of 2011 ONS Labour market survey [online] Accessed 9 August 2011 Available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/womenconference.pdf>

37 Unison website [accessed 1 August 2011] <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/NewUNISONDossierOfCuts.pdf>

38 BBC News 12 May 2011 [online] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-13361089> [accessed on 1 August 2011].

39 JackFM 2011. Job Cuts At Bristol Police Jackfm.co.uk. [Online] 18 February. Available at: <http://www.jackbristol.com/news/bristols-news/job-cuts-at-bristol-police-5594> [Accessed 1 August 2011].

40 Note 37.

41 Women make up 62.4% of Police support staff and 69.4% of the PSCO Support roles. Avon & Somerset Constabulary, Equality Scheme 2010. [online] Available at: http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/information/Documents/cache/PDF/Document4431_458238.pdf [Accessed 20 September 11].

42 Bristol City Council Equalities Impact Assessment Residential Futures p.5 [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/community_and_safety/equality_and_diversity/equality_impact_assessments/Residential%20Futures%20EQIA%20-%202009.pdf [Accessed 26 September 2011].

43 For example Hartcliffe's Children's Centre can no longer offer day care places to those who cannot afford it. BBC Newsnight website 16 August 2010 [online] Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/8912594.stm>.

44 Information from Family Information Services [2 September 2011].

45 BCC Workforce Diversity Statistics, HR Management information report 31 March 2011, [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36419167.

46 Trade Union Congress. 2010. The gender impact of the cuts. at p.8 [online] Available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderimpactofthecuts.pdf>.

47 Note 45.

48 Office for National Statistics., Labour market profile Bristol 2009-10. [online] Available at: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/2038431894/report.aspx?town=bristol#tabempunemp>.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 This pay gap of 18 points is 3.9 points higher than the national average pay gap. Ibid.

52 Ibid. Note: The ONS gives data for pay rates for people working in Bristol and people living in Bristol separately. We have looked here at pay for people living in Bristol.

53 Office for National Statistics., Annual survey of hours and earnings 2009. [online] Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statBase/product.asp?vlnk=15313> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

54 Office for National Statistics, Focus on Gender: Work & Family, [online] Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1655> [Accessed 5 July 2011].

55 Gingerbread. Gingerbread fact file: myths and labels about single parents. [online] Available at: <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/365/Gingerbread-Factfile> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

56 Women's Budget Group., 2010. White paper on universal credit. [online] Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmworpen/writev/whitepap/uc40.htm> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

57 Daycare Trust. Making Work Pay - The Childcare Trap [online] Available at http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/data/files/Research/making_work_pay.pdf [Accessed 20 September 2011].

58 There are 10,600 women in Bristol of Asian or Asian British origin, 7,100 Black or Black British women, 5,200 mixed parentage, 12,800 White non British and 2,300 Chinese or other ethnic group. See Office for National Statistics, June 2009. Neighbourhood statistics Bristol: resident population estimates by ethnic group. [Online] Available at: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=13&g=398712&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1310046794740&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1811> [Accessed 5 July 2011].

59 Bristol City Council Statistics [online] Available at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Council-Democracy/Statistics-Census-Information/key-facts-about-bristol.en> [Accessed 9 August 2011].

60 Employment rates among BME women vary – 25.4% of women of Pakistani origin and 28.1 women of Bangladeshi origin are employed nationally compared to 66.9% of Black Caribbean women and 50.2% of Black African women. According to the Fawcett Society Muslim women are one of two groups that face the highest employment penalties in the country. Evidence of discrimination can be seen at the interview stage with a quarter of BME women being asked (illegal) questions about what their families think about them working, or their childcare arrangements compared to 14% of white women. BME women are also four times more likely than white women to be working in jobs for which they are overqualified and are disproportionately represented in routine or semi routine and insecure temporary jobs. See Fawcett Society, 2009. Poverty pathways: ethnic minority women's livelihoods. [online] June 2009. Available at: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Povertypathways.pdf> [Accessed 5 July 2011].

61 In the South West the employment rate for disabled people was 55% (higher than the national average of 50%). See: EHRC. 2010. How fair is Britain? Equality, human rights and good relations in 2010. The first triennial review. [online] at p.397, Available at: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/how-fair-is-britain/full-report-and-evidence-downloads/#How_fair_is_Britain_Equality_Human_Rights_and_Good_Relations_in_2010_The_First_Triennial_Review [Accessed 5 July 2011].

Disability has a greater impact on employment than gender or lone parenthood. Among female lone parents 65% of those who are non-disabled are in work compared to 30% of those who are disabled. See The Poverty Site, United Kingdom, work and disability. [online] Available at: <http://www.poverty.org.uk/45/index.shtml?2>.

A 2007 survey of 700 employers carried out by Personnel Today with Leonard Cheshire found that 86% agreed that employers would pick a non-disabled candidate over a disabled candidate, while 92% said there was still discrimination against disabled people in employment and recruitment. See Personnel Today. 2007. Discrimination against disabled still rife. [online] Available at: <http://www.personneltoday.com/articles/2007/12/03/43501/discrimination-against-disabled-still-rife-says-report.html>.

62 Fawcett Society., 2007. Saving lives: women's lifetime saving patterns. [online] at p.3 Available at: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Saving%20Lives.pdf>.

3. Housing

3.1 Overview

Local Housing Allowance was introduced in 2008 and replaces Housing Benefit for tenants in private rented accommodation. It is a means tested benefit available to tenants in work as well as people who are unemployed, disabled, carers or retired.

In April 2011 a number of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) were implemented. These changes reduced the amount of LHA that tenants can claim by between £10 and £15 a week⁶³. The cost of accommodation in Bristol is high and LHA only covers the cost of 33% of private rented accommodation available (previously 55%)⁶⁴. Women will bear a disproportionate burden of these changes since women are the main recipients of housing benefit. Some groups of women such as lone parents and BME women will be hardest hit.⁶⁵ The EU's Urban Audit places Bristol in the most unaffordable fifth of major European cities for buying a flat or house.⁶⁶ Careful monitoring and provision of support is required to mitigate impacts incompatible with equality and human rights.

3.2 What is Changing?

In April 2011 a number of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) were introduced. The key changes that are likely to affect women in Bristol are as follows:

- LHA is now capped at £250 a week for a one bedroom house/flat, £290 for two bedrooms, £340 for three bedrooms, up to an upper limit of £400 a week for four bedrooms.

- Non-dependent deductions will increase. These are the amount deducted from housing benefit because it is assumed that a non-dependent family member such as an adult son or daughter or an elderly relative is contributing to the rent.
- Previously, if a tenant paid rent that was below the maximum LHA they were allowed to keep up to £15 excess – this was abolished in April 2011.
- Due to the high cost of accommodation in Bristol, LHA will only cover 33% of what is available. The previous rates covered 55% of available accommodation.
- From October 2011, LHA will only cover up to the bottom 30th percentile point of private sector rents in Bristol, rather than the median.
- From April 2013, LHA rates will be up-rated in line with the Consumer Prices Index, rather than on the basis of local rents.

Provision of homelessness services in Bristol

- Bristol City Council will save £90k through cuts to the number of homelessness officers.
- Bristol City Council is planning to reduce its Tenant Support Service budget by 20 percent in 2011/12, meaning that either fewer tenants will be supported, or support periods will be reduced.⁶⁷
- Funding for these services comes from the Supporting People fund, which is paid to Bristol City Council by central government. The Supporting People fund has been cut by 11.5% over three years and is no longer ring-fenced.

3.3 Who is Affected by This?

In Bristol there are 38,630 households claiming housing benefit.⁶⁸ Of these 11,080 are in the private rented sector and will be affected by the changes.⁶⁹ **These changes will have a disproportionate effect on women** since single women are the main recipients of housing benefit. This includes elderly women, women with caring responsibilities and single mothers. In 2010 46% of housing benefit claimants in the private sector are single women compared to 20% who were couples and 30% who were men.⁷⁰

“Reduced funding will mean we will have to reduce the number of staff we currently employ (18 in total) which will in turn minimise the numbers of people we can work with and the type of support we can provide (we already have 52 families on our current waiting list). There will be even fewer opportunities to support clients to access opportunities which would help them to secure and sustain a home and financial stability and independence.”

Karen McLean, Shelter

We calculate that in Bristol 5,097 single women and 2,216 women in couples receive LHA compared with 3,324 men.⁷¹ In the short term, at least 4,420 people will lose between £10 and £15 per week depending on the numbers of bedrooms in their house.⁷²

Rents in Bristol are high compared to other parts of the country and there is already concern that the housing market in Bristol is unaffordable. Fewer young people (under 35 years old) can afford to buy or rent in Bristol compared to the national average so the impact of these changes is more severe than elsewhere.⁷³ Housing in Bristol will become

‘very unaffordable’ to those on LHA by 2021.⁷⁴

In addition this situation also needs to be seen in light of

- increased pressure on finances, rent arrears and numbers of evictions being caused by the recession. The number of families which became homeless after being evicted by private sector landlords jumped 34 per cent in England last year.⁷⁵
- Bristol’s particular shortage of 2, 3 and 4+ bed affordable homes⁷⁶
- the danger of women who are joint tenants with men (and who may have little control over household finances) becoming liable for rent arrears if the man leaves the household.

The longer term impacts are likely to be more severe. The change from basing LHA rates on actual rents to up-rating them in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) is likely to have a major long term impact. The CPI has increased at a far slower rate than rents in recent years. In the ten years from 1997/98 to 2007/08 the consumer prices index rose by 20%. During the same ten year period median rents increased by almost 70%.⁷⁷ Over time it is highly likely that the actual rate of increase in local rents will greatly outstrip the increase in LHA.

This will mean that the number of properties available to people dependant on Local Housing Allowance will reduce. The Chartered Institute of Housing have calculated that in less than 17 years the LHA for two, three or four bedroom properties in Bristol will be less than the lowest rent available.⁷⁸ A 2010 survey of landlords nationally showed that 43% said they were likely to scale back on accepting LHA tenants.⁷⁹

3.4 Impact on Particular Groups

There are a number of particular groups who are likely to be vulnerable to the changes made. It is estimated:

- 47% of those affected will have children, of which 32% will be lone parents;⁸⁰
- 19% will be disabled;⁸¹
- 8% will be pensioners;⁸²
- 13% will be from BME groups who will also be disproportionately affected by the 4 bedroom cap as they often live with extended family.⁸³ In Bristol this equates to estimated average loss per LHA recipient in a 4 bed house of £67 per week.⁸⁴
- People with non-dependents (like elderly relatives) living in the same households will also incur extra charges.⁸⁵

“In a typical Chinese family, children usually live with their parents before they get married. The increase in non-dependant deductions of Housing Benefit is most likely to increase their financial burdens. Many of our clients could not afford to pay higher rents so they have to reduce housing costs by living in small and overcrowded accommodation. For example, two adults and two children living in one room.”

Bristol & Avon Chinese Women’s Group

3.5 What are the Human Rights and Equalities Issues?

Taken together therefore all these changes will **disproportionately impact on women, particularly lone parents and those with larger families, including many BME women.**

Poor Practice in Impact Assessment

The Department of Work and Pensions Equality Impact Assessment of the changes to Housing Benefit states ‘The cumulative impacts of these measures do not appear to disadvantage one group more disproportionately than another.’ (p.14) This is despite the fact that their own research shows that the policy will hit women in larger numbers than men (p.11).

The DWP EIA also states that it has not been possible to calculate the impact of the proposals on BME groups (p.13). But the Chartered Institute for Housing questions this, pointing out that a full equality impact assessment was produced in 2009 when the five bedroom limit was introduced which concluded:

‘There is likely to be a disproportionate percentage of customers from minority ethnic groups entitled to six or more bedroom properties, raising concerns of indirect discrimination [...]. Taking 5 or more bedroom characteristics as a guide [...], the Department recognises this disproportionate impact on ethnic minority groups, but considers this to be justified’

There is no research on the severity of the impacts of these benefit changes on women in Bristol. But at the national level research by the Cambridge Centre for Housing Planning and Research has demonstrated the following immediate impacts:

- The number of couples with an income of less than £50 a week after rent has been paid will double. This is less than half the minimum income guaranteed by benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance.⁸⁶

- Between 311,000 and 612,000 people will be left in ‘severe housing difficulty’ (unable to re-negotiate their rent or make up the shortfall) by the LHA changes.⁸⁷

Any forced moves or homelessness as a result of these changes will have a disproportionate impact on women since, as already shown, there are far more women than men claiming LHA, thus far more women than men at risk. Further,

- The supply of social housing in Bristol is limited, and there are only between 2500-3000 vacancies each year. In February 2011, there were already 14,448 households on the Bristol Housing Register. There are limited options for good rehousing for those made homeless or forced to move.
- Due to the age of housing stock in Bristol, the condition and energy efficiency of private housing is often not adequate.⁸⁸
- Women are usually the ones responsible for organising children’s schooling and access to any local services they may need. Women also rely heavily on informal networks of support to combine work and family life - moving to a new area can disrupt these and make it difficult to continue in paid work.
- The human rights of children in families forced to move or made homeless will be negatively affected, both girls and boys.

Increased pressure on budgets will have a disproportionate impact on women because women often act as the ‘shock absorbers’ of poverty, cutting back on their own consumption (including of food) in order to balance family budgets.⁸⁹ (See chapter on incomes and poverty for more detail on this)

Increased pressures on family budgets as a result of benefit reductions can also lead to human rights abuses for women, such as increases in domestic violence or inability to access adequate food (see quote below).

“A Chinese woman, who is a victim of domestic violence, has been desperately hoping to move to a safe private-rented place. The incredibly high rent put her off as she only works part time and she is always worried that she will lose her job because of the gloomy economic situation. Due to the cuts to domestic violence services, the support she receives is also limited. She therefore made an application for social housing. She has still not been able to get re-housed, even though she has been bidding for properties for nearly a year. In the meantime she and her 9-year-old daughter have to stay with the bad-tempered husband and therefore suffer from anxiety and mental distress.”

Rosa Hui, Chief Executive, Bristol & Avon Chinese Women’s Group

3.6 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to housing.

In order to assess the actual human rights and equalities impact of all these changes the following areas should be monitored:

- The gap between actual rents and the amount paid by local housing allowance and how this changes over time.

- The quantity of private rented accommodation available in different parts of Bristol at LHA rates or below.
- The numbers of people made homeless in Bristol and the proportion of them who are female and also the total number and relative proportion of those who are housed by the Council.
- The impact of changes to LHA (and other benefits) to the household budgets of particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

3.7 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Maureen is aged 50. She has mild learning disabilities and finds reading difficult. She worked as a cleaner all her life until severe arthritis forced her to stop work. She pays £119 a week rent for a one bedroom flat.

She was claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) but was found fit for work despite the fact that she can no longer do manual work and her learning difficulties make it difficult to find other work that she can do.(1) So she is now claiming Job Seekers Allowance.

After housing costs, she has a disposable income of £65.45 a week (JSA). This is significantly less than the £91.30 she would receive on work related ESA. She used to attend a drop in centre for people with learning difficulties where staff would have helped her appeal against the decision not to grant ESA, but these sessions are no longer running.(2)

The changes to housing benefit mean that the maximum amount of housing benefit she can claim is reduced to £114. She finds the idea of moving very difficult and is unable to cope with finding a new flat. She has to make up the difference, a loss of £5 a week.(3) Her disposable income has dropped to £60.45 a week.

The Job Centre insists she applies for jobs that require on-line application but she cannot use a computer. Her benefits are suspended.(4) She cannot get legal aid to appeal against the decision to sanction her benefits.(5)

This case study draws its calculations of benefit cuts from work by the Citizens Advice Bureau. See http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/the_coalition_budget_2010-2.htm for more information

(1) The Citizens Advice Bureau has collected extensive evidence from across the UK of assessments for Employment and Support Allowance that fail to take into account the combined impact of a person's disabilities (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter).

(2) There have been cuts to funding for voluntary organisations providing drop in advice sessions of this type (see Women's Voluntary Organisations Chapter).

(3) The rate that Local Housing Allowance will cover in Bristol for a one bedroom flat has been reduced to just over £114 (See Housing Chapter)

(4) Sanctions for failing to apply for jobs have been increased. There is already national evidence of people with learning disabilities being unfairly sanctioned and concerns that this will get worse under the new regime (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter).

(5) Legal aid for welfare benefit cases is ending (see Legal Services Chapter).

63 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010. *Impacts of housing benefit proposals: changes to the local housing allowance to be introduced in 2011-12*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/impacts-of-hb-proposals.pdf> [Accessed 5 July 2011].

64 Ibid.

65 Department of Work and Pensions. 2010. *Equality impact assessment housing benefit*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/ha-eia-nov10.pdf> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

66 Bristol Partnership, Bristol: *State of the city 2010*. p.24. [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36498092.

67 False Economy [online] Available at <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/cuts/item/bristol-housing-support>

68 Office for National Statistics. 2009. *Neighbourhood statistics: housing benefit/council tax benefit claimants*. [online] Available at: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=4&g=398712&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1309859438259&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1037>

69 Ibid.

70 Single Housing Benefit Extract, March 2010 & Family Resources Survey 06/07, 07/08 and 08/09 (for 'all non-HB private rented sector (PRS)' figures).

71 On the basis that Bristol is in line with national breakdowns and assuming all couples are heterosexual. (in 2011 census 940 individuals out of 298, 122 persons over 16 were registered as living in same sex couples).

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Type of property	Number losing	% of total who will lose	Amount lost per week
Room in shared house	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	Data unavailable
1 bedroom	3,290	61	£14
2 bedroom	760	32	£10
3 bedroom	230	35	£11
4 bedroom	100	72	£15
5 bedroom	40	66	£15

Source: Department of Work and Pensions. 2010. Above (Note 63).

73 Draft Child Poverty Strategy [online] p14. 34.2% can afford to buy or rent in Bristol compared to 43.1% nationally. Available at: <http://bristolchildren.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/consultationdraftchildpovertystrategy02081.pdf>

74 Shelter research March 2011, *The Impact of Welfare Reform Bill measures on affordability for low income private renting families* [online] Available at: http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/334726/Impact_of_Welfare_Reform_Bill_measures_on_affordability_for_low_income_private_renting_families.pdf Accessed 23 August 2011.

75 Hilditch, M., 2011. *Homelessness grows as private tenants get kicked out*. Inside Housing. [Online] 18 March. Available at: <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/ihstory.aspx?storycode=6514124> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

76 Bristol Partnership. 2011. *Bristol: State of the city 2010*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36498092 [Accessed 5 July 2011].

77 Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research. 2010. *How will changes to Local Housing Allowance affect low-income tenants in private rented housing?* [Online] Available at: http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/290041/CCHPR_final_for_web_2.pdf at p.30.

78 Chartered Institute of Housing., 2010. *Briefing paper on the impact of changes to housing benefit and local housing allowance in the budget*. [Online] Available at: <http://housing.cih.co.uk/memberbriefing/housingbenefit-July-2010.htm> [Accessed 5 July 2011].

79 Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research. 2010 note 77 at p.26.

80 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010 Above (Note 63).

81 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010 Above (Note 63) 26% of people receiving housing benefit are disabled, but a smaller proportion are in private rented accommodation.

82 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010. Above (Note 63). (34% of people receiving housing benefit are pensioners, but only 8% of those in private rented accommodation).

83 Chartered Institute of Housing. 2010. *Inquiry into the impact of the changes to Housing Benefit announced in the June 2010 Budget*. [online] at p.14 Available at: <http://www.cih.org/policy/Resp-SelectCommitteeBudget-Oct10.pdf> [Accessed 21 April 2011].

84 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010 Above (Note 63).

85 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010 Above (Note 63).

86 Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research. 2010. Above (Note 77) at p 16.

87 Ibid, at p.17.

88 As a result of the age of the stock, the condition and energy efficiency of private housing remain a concern with 24% of the stock being in non decent condition in 2007 and the energy efficiency (SAP) rating being 59 (currently 92% decent and SAP 61 in the affordable housing stock) Bristol Partnership, Bristol: *State of the city 2010*, p25[online] http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36498092 [Accessed 5 July 2011].

4. Incomes and Poverty

4.1 Overview

Personal Tax Allowance Increase

The personal tax allowance increased in April 2011 by £1000 from £6,475 to £7,475. HRMC predict that this will: Remove the 880,000 lowest income taxpayers out of tax altogether; and give around 23 million basic rate taxpayers a gain of £170 per annum on average.

However, Fawcett and the Women's Budget Group point out that men will gain £166 million more than women and that 73% of those who earn too little to benefit will be women.⁽¹⁾

(1) <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/The%20Impact%20on%20Women%20of%20Budget%202011.pdf>

The benefit and tax changes in the 2010 budget will cost women across the UK £5.76 billion pounds. The cost to men will be lower - £2.295 billion.⁹⁰ This is because women are more likely than men to be dependent on benefits and tax credits.

For women in Bristol the total cost would be £44,825,450.⁹¹ This cost to women in Bristol is in line with the UK average.

To define poverty in an affluent UK core city, we have used the definition of poverty used by Bristol City Council for this report which recognises its relative impact in our society - in terms of both low household income and the inequalities it creates in everyday life:

'Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or

are at least encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.' (Peter Townsend).

While some women will gain from some tax and benefit changes (for example the increase in the personal tax allowance and the increase in the child element of Child Tax Credit, see below), the overall impact is likely to make women poorer relative to men. This will further increase gender inequality in Bristol. In addition, there will be particularly severe consequences for some groups of women, such as lone parents, disabled women and carers, who may be left in poverty as a result of changes to the benefit system. These changes may impact on the human rights of these women.

This chapter considers the impact on women of a series of changes to the tax and benefit system, some of which came into force in April 2011 and others that are due to take effect later. Changes to housing benefit, which will also have a significant effect on the income of some women in Bristol, are covered in the chapter on housing.

We have not been able to catalogue all of the changes to benefits, allowances, etc. for reasons of space. Here we concentrate on those areas that were highlighted as most significant for women in Bristol through our consultation with women's organisations, other voluntary groups and individual women when compiling this report. There are therefore three categories of people whose incomes we analyse below:

- **Families** – reduction and withdrawal of benefits to pregnant women, freezing of child benefit rates and various changes to tax credits will have significant impacts on many families in Bristol, and a disproportionate effect on women. Lone parents in Bristol (mostly women) will be

particularly affected by a series of other changes to benefits as well as the child support scheme and a new cap on total benefits.

- **Disabled People and Carers**
 - **Disabled people** in Bristol are potentially affected by the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the way in which it is assessed. They will also potentially be affected by the 20% cut to Disability Living Allowance (which will become Personal Independence Payment from April 2013).
 - **Carers in Bristol** are potentially affected by those they care for losing their Personal Independence Payment. This could also mean carers losing their Carers Allowance. As the majority of women are carers, such changes will disproportionately affect women.
- **Older Women** – Older women will be affected by changes to the age at which they can claim their pensions. In particular, significant numbers of women in their mid-50s will have a very short time to adapt to a change that will see them lose a significant amount of income.

There is also a set of issues that affects them all:

- **Other Changes that may Affect Incomes** – The formula for up-rating of benefits has changed, with potentially negative impact on women's incomes in the long term. The sanctions for failing actively to seek work have become more severe.

- **Universal credit.** It is not clear what the impact of the move to Universal Benefit will be. Some organisations have raised a series of concerns both about how the credit is calculated and the impact on gender equality of systems of payment.

It is recognised that some women (and men) who lose income from changes to benefits and tax credits may find work, or be able to increase their working hours and as a result increase their overall incomes. But this chapter concentrates on the potential impacts for those who are unable to find work. This is in order to identify the potential impacts on the poorest, most vulnerable and disadvantaged, whose human rights are most at risk.

A disproportionate number of these people are likely to be women. In addition, widespread job losses in the public sector in Bristol will disproportionately impact on women (see employment section); there may be large numbers of women who cannot find work or increase their working hours.

4.2 Benefits to Families

4.2.1 What is changing?

Pregnancy

- Health in Pregnancy grant which was a payment of £190 paid to women in the 25th week of pregnancy and designed to support healthy eating was abolished from January 2011.
- Sure Start maternity grant of £500 which was paid to low income women from the 29th week of pregnancy is now only payable to women pregnant with their first child.

Child Benefit

- Child Benefit rates have been frozen for three years from April 2011 – amounting to a real terms cut.⁹² In addition, families with a higher rate tax payer will no longer be entitled to child benefit. This will impact on women disproportionately, as the majority of single parents are women, and child benefit entitlement is based on the income of the highest earning parent and not household income.

Tax Credits

There will be a series of changes to tax credits:

- There will be above inflation increases in the child element of Child Tax Credit in April 2011 and April 2012. This will mean an additional £180 in the 2011/12 financial year and £110 in the 2012/13 financial year.
- The baby element of tax credits will be withdrawn.
- Families earning more than £40,000 will start to lose tax credits.
- The basic rate of tax credit and the rate for people working more than 30 hours a week will be frozen for three years.
- The rate at which tax credits are withdrawn as income rises will increase from 39% to 40%.
- A fall in income of up to £2500 will not lead to an increase in a tax credit award.
- Families with children will have to work for at least 24 hours a week (instead of the current 16) and one of them must work at least 16 hours in order to receive tax credits.

- The childcare Tax Credit will be cut to only cover 70% rather than 80% of childcare costs.

Lone Parents

There will be some changes particularly affecting lone parents:

- From October 2011 lone parents with children over five will be required to move from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance and therefore be actively seeking work.
- The Child Support Agency is being replaced by the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC). Lone parents who use the CMEC will be charged an application fee of up to £100 and between 7% and 12% of any maintenance paid.
- From 2013 the Government will introduce a cap on the total amount of benefit that working-age people can receive so that households on out of work benefits will no longer receive more in benefit than the average weekly wage earned by working families. This will apply to all working age benefit claimants but according to the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) will particularly affect lone parents.⁹³

4.2.2 Who will these changes affect?

Health in pregnancy grant

The Health in pregnancy grant was available to all women who reached the 25th week of pregnancy and was worth £190. The grant stopped in January 2011. This will affect around 6,203 women in Bristol a year.⁹⁴

Sure Start maternity grant

We could not find figures showing the numbers of women in Bristol who will no longer receive this grant, but nationally it will affect around 150,000 claimants a year.⁹⁵

Child Benefit

There are 48,865 families in Bristol who are claiming Child Benefit.⁹⁶

Child benefit is usually paid to the mother and for some women it is the only income they have in their own right. Ruth Lister, Emeritus Professor Baroness Lister of Burtsett explains:

'Child Benefit provides mothers directly with a secure source of income, which is particularly important if they do not have an independent wage'⁹⁷

This cut will increase women's dependence on their partners, and may be particularly damaging for women in violent relationships involving financial abuse.

Tax credits

38,080 families in Bristol receive tax credits.⁹⁸ Some of the poorest families and those on low wages will gain through the increase in Child Tax Credit in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and the increase in the personal tax allowance. Low waged women in particular will gain also from the increase in the personal tax allowance.

However, a detailed study by the National Family and Parenting Institute has concluded that 'these increases are, for many families, off-set by losses from other elements of the benefits and tax credit system'.⁹⁹

Families in Bristol with a child under a year old will also be affected by the withdrawal of the baby element of tax credit. This is worth

The National Family and Parenting Institute Study highlights in particular:

- A family with two children claiming the basic rate Working Tax Credit will lose £80.64 in 2011 rising to £210 by 2012/13.
- If they work more than 30 hours a week their losses will be greater - £113.82 in 2011 rising to £297.42 in 2013.
- There are 205,000 families with children across the UK currently working fewer than 24 hours a week. If they are unable to increase their hours they will lose £3,810 in tax credits.

£545 a year to the poorest families. Nationally this will affect 484,000 families.

In 2008, 2,480 families in Bristol claimed the childcare element of Working Tax Credit, and 1,545 of these families are lone parent families.¹⁰⁰ As a result of the cut in childcare tax credit from 80% to 70% of childcare costs a family in Bristol with one child in full time childcare claiming Childcare Tax Credit will lose on average £22.50 per week.¹⁰¹ Bristol has a higher than average number of households with one or more children under five which means these cuts will affect more families than in other parts of the country.¹⁰²

4.3 Lone Parents

Lone parents will be particularly negatively affected by the cut in childcare tax credit since they have to meet childcare costs out of one income and do not have a partner to share childcare with. They will also potentially be affected by changes to Income Support, the benefit cap and charges for use of the new child support scheme. Fawcett Society research has found that as a proportion of income, lone mothers are disproportionately

affected by the Child Benefit freeze and the loss of Sure Start maternity grant.¹⁰³

In Bristol many of the children living in poverty (75.5%) live in lone parent families, compared with 67.4% in core cities and 68.2% in England as a whole. These changes to benefits will put more financial pressure on lone parents.

Income Support to Jobseekers Allowance

In Bristol there are 6,030 lone parents claiming income support.¹⁰⁴ From October 2011 lone parents with children over five will be required to move from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance and therefore be actively seeking work.

Lone parents face particular barriers to entering paid work including:

- the cost of childcare has to be met from one salary, rather than two for couples
- the difficulty of finding childcare outside 'standard' working hours (before 8am, after 6pm or weekends).

Since the changes have been announced, almost a quarter of lone mothers have had to give up work to look after their children due to the increased cost of childcare.¹⁰⁵ Lone parents will not be obliged to take work that does not fit around their caring responsibilities. In practice however, organisations like Gingerbread have shown that benefits advisors do not always show understanding of the particular situation that lone parents face, with evidence that some lone parents are threatened with sanctions for refusing jobs that would be impossible to fit around their children's needs.¹⁰⁶ The treatment of lone parents in Bristol therefore must be monitored carefully, particularly in the light of the more severe sanctions regime (see below).

The Benefit Cap

The cap on total benefits that a family can receive will disproportionately affect women in Bristol and affect lone parents (mostly women) worst of all. The DWP's own Equality Impact Assessment of this policy states:

"We expect around 60% of customers who are likely to have their benefit reduced by the cap to be single females but only around 3% to be single men. Most of the single women affected are likely to be lone parents, this is because we expect the vast majority of households affected by this policy (around 90%) to have children. Approximately 60% of those who will be capped are single women. Single women form around 40% of the overall benefit population."¹⁰⁷

The DWP argues that these impacts will be mitigated by policies to support lone parents into paid work. However, this will still leave women who are unable to find work, particularly work that fits around their childcare responsibilities, facing a significant drop in income.

Charges for the Use of the New Child Support Scheme

Lone parents will also lose out from government proposals to charge for use of the new child support scheme, the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC) which will replace the Child Support Agency.

Lone parents who use the CMEC will be charged:

- An application fee of £100, paid in advance (£50 for people on benefits, with £20 due in advance)
- A minimum 7% and maximum 12% of any child maintenance paid, called a collection charge.

Once the new scheme is underway, all existing Child Support Agency (CSA) users will have to choose whether to opt in to the new scheme – and pay the charges - or make their own arrangements.

For many lone parents on the lowest incomes these charges may act as a barrier to accessing the CMEC. They and their children may be left with no support at all from the non-resident parent, or, if they can negotiate some money, it may be far less than what they would be entitled to.¹⁰⁸

4.4 Disabled People and their Carers

4.4.1 What is Changing?

- Disabled people who have been claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) will have to undergo an assessment to see if they are eligible for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) which replaces IB.
- People on ESA will be placed in two groups. Those whose disability is ‘severe’ or who are terminally ill will be in the support group and will not be expected to work. Those who are judged to be less severe are placed in the ‘work related activity group’ and are expected to take part in work focussed activity.
- There are two types of ESA – contributory (based on NI contributions) and income related for those who have not made sufficient NI contributions.
- Contributory ESA will only be paid to people in the work related activity group for one year, after which it will be means tested. If they have savings, assets or a partner who works then their benefits will stop.

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is being changed to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). People currently receiving DLA will have to be re-assessed. At the same time the total budget for DLA/PIP is being cut by 20%.
- The mobility component of PIP is being withdrawn from people living in residential care.

4.4.2 Who is Affected by This?

The above changes will have an impact on both disabled people and their carers. We deal with each in turn below.

4.4.2.1 Disabled People

Employment and Support Allowance

There are 21,390 people in Bristol claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Incapacity Benefit (IB).¹⁰⁹ Of these 8,530 are men and 12,860 are women.¹¹⁰ Although the changes will not have a disproportionate impact on women as a group we include them here because they may lead to a significant drop in income for some groups of women, particularly those who were receiving IB but are assessed as not being entitled to ESA.

Since 2008 Incapacity Benefit has been replaced by Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for new claimants. In April 2011 people claiming Incapacity Benefit were moved onto Employment and Support Allowance.

Very many disabled people, their carers and disability organisations have raised serious concerns with the way people are assessed for ESA. A national survey by the Disability Benefits Consortium of disabled people found:

- Over half of those respondents who had been for a medical assessment for ESA found it stressful and more than four in ten said it actually made their health condition or impairment worse because of the stress and anxiety caused.
- Over half of those respondents who had received a decision on their application for ESA didn't agree with the decision and of these, half planned to appeal.¹¹¹

A national report by the Citizens Advice Bureau, endorsed by 17 other organisations, highlighted a number of specific problems with the assessments:

- Seriously ill people who should be exempt from the assessment are forced to be assessed.
- The assessment does not 'take sufficient account of variable symptoms'. 'There is little recognition of generalised pain and exhaustion, or the seriousness of an underlying condition. It takes no account of the context of the work environment, including a person's education, skills and circumstances or the discrimination they may face in looking for work.'
- The assessment is producing 'inappropriate outcomes'. 'Citizens Advice and other organisations have been concerned for many years about the quality of medical assessments for benefits. We still hear repeated reports of rushed assessments, assumptions being made without explanation, inaccurate recording and poor recognition of mental health problems.'¹¹²

In addition to the stress caused by the assessment for ESA, disabled people will also be negatively impacted by the move to limit contributory ESA to one year for people

who are in the 'work related activity' group. People with assets, savings or a working partner will no longer receive benefits. Among others, this will hit disabled women, women who are carers and the partners of disabled people.¹¹³

Disability Living Allowance

There were 8,400 men and 8000 women in Bristol claiming Disability Living Allowance in 2005.¹¹⁴ Although the changes will not disproportionately affect women we include them here because of the serious impact they will have on the incomes of disabled women and women carers.

"Changes to benefit system are likely to make our service users confused and could cause them anxiety. For example, a Chinese lady who is a full-time carer for her daughter who has learning disabilities expressed her concerns about the changes. Cuts to DLA would cause some financial difficulties as she could not work due to her caring duties and so her husband supports the whole family financially."

Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group

As DLA is replaced by the Personal Independence Payment disabled people will be affected by a cut in the total budget of 20%. The Government has said it wishes to focus support for those most in need.

However, the Disability Alliance has pointed out that:

‘A focus on those disabled people with the greatest need will exclude many disabled people who still face additional costs associated with their disability or condition. The people accessing the lowest rates of DLA are often unlikely to be able to access support elsewhere and cuts to these groups could lead to unsustainable pressure on social care or NHS budgets. In the context of council budget cuts and the NHS being under considerable pressure, people’s needs could remain unmet elsewhere. This is especially relevant given the Government’s announced changes to time-limiting contributory ESA and increasing sanctions and conditions on the disabled people who receive this out-of-work benefit.’¹¹⁵

4.4.2.2 Carers

A disproportionate number of carers are women. Nationally 3.4 million (58%) of carers are women, and are one in five carers are aged 54 to 60 – the “peak” time for caring. Of the estimated 662,000 carers who combine part-time work with caring, 89% are female.¹¹⁶

Changes to Disability Living Allowance will affect carers as well as those receiving care. If someone currently receiving the middle or higher level rate of DLA is re-assessed onto the lower rate of PIP, or judged not to be eligible at all, then not only will they lose money but their carer will lose their Carer’s Allowance. Disabled people and carers are already at high risk of living in poverty (see chapter on Health, Social Care and Other Support Services for more details). A further reduction in benefits could lead to severe hardship.

Carer’s Allowance

Carers who do not qualify for means tested benefits and who care for someone for more than 35 hours a week (and do not earn over £95) can currently claim carer’s allowance of £53.90 a week. There are 2,740 women in Bristol receiving carer’s allowance compared to 900 men.¹¹⁷

A carer in this situation would have to move onto universal credit. It is not clear whether they would then be expected to look for work, even though they are still responsible for full time care (see universal credit section below for issues relating to this).

4.5 Older People

4.5.1 What is Changing?

Increase to the age of the state pension

- State pension age for women was due to rise gradually from 60 to 65 by 2020.
- It will now raise more rapidly, reaching 65 by December 2018 and 66 by April 2020, bringing it in line with men. From 2020 the state pension age will therefore be 66 for both women and men.

4.5.2 Who is Affected by This?

Changes to the age of the state pension will equalise the pension age for women and men. However, as a result of the more rapid move towards equality than previously planned there is a group of women in their mid-50s will have a very short time to adapt to a change that will see them lose a significant amount of income.

Rash Bhabra, from pension experts Towers Watson, has argued that women born around 1954 will be the biggest losers.

'A woman born on 5 April 1953 will still be able to claim her State Pension when she is just 62 years, 11 months and one day old. A woman born a year and a day later will have to wait until she is 66. The extra three years of income could be worth more than £15,000 just looking at the Basic State Pension and could be much higher for women with substantial entitlements to SERPS or the State Second Pension. It may have been fairer to start the changes earlier but implement them more gradually.'¹¹⁸

Age UK has argued that:

If given the green light these changes will deny millions of people the chance to plan properly for their retirement and will condemn the poorest to even more hardship.¹¹⁹

Some women will not be able to continue to work for additional years in order to address their personal pension deficit due to caring responsibilities or personal ill health. Nationally a third of women in social classes D and E could not work longer because of health problems and 16% are unemployed.¹²⁰

4.6 Other Changes that May Affect Incomes

4.6.1 Conditionality and Sanctions

Benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance are already conditional on a claimant seeking work. People whom a Job Centre believes are not actively seeking work can face sanctions including loss of benefits. Sanctions will become more severe with the introduction of the Universal Credit.

The Citizens Advice Bureau nationally has raised concerns that sanctions are already being applied unfairly:

Case evidence reported by bureaux to Citizens Advice highlights that many claimants are sanctioned apparently inappropriately; others, it is clear, do not know why they have been sanctioned, and get no explanation or warning in advance of the sanction being applied. Cases highlight the impact of sanctions on the most vulnerable claimants. They are often vulnerable clients with learning disabilities who have failed to understand what is required of them, or who haven't attended courses or applied for jobs because the options have been inappropriate to their disabilities or levels of literacy.¹²¹

There have been national newspaper reports that DWP staff in some areas have been set targets to sanction people.¹²² The Government has admitted that some Job Centre managers 'misunderstood' the sanctions system and had been setting targets.¹²³ The Government claims that this has been stopped but the Guardian has reported claims by a number of DWP staff that the policy is still continuing in their area and that as a result staff are deliberately targeting the most vulnerable people, including people with learning difficulties and poor English in order to find an excuse to apply a sanction.¹²⁴

Women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence have reported being sanctioned when they were unable to attend appointments or interviews as a result of their trauma following attack. (See chapter on Violence for more information).

Case Study Benefits Conditionality and ESOL

“Robina (not her real name) is just one of numerous learners who have come to us having had letters - written in English - from the Jobcentre threatening to remove benefits if they do not prove that they have enrolled on ESOL classes. But we are not in a position to provide these due to lack of funding so all we could give her was a letter to take back to the Jobcentre to say that she was number 257 on our waiting list. It is terrifying to receive these letters. There must be countless other people in Bristol getting these letters who don't have enough understanding of English or of the system to even begin to understand what it means for them or what they need to do about it. They will presumably lose benefits.”

Sarah Renshaw, Easton Learning Centre

In Bristol in 2010, 10,220 people were referred for sanctions.¹²⁵ There is no indication that Bristol was one of the areas where Job Centre managers were setting targets to sanction people. However, we believe that because of the severe impact on the people affected and the move to stricter sanctions under the Universal Credit (see below) the impact of sanctions on claimants in Bristol needs to be carefully monitored.

4.6.2 Up-rating of benefits

What is changing?

Benefits and tax credits will be up-rated in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rather than the Retail Price Index or the Rossi Index (a variant on the RPI).

Who is Affected by This?

This will affect everybody receiving benefits and tax credits. This may affect over 82,540 families in Bristol.¹²⁶ Benefits, including tax credits make up a greater percentage of women's total income than men's (18% for women compared to 8% for men). Nearly a third (30%) of women but only 15% of men rely on state support for at least 75% of their income.¹²⁷

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has estimated that the difference between the CPI and the RPI is likely to be close to 2% each year¹²⁸. This will mean that the incomes of people on benefits will decline relative to the general population over time. Since women are more likely to be affected this will increase their poverty relative to men.

4.7 Universal Credit

4.7.1 What is changing?

From 2013 the Government is planning to replace all in and out of work benefits with a 'Universal Credit'.

- This payment will replace non-contributory Job Seekers Allowance, Working and Child Tax Credits, Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Council Tax Benefit.
- It will mean a single system of support for people moving in and out of work without needing to make separate claims.
- It will be paid out as a single monthly payment and the Government is proposing that for couples one person should claim the Universal Credit on behalf of the family.

4.7.2 Who is Affected by This?

This change will affect everyone claiming tax credits or out of work benefits. This may affect over 82,000 families in Bristol.¹²⁹

It is difficult to predict the impact this change will have on women's incomes because not all elements of the way the credit will be calculated have been announced.¹³⁰ Some women may gain because they will be able to combine universal credit with 'mini jobs' of less than sixteen hours a week. However, others may lose depending on the way the credit is calculated.¹³¹

In addition, the Women's Budget Group has raised concerns about the potential impact on gender equality of the way in which the Universal Credit will be paid¹³². Their concerns include:

- **Disincentives for second earners -** Because of the way the universal credit will be withdrawn second earners in couples (usually the woman) will be worse off under the Universal Credit. The effect of the Universal Credit may be to discourage women with working partners to return to paid work after the birth of a child. This will leave many women without an independent income and at risk of poverty if the couple separate.
- **Payment to a single person within couples -** The Government is proposing that for couples one person should claim the Universal Credit on behalf of the family. This may leave women without any independent income. There is strong evidence that money is not shared equally within households, and in some couples the person who earns money, or receives it in benefits, exercises greater (including total) control over how it is spent.¹³³

- **How often payment is made -** The Universal Credit will be paid as a single monthly payment. At the moment some benefits are paid fortnightly, while tax credits are paid monthly. The Women's Budget Group argues that this will cause problems with budgeting for some families. These will particularly impact on women because in low income households it is usually the woman who is responsible for managing day to day spending and balancing the family budget. Women tend to be the 'shock absorbers' of poverty, going without in order to ensure other family members are fed and clothed.¹³⁴

The Universal Credit will have a more severe sanctions regime. Someone who does not take part in Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) can lose benefits for 13 weeks for a first 'offence' and 26 weeks for a second.

The Universal Credit will be a major change to the benefit and tax credit system. It is important that the impact of this change is carefully monitored in Bristol, both for its impact on women's incomes and the longer term impacts on gender equality. In the light of problems with the existing sanctions system the impact of the tougher sanctions regime needs to be carefully monitored.

4.8 Impact of Other Changes

Women's incomes may also be affected by a number of other changes catalogued elsewhere in this report including

- Women are more likely to be affected by reductions in Housing Benefit; (see chapter on housing).
- Women needing legal advice or help (for example to deal with unfairly applied sanctions or mistakes in benefit

assessments) will be affected by the removal of legal aid for welfare benefit cases; (see chapter on legal advice and help).

- Women's chances of finding suitable employment may be reduced by the loss of a large number of public sector jobs; (see employment chapter for more details).

“What is becoming clear from the increased numbers of contacts that we are receiving is that the cuts and general economic situation are having an increasingly detrimental effect on women’s mental health and general wellbeing. Many of the women we work with are on low incomes and/or benefits and they already have to contend with the difficulties and inequalities associated with poverty. Reductions in benefits and other cuts will of course have the biggest impact on those already in or on the edge of poverty.”
Kyra Bond, Womankind

4.9 What are the Human Rights and Equality Impacts?

The overall impact of these tax and benefit changes, particularly when combined with the changes to housing benefit, will hit women more than men. Calculations by the House of Commons Library have shown that the cost to women of all changes including housing benefit will be £5.76 billion pounds. The cost to men will be lower - £2.295 billion.

Women are already poorer than men¹³⁵ and receive a higher proportion of their income from benefits¹³⁶, so the effect of these changes will be to increase inequality between women and men's incomes.

The impact of these changes on individual women in Bristol will depend on their situation. However, for some women the combined impact of changes to benefits and tax credits could lead to a significant loss of income, pushing those women into poverty. Lone parents, disabled women, carers and BME women are likely to be particularly badly hit.

Poverty has significant long term impacts on people's overall health and well-being that also raises human rights issues:

- **Infant mortality** is 35% more common among those from manual backgrounds than those from non-manual backgrounds.¹³⁷
- **Life expectancy** is linked to poverty. There is an 8.8 year differential between the most and least deprived wards in Bristol in terms of life expectancy.¹³⁸
- **Babies born to teenage mothers** have a 60% higher infant mortality rate and a 63% increased risk of being born into poverty compared to babies born to older mothers.¹³⁹
- **Poorer children** on average experience poorer health during their childhoods and the effects of this last throughout their lives. Three-year-olds in households with incomes below about £10,000 are 2.5 times more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000.¹⁴⁰ Children growing up in poverty experience significant long term impacts on their health, educational attainment, employment opportunities and life expectancy.¹⁴¹ In Bristol over a quarter of children grow up in poverty.¹⁴²

- **The risk of mental illness** for someone in the poorest fifth of the population is around twice the average.¹⁴³

Therefore, if the combined impact of changes to benefits and tax credits leads to a significant loss of income, pushing women into poverty, this could impact on their right to health or even their right to life.¹⁴⁴

4.10 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we

focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to changes to benefits and tax credits

The impact of the changes to benefits and taxes and the harsher sanction regime should be monitored to assess:

- the long term impact of the changes on gender equality;
- the impact of the changes on the human rights of the poorest women.

4.11 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Debbie lives with her husband Sean and their two children. They own their own house. Sean has been seriously injured at work and claims contributory Employment and Support Allowance. Debbie works 25 hours a week earning the minimum wage and the couple receive tax credits.

Debbie's employer reduces her hours to 20 per week. (1)

Debbie contacts the tax credits office to inform them of her change of situation and is shocked to be told that she is no longer entitled to tax credits. (2)

Debbie looks for another job with longer hours, but it is hard to find one that fits around her children and Sean's care needs. Debbie looks into afterschool clubs for her children but discovers that the afterschool club at her school has closed down. (3)

After a year Sean is told that he is no longer entitled to Employment and Support Allowance because of Debbie's earnings. (4)

In total the couple have lost £168.31 a week. (5)

(1) In order to avoid making staff redundant some employers are reducing hours.

(2) From April 2011 couples must work at least 24 hours a week between them in order to be entitled to tax credits (up from 16 hours).

(3) With cuts to school budgets after school clubs may be under threat; (see Health, Social Care and Other Support Chapter).

(4) Contributory ESA is now limited to one year. (See incomes and Poverty Chapter).

(5) Lose working tax credit £36.75 basic element, £37.31 couple element and £94.25 contributory ESA (2011/12 weekly rates) – financial calculation from http://www.familyandparenting.org/Filestore//Main_report_families_in_an_age_of_austerity.pdf

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- 91 Based on an average national cost for women across the UK of £229.88 and 194,995 women over 16 in Bristol – based on data from ONS <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadKeyFigures.do?a=3&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=15&g=398712&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1309897971963&enc=1>
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- 100 ONS 2010. [online] Available at <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=4&g=398716&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1313608892172&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2117> [Accessed 14 August 2011].
- 101 Based on a Bristol average of £45 per day for a full time nursery place, source: Bristol Family Information Service, verbal communication, 2 September 2011.
- 102 Draft Child Poverty Strategy [online] Available at: <http://bristolchildren.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/consultationdraftchildpovertystrategy02081.pdf> [Accessed 18 August].
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- 104 Office for National Statistics, 2010. Income support claimants Bristol [online] available at <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=276834&c=bristol&d=13&e=4&g=398716&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1315340412352&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1354> [Accessed 5 July 2011].
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5. Education and Training

5.1 Overview

Women in Bristol will be affected by a series of cuts to funding. A number of these cuts in both further and higher education will have a disproportionate impact on women either because they are the majority of those affected or because women's lifetime earnings are on average lower than men's, making it harder for women meet the increased costs of studying. Taken together, there are concerns that all of these cuts may act as a serious barrier to some women obtaining educational qualifications. This will leave women with limited options to pursue, further entrenching workplace segregation and the over-representation of women in occupations which are low-paid and in some cases 'dirty, dangerous or demeaning'. On-going monitoring of women's access to further/higher education and other impacts of higher costs is therefore required.

Educational support and guidance for families is being greatly reduced, which will have a disproportionate impact on women who make up the majority of primary, and sole, carers for their children.

5.2 What is Changing?

5.2.1 Early Years and Family Support

- While Ministers say that the funding for the Sure Start initiative has been protected, in reality it is one of several schemes, now funded as part of an "early intervention" grant (EIG), overall funding for which was cut by 11% in 2011/12.¹⁴⁵

- The BookTrust scheme funding for free books is also being cut from £13 million to £6 million.¹⁴⁶
- In Bristol in 2011/12 alone a cut of more than £3 million in local authority funding has been imposed in Children and Young People's Services which will have a significant impact on vulnerable families and single parent families. This includes cuts to the Welfare Service, the Educational Psychology Team, and the deletion of an Inclusion Officer post.¹⁴⁷
- 2011/12 has seen a cut of £0.975 million to targeted support for young people.¹⁴⁸

Connexions

Learning Partnerships West CIC's Bristol operation has seen their Connexions Centre in Colston Avenue reduce its operational hours by 50%. Funding to Connexions in Bristol has been reduced by 35.6% over 2009-10 and 2010-11. Around 34 Personal Advisers were lost from front line delivery work. The Bristol Connexions service to schools and academies has been reduced from universal & targeted work (servicing over 20,000 Bristol teenagers) to targeted work only (9,351 young people). Some schools have experienced a reduction of Personal Adviser support of between 2-3 days per week. Colleges have experienced similar reductions. Meanwhile new statutory guidance including 19 year olds in NEET targets means that Bristol City Council will have the additional responsibility of working with 11,600 more young people. The development and process for the proposed National Career Service is still unclear. The current percentage gender make up of NEET young people in Bristol is a 50/50 split.

Learning Partnership West CIC

5.2.2 Schools

- The grant received by Bristol from the Department for Education to pay for schools and colleges in Bristol has been cut by £2.6 million.¹⁴⁹ As a result of these cuts in addition to the change in services provided for transporting children to school, children's play areas, behaviour and attendance, subsidies for services commissioned by schools will be removed. Central support for schools will continue to be reduced.¹⁵⁰
- 2011/12 has seen a cut of £0.724 million to direct support for schools.¹⁵¹
- Bristol has benefited from a significant Building Schools for the Future programme. However, the BSF scheme, worth £55 billion nationally, has been scrapped and the DfE plan to replace it with a £2 billion scheme.¹⁵² This is at a time when Bristol has an increasing early years and primary school population requiring additional school building projects and a number of planned improvements and rebuilding work to existing primary schools in some of the most deprived areas of the city have been cancelled.¹⁵³
- Following changes to local authority funding and to legislation in the Education Bill covering Information Advice and Guidance within the curriculum, the Connexions Service – which was a major provider of support, information and advice to learners - is now funded to deliver only Targeted Youth Support for young people at risk of not making a 'successful transition' post-16.¹⁵⁴
- Schools will now be required to 'buy in' specialist support such as careers guidance, family liaison and assistance

with delivery of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)¹⁵⁵ – or to balance budgets by providing these services themselves.

5.2.3 Further Education and Training

Institutional Funding

- Further education colleges are facing a 17% cut in funding.¹⁵⁶
- The Government has changed its mind on rules that would have prevented colleges offering fully funded courses to people who were not on Job Seekers Allowance or disability benefits who were looking for work. Colleges now have 'local discretion' to provide free courses to students on other benefits if the training would help them into work. However, there is no additional funding for these people and college leaders have warned that it will be difficult for colleges to provide courses to all of those who would benefit.¹⁵⁷

Funding for Mature Students

- Students aged 25 and older will have to pay half the fees for a level 2 (GCSE equivalent) qualification.
- Students aged 25 or older will receive no help with fees for a level 3 (A level equivalent) qualification.¹⁵⁸

Educational Maintenance Allowance

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was paid to over 635,000 learners nationally to help them stay in education after the age of 16. Around 80% of those young people received £30 per week (£1,170 a year) – that means their household income is below £20,800 per year.

- EMA has been replaced by a new bursary scheme and the national funding reduced from £560 million to £180 million. Funding will go to colleges and schools to distribute at their discretion meaning that students in different parts of the country in the same situation may receive different amounts of support depending on the policy of their college.
- 12,000 16-19 year olds (those in care, care leavers and students on income support) will be guaranteed a payment of £1,200 a year, an increase of £30 a year from the £1170 they received under EMA. Other students will be entitled to substantially less.
- The Government has reversed a decision to cut EMA from the end of the academic year. Students who first successfully applied for EMA in 2009/10 will continue to receive payments at the same level until the end of the 2011/12 academic year and students in their first year of post-16 study who were in receipt of the maximum weekly EMA payment of £30 will be eligible for £20 until the end of the 2011/12 academic year.¹⁵⁹

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

- The Government has made a U turn on planned cuts to the funding of ESOL courses. These would have limited free places to people receiving Job Seekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance. Funding will now be available on a discretionary basis for those who demonstrate that they are seeking work, including people on income related benefits (such as Income Support) as well as JSA or ESA.¹⁶⁰ This change has been welcomed by FE colleges and campaigners to save ESOL but it has

caused significant problems for colleges who had already told students they would not be eligible for funding and had replaced ESOL courses with other courses.¹⁶¹ Government co-funding for workplace ESOL courses will end in all circumstances.¹⁶²

Apprenticeships

- 75,000 additional apprenticeship places are planned for under 25s.¹⁶³
- In 2011/12, as in 2010/11, there is an upfront 25% reduction in rates paid for all 19+ apprenticeship provision delivered to and by large employers with 1,000 or more employees.¹⁶⁴

Care to Learn

- Care to Learn provides non-means-tested support for childcare and travel costs for parents up to the age of 20 to help them continue in education and training and enter employment. The Government is currently consulting on possible changes to Care to Learn including making it means-tested, reducing the amount paid towards childcare costs, making the scheme discretionary for colleges to administer or reducing the age at which it can be claimed to 18.

Higher Education

- Universities face teaching cuts of up to 80% with funding for arts, humanities and social science subjects being cut completely. To replace this, universities will be able to charge tuition fees of between £6,000 and £9,000 (up to three times the current level of fees). The Government has said that all universities charging over £6,000 are expected to prove that they are doing enough to encourage students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Funding for Aimhigher, which supported people from under-represented groups to get to university, will end in 2011.¹⁶⁵
- There are two universities in Bristol: both Bristol University and UWE have set their fees at £9,000 per year.¹⁶⁶
- Bristol University plans to cut its bursaries from 2012/13, replacing them with fee waivers.¹⁶⁷

5.3 Who is Affected by This?

5.3.1 Schools, Early Years and Family Support Services

Bristol's Equality Impact Assessment for the review of Early Intervention¹⁶⁸ acknowledges that single parent families have been identified as more vulnerable and therefore in greater need of early intervention services than families with two parents. In addition, a larger proportion of single parents are women and Bristol has a higher percentage of children in poverty in single parent families (75% compared to 67% in other core cities). Therefore any reduction in availability of early intervention services will have a disproportionate effect on women.

Schools in Bristol have already struggled to improve the attainment levels of children and young people, which remain below the national average at GCSE and to improve school attendance rates. While the government has claimed there have been no cuts to the funding of schools, in reality real terms funding has reduced and a number of specific funding streams have been removed; these are often providing support to more vulnerable learners and extended services such as after-school clubs which are a key element of childcare.

Nationally cuts to education budgets have already led to cuts in services, such as educational psychology and speech and language services, in schools for children with special needs or mental health problems.¹⁶⁹ The government's change agenda in relation to schools is radical and fast paced, with the introduction of free schools, increasing school autonomy and changes to the role of local authorities, including impact on public scrutiny of the education system. The impact of these changes is difficult to assess but requires monitoring to ensure that the impact is understood and those that are vulnerable, including girls, receive the education support they need.

While overall girls achieve better than boys at GCSE, there are certain groups of girls who continue to achieve significantly below their peers. It is also important to continue to monitor the impact of subject and curriculum choices. There are particular issues around non-attendance for girls, this is often related to health issues and emotional problems, which also prevent girls from learning well. Reducing support resources could have further impact, particularly as it is known that girls with problems in school are less likely than boys to get the attention and support they need.¹⁷⁰ Any cut to expert support is likely to see this already unequal situation made worse.

In addition to the children directly impacted by the cuts there will be an indirect impact of the cuts on women who are the mothers of these children. Since women tend to be the primary carer the work of trying to get additional help, taking children to appointments, appealing against decisions and so on is largely carried out by women. This can be seen in the disproportionate number of women (73%) applying for legal aid for education related cases.¹⁷¹ (See Legal Advice chapter for more information).

“We’re going to see all sorts of things that we hadn’t been able to anticipate. It’s going to be back to the absolute basics for everything including careers advice and guidance, you’ll be doing it yourself, which will further exacerbate the differences between supported and unsupported kids.”

*Senior Education Professional,
Bristol*

“In the tough economic climate ahead, there will be a greater pressure on young people to go out to work and bring in money for their families – especially as it will now be so difficult financially to stay on at school or college. We also know that a number of young people - usually girls - are called on by their parents to care for younger siblings while their parents go to work to make ends meet – these young women miss school and this happens far more than we would like. I can only see this situation becoming more common”.

*Senior Education Professional,
Bristol*

Bristol has seen an increase in population since 2001 - the 13.2% increase is 2.5 times higher than the 5.3% estimated increase in Great Britain as a whole. This represents an annual average growth rate in Bristol of 1.5% compared to the 0.6% average in Great Britain as a whole. If present population trends continue, Bristol’s population is projected to increase by 31.3% between 2008 and 2028 – this is one of the highest growth rates in the country.¹⁷² The cuts to funding for education and the cessation of the Building Schools for the Future programme will have a particular impact on the availability of early years and primary school places: the Council has acknowledged that there is a chronic

shortage of school places across the city and estimates that 3,000 more – the equivalent of 14 small primaries – will have to be created in the next four years.¹⁷³ The impact on parents and carers of the projected lack of availability of childcare places and primary school places, and the increasing distances children will have to travel due to the lack of local places, is likely to fall disproportionately on women who are more likely to be the primary carers for their children.

5.3.2 Further Education

Further education colleges are facing a 17% cut in funding. The full impact of these cuts in Bristol is not yet clear but comments from staff in FE have included concerns about:

- cuts to contact time for students
- cuts to staff contracts so that they end in May rather than June, meaning deadlines for students have had to be brought forward
- cuts to pastoral care support available to students
- cuts to the ‘learning support fund’ to support students with particular needs
- cuts to courses such as hairdressing and travel and tourism.¹⁷⁴

75 % of the students on “inactive” benefits, ranging from Income Support to Housing Benefit, are female. A high proportion are also from ethnic minorities. Although the Government has done a U turn on its policy preventing colleges from providing free courses to these students it has not provided any funding to support free courses.¹⁷⁵

Funding for mature students

Women mature students are likely to be disproportionately affected by proposals to

remove funding for level 2 (GCSE equivalent) or level 3 (A level equivalent) qualifications for anyone over 25. 56% of learners at level 2 aged 25 and over are women.¹⁷⁶ This pushes more women into roles which are unskilled, often dirty, dangerous or demeaning.

These cuts have particular implications for women who may have had children young and not completed their education. For instance, a woman who wishes to study 'A' levels in order to apply for university will have to take on loans not only for her university study, but also for 'A' levels.

Education Maintenance Allowance

In Bristol as a whole, fewer than 26% of young people currently participate in Higher Education and there are areas where participation is less than 16%. In 2010, 2,819 students in Bristol received EMA.¹⁷⁷ Roughly equal numbers of male and female students claim EMA¹⁷⁸. An Equality Impact Assessment of EMA carried out in 2009 showed that EMA was particularly important in helping teenage mothers and young people with special needs stay in education.¹⁷⁹

There is no research at the local level on the effect of participation and achievement rates for students receiving EMA, but national studies suggest increases in participation rates, grades achieved by students and future earning potential.¹⁸⁰ There is evidence that EMA has had a particularly positive impact for BME girls and young women.¹⁸¹

Under the new bursary scheme it will be up to colleges to decide how money is distributed to most students (except students in care, care leavers and those on Income Support). It is not yet clear what impact this will have on students in Bristol.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

The U turn on ESOL funding will particularly benefit women since 74% of the students who would not have been eligible for free ESOL places are women.¹⁸²

However, the announcement of a U turn was made in August 2011, leaving colleges with very little time to organise courses or attract students. Many students had been told they could not get funding and some colleges had cut the number of ESOL places available significantly.

Apprenticeships

There are no figures about the number of additional apprenticeships which will be made available in Bristol. Research on apprenticeships shows that they tend to be very heavily gender segregated. For instance, women make up 2% of apprentices in Construction, 3% in engineering and 1% in plumbing, compared to 97.5% in early years (children under school age).¹⁸³ Gender segregation in the labour market is one of the major underlying causes of the continued pay gap between men and women. Female apprentices earn 21% less than their male counterparts.¹⁸⁴

5.3.3 Higher Education

Students brought up in Bristol study all over the country. Students come from all over the country to study at one of Bristol's two universities:

There are 18,615 students at Bristol University of whom 9,757 are women (52.4%).

There are 30,068 students at the University of West of England of whom 17,016 are women (56.6%).

The change in funding arrangements at universities will have a disproportionate impact on women because:

- The courses that have lost all their teaching funding (arts, humanities and social sciences) are more likely to be taken by women than by men.¹⁸⁵ In contrast the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) courses which are more likely to be studied by men have had their funding protected. It can be argued that increasing the numbers of women studying STEM subjects, which may lead to higher paid jobs, would have a positive impact on gender equality. However, as of April 2011 the Government has stopped funding to UKRC, the leading body in the UK offering advice and services to address the under-representation of women in science and technology.¹⁸⁶
- Women continue to earn less than men over their lifetime, and the 'graduate premium' is lower for women than for men. For instance, three and a half years after graduating 22% of men earn over £30,000 compared to only 12% of women.¹⁸⁷ This means that it will take women longer to pay off their student loan and interest will be accumulated accordingly. It will cost women more on average to get a degree than men. The London Economics Consultancy has estimated that 70-80% of women students will not be able to pay off their student loans in the thirty years after they graduate.¹⁸⁸

There are more women than men mature students. 40.3% of female students are over 25 compared to 36.7% of male students.¹⁸⁹ Research by the London Economics Consultancy concludes that mature students

may be particularly likely to be put off higher education by increased fees.¹⁹⁰

“The Government is making it more difficult for women in Bristol to access the top universities and the top education that the city offers. This will mean that fewer women from lower income backgrounds will be able to get a top-class degree at a price they can afford.”

Gus Baker, UBU President

There is likely to be a particular impact on women who have children. 60% of students with children have considered leaving their course as a result of difficulties to do with finances, childcare and inflexible course arrangements. Over half have taken on debts, other than student loans, to meet their living expenses whilst students. Any further cuts to childcare funding, nursery provision, and support services at institutions, will undoubtedly lead to student parents leaving their courses as they struggle to cope.¹⁹¹

Women living in poverty are particularly likely to be affected by the introduction of fees. Polling by MORI showed that school students from disadvantaged backgrounds were much more likely than other students to be put off higher education by increased fees.¹⁹² This may be a particular issue in Bristol as average household income in Bristol is lower than the national average and 14% of the city's population live in areas that are among the 10% most deprived areas in England.¹⁹³

5.4 What are the Human Rights and Equalities Issues?

Women tend to be the primary carers of children. Therefore there will be an indirect unequal impact of cuts to funding for

schools, early years provision and family support services on women.

Individually, it has been demonstrated above that many of the cuts to further and higher education will have a disproportionate effect on women nationally and in Bristol in particular. Taken together, there are concerns that all of these cuts collectively may seriously disadvantage women in the following ways:

- **Act as a barrier to women obtaining educational qualifications** – Increased fees for higher education and reduced support for further education courses will potentially act as a significant barrier to women, particularly those who have children, are from poorer backgrounds and/or are mature students.
- **Have negative impacts on women in later life** – Women who are unable to obtain educational qualifications as a result of increased fees and reduced support may see their earning potential and job prospects reduced as a result.

It is even being argued in a current case that some of the increases in costs of education amount to discrimination in terms of the right to education under the Human Rights Act.¹⁹⁴

5.5 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to education.

In order to assess the actual human rights and equality impacts of these changes on women in Bristol, the following areas should be monitored in particular:

- The number/percentage of women who are accessing further and higher education courses after the implementation of cuts.
- Other negative impacts on women of reduced support and funding for further and higher education; (e.g. ability to pay back student loans).
- Cuts and reduction of support services in schools and the impact of this on girls and indirect impacts of this on women.

5.6 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Vicky is a lone parent in her forties living with her two children in a three bedroom flat which is privately rented. Their rent is £230 a week.

Her daughter is eleven and her son is five and has just started school. She claims Income Support and receives Child Tax Credit totalling £198 a week. She gains about £2 a week as a result of changes to benefits and tax credits. However, her Housing Benefit drops by £5.31 leaving her £3.31 a week worse off. (1)

As her son has turned five she is moved onto Job Seekers Allowance. (2) Her son is having problems settling in at school. He has speech and language problems and Vicky tries unsuccessfully to get additional support through the school. (3) His speech problems make him frustrated and he starts misbehaving.

... (cont)

Vicky frequently has to go to the school at short notice to talk to teachers about his behaviour. She does not know how she can find a job that would fit around her care needs.

Vicky was left with debts when her partner left. She has been trying to pay this off but has found it difficult as her income has fallen. After struggling for many months she goes to the Citizens Advice Bureau but they no longer have specialist debt advisors(4).

(1) The local housing allowance rate for a three bedroom property has dropped from £166.85 to £161.54 (see Housing Chapter)

(2) From October 2011 lone parents with children over five will be required to move from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance and therefore be actively seeking work (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter)

(3) Funding for speech and language support in schools has been cut (see Health, Social Care and other Support Services Chapter).

(4) Funding for specialist debt advice has been extended for a year but there is no guarantee of further funding at the end of this period.

145 The Guardian 12 September 2011 Targeted cuts make every child a loser <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/sep/12/education-projects-cuts-closures> [Accessed 19 September 2011].

146 *ibid.*

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148 *ibid.*

149 VOSCUR [online] Available at <http://www.voscur.org/news/localgovernmentbudgetcuts> [Accessed 23 August 2011].

150 Bristol City Council Budget Saving Proposals 2011/12 [online] Available at : <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/City%20council%20budget%20savings%20proposals-%20October%202010.pdf> [Accessed 21 September 2011].

151 Bristol City Council (Note 147).

152 (Note 145).

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154 Learning Partnership West, 2011. Targeted Work in Schools 2011-2012.

155 Learning Partnership West, 2011. Supporting Young People and Families – Traded Services.

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162 Skills Funding Agency, July 2011. Adult Skills Budget Funding Requirements 2011/12 http://readingroom.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/sfa/adult_skills_budget_funding_requirements_2011_12_-_july_2011.pdf [Accessed 21 September 2011].

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164 Skills Funding Agency (Note 162).

165 Times Higher Education 25 November 2010 Aimhigher brought down by coalition axe <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=414416>

- 166 A breakdown of different fee levels for different courses at Bristol University can be found at: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/academicregistry/fees/band11.pdf> and for UWE at <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/feesandfunding/tuitionfees/undergraduatefeeshomeeu/2011-2012undergraduatefees.aspx>
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6. Violence Against Women

6.1 Overview

Violence and/or abuse against women is a widespread, but often hidden, abuse of women's human rights. Services for women in Bristol are already over-stretched. National research has shown that statutory agencies (in particular the health service, police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and courts) often fail to meet women's needs in a way which many women feel amounts to a repeat form of abuse.¹⁹⁵ Research by the Fawcett Society has suggested that levels of violence against women may have increased since the recession began.¹⁹⁶

This chapter demonstrates how the cumulative impacts of cuts - cuts to advice, housing and counselling services to women, cuts to the budget of the police, CPS and National Health Service combined with cuts to legal aid and cuts to welfare benefits - will all have an impact on the human rights of women victims and survivors of violence in Bristol.

We have focussed on violence against women rather than crime more generally because of the scale of the problem and because violence against women was identified as a priority issue among women's organisations and individual women when researching this report. However, many of the issues raised, particularly the cuts to police and Crown Prosecution Service budgets are also relevant to other types of crime.

The scale of the problem

- **Every month in Bristol more than 50 sexual assaults and other sexual offences are reported, 19 of which are rapes.**
- **However, Government figures suggest only between 15% and 20% of rapes are ever reported. Therefore it is likely the actual number of rapes in Bristol is closer to 130 a month.¹⁹⁷**
- **43,340 women in Bristol are likely to have been raped or sexually abused at some point in their lifetime.¹⁹⁸**
- **Between 15,400 and 22,000 women in Bristol will experience domestic violence every year.¹⁹⁹**
- **55,000 women in Bristol are likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime.²⁰⁰**
- **If sexual assault and stalking are included, then 99,000 women in Bristol (45% of the female population) have experienced at least one incident of inter-personal abuse in their lifetimes.²⁰¹**
- **Repeat victimisation is common. 44% of victims of domestic violence report more than one incident. No other type of crime has such a high rate of repeat victimisation.²⁰²**
- **Attacks on women have risen by more than 2,000 a week nationally since the start of the recession.²⁰³**

6.2 What is Changing?

Women experiencing violence and/or abuse in Bristol will be affected by a number of cuts including funding for service provision, legal advice, criminal justice agencies, welfare benefits, and housing. Here we provide an overview of the main changes before exploring each in depth in the sections below.

- **Services for women** experiencing violence in Bristol are under threat. Some agencies have already lost significant funding. Funding for other services is currently under review leaving organisations uncertain about their future.
- **The Police and Crown Prosecution Service** are both facing a budget cut which agencies fear may reduce the support available to victims and survivors of violence.
- **Cuts to legal aid** will reduce the ability of women suffering violence to get the legal help and support they need.
- **Cuts and other changes to welfare benefits** risk increasing women's financial dependency on men, making it harder for women to leave violent relationships.
- **Increased conditionality of benefits** may impact women who are unable to seek work because of trauma or on-going mental health problems as a result of their abuse.
- **Current and forthcoming restrictions on housing benefit** and on the availability of affordable rental housing may make it harder for women to move out of a shared home, (including moving areas to get away from their attacker).
- **The National Health Service** is facing a budget cut which may reduce the level of support available to victims of violence. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) which currently fund work with victims and survivors of violence are being abolished and it is not clear how far the new GP consortia will continue to fund this work.

6.3 Services for Women Experiencing Violence

6.3.1 Domestic Violence services

There are three main agencies providing services to women experiencing domestic violence in Bristol; Next Link; Womankind, and Novas Scarman.

- Next Link provides specialist domestic abuse services for women and children in Bristol including dedicated BME, South Asian and Somali services and a GP referral service.
- Womankind provides women in the Bristol area with free or affordable professional counselling, psychotherapy and on-going support including a Helpline for women in distress and women suffering domestic abuse.
- Novas Scarman, funded by Safer Bristol, also runs survivor group work programmes for women to understand the abuse, including the impact on children, and build self-confidence and self-esteem.

WISH provided face to face specialist domestic abuse services for women and children in South Bristol but has recently suffered funding cuts. The service will continue with a slightly different purpose funded by Children in Need, looking at the causes of violence with young people.

Funding was reallocated to Next Link to continue the work. By centralising the support services, victims and survivors of violence will not have less choice about who they turn to for help and support.

One of the main sources of funding for accommodation based services (such as refuge provision and floating support) has been the Supporting People programme, which is paid from central Government via Bristol City Council.

Supporting People has been cut by 11.5% and is no longer ring-fenced. This has resulted in councils in some parts of the country making cuts of up to 50% in their spending on Supporting People funded projects.²⁰⁴ In Bristol the reduction in formula grants combined with the removal of the ring fencing effectively reduced the budget for Supporting People by £9m, or 36% for 2011/12.²⁰⁵ Supporting People supports 6,996 households in Bristol, and within these households are 319 women dealing with domestic abuse.²⁰⁶

Bristol is currently faring better than in many parts of the country; (when contacted in February 2011 60% of domestic violence services in England did not yet have confirmation of funding beyond March 2011²⁰⁷). However, agencies in Bristol are still facing a great deal of uncertainty and a fear that funding may be cut in the long term.

Safer Bristol has funded a consortium of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) to work cooperatively, developing good practice, collecting data, sharing training and supporting victims/witnesses at the Specialist Domestic Violence Court at the magistrates' court. This included funding for nationally accredited IDVA training for specialist DVA support workers across all specialist DVA agencies.

Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) also funds domestic violence services in Bristol. With the abolition of PCTs, this funding is now uncertain.

6.3.2 Sexual Violence Services

The main agency providing services to victims and survivors of sexual violence is Bristol Rape Crisis. The service provides specialist support service for women and girls in Bristol and the surrounding areas, who have experienced any form of sexual violence, at any point in their lives.

The Government announced up to £10.5 million funding for rape crisis centres in January 2011.²⁰⁸ This will be available for new and existing rape crisis centres. On average there is a 3 month waiting list for specialist sexual violence counsellors.

Statutory services in Bristol for women who experience sexual violence are provided through Bristol's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), which has been in operation since 2008. The SARC provides a sexual assault support service for men, women and children in the Avon and Somerset area including information and referral services, forensic medical facilities, counselling, and support through the criminal justice system. Numbers of people accessing the SARC are growing year on year with significant increases around self-referrals²⁰⁹ attributed to funding for communications and outreach work. Bristol's SARC is funded through a partnership agreement with Avon and Somerset Police, five NHS PCTs and 5 local authorities including Bristol. Health and Police have committed to recurrent funding at current levels to the SARC. Local authority funding, for Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs), is at risk although Bristol has committed its contribution for the next year. ISVA posts were developed with support from central government funding but mainstreaming of the funding within constrained local authority budgets is a major challenge.

“The Avon and Somerset Strategic Board for the SARC has recognised the constraints across all budgets which mean that we may not be able to put further funds in to the SARC at this time. However we are committed to the delivery of this crucial service and we are determined to retain the high standards and victim focussed approach to client care as part of a full care pathway across organisations. Services to support victims of sexual violence remain a priority in the Bristol Sexual Health Strategy.”

Eithne Burt, Programme Manager, Commissioning, Sexual Health, NHS Bristol.

80% of women who report rape to the police either withdraw their complaint, or have the case dropped. Where this service is available, ISVAs have greatly reduced this attrition rate for those who engage with their service.²¹⁰

The police have made an increased investment this year for a dedicated Forensic Medical Examination Service to the SARC with an intention of improving the victim experience and delivering higher standards.

“The Constabulary is committed to providing an excellent service to victims of sexual violence and this includes a specialist forensic medical examination service within the SARC. Whilst this has proved challenging in the current financial climate, this is a priority for us; it has been achieved by exploring new and innovative ways of working including the adoption of a nurse led model of service delivery, one of the first of its kind nationally. In this way, we hope that we have improved our service to victims despite the budgetary challenges”.

Detective Superintendent Sarah Crew, Avon and Somerset Constabulary

6.3.3 Impact of these cuts

Without women’s refuges or supported accommodation, women in violent relationships may have nowhere else to go where they (and their children) can be safe. Women may have no family or friends that they can stay with, or may not be safe staying somewhere where their partner or ex-partner can find them. They may be forced to continue staying with their violent partner, putting both themselves and their children at further risk.

Bristol needs 43 safe house places for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse, but currently has only 28. In the first quarter of 2011 8 women who were escaping violence or abuse presented as homeless to the Homeless Persons Unit of the council because they were unable to gain a space in a refuge in Bristol, compared to 12 women for the whole of 2010/11. This will only get worse, unless more places can be funded.²¹¹

Women who have experienced violence and/or abuse may face a huge range of financial, legal, employment related or housing problems. These problems can be exacerbated by statutory services which fail to meet their needs. Without specialist outreach and advocacy services such as those provided by Next Link and Victim Support; and IDVAs and other specialist services such as those for BMER women, women may find it impossible to get the advice and support they need to protect them and their children, and escape from the perpetrators.

Violence against women is linked to long term mental illness and with physical and sexual health problems.²¹² Specialist counselling services such as those provided by Womankind are vital in helping women deal with the long term impact of violence.

6.4 Cuts to Policing

Avon and Somerset Constabulary have to make a saving of £40 million over four years. This may lead to cuts of 200 civilian jobs and 40 police officer posts.²¹³

All the agencies dealing with violence against women expressed concerns if there are cuts to the number of specialist domestic abuse officers who have been specially trained to deal with domestic violence cases.

Research into the experience of the criminal justice system among women who have suffered domestic or sexual violence shows that large numbers of women already ‘felt disillusioned about the level of protection and response received - from the police and felt they had unequal access to the criminal justice system.’²¹⁴ Agencies dealing with violence against women are concerned that cuts in police resources will make the situation worse.

6.5 Cuts to the Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service is facing cuts of 25% which they suggest will “delay and possibly deny justice”, to some of the most vulnerable women across the country.²¹⁵ President of the Law Society, Linda Lee supports the view that those who will be hardest hit are those in need of help with housing, mental health and domestic violence, the majority of whom are women.²¹⁶

Director of Public Prosecutions Keir Starmer has said ‘I’m determined that the budget cuts will not affect our service to victims of sexual offences and domestic abuse,’ and that violence against women is a priority for the CPS.²¹⁷ However, agencies in Bristol remain concerned that such substantial cuts

may impact on the resources available to prosecute cases of violence against women.

6.6 Health Service Cuts

Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) has to make savings of £19 million on its 2011/12 budget.²¹⁸ From 2013, PCTs will be abolished to be replaced by GP consortia (see section on Health and Social Care for more information).

Violence against women has long term impacts on the physical and mental health of women. The impact of rape and sexual abuse includes anxiety and panic attacks, depression, substance misuse, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide.²¹⁹ Women who experience domestic violence require twice the level of general medical services and three to eight times the level of mental health services.²²⁰ Half the women of Asian origin who have attempted suicide or self-harm are domestic violence survivors.²²¹

Health professionals have a vital role to play in identifying women who are experiencing abuse, and signposting them to appropriate services. Currently, a pilot project, providing specialist domestic abuse advocates in GP surgeries, is demonstrating how important such links are.

Research by the WNC for the Department of Health has demonstrated the ways in which health services currently fail to meet the needs of women experiencing violence.²²² Any cuts to NHS funding may reduce the ability of health services to meet these women’s needs still further. In particular, Womankind, has expressed concerns about the increased mental health pressures for women in Bristol, which are particularly important for women who have suffered violence.

“What is becoming clear from the increased numbers of contacts that we are receiving is that the cuts and general economic situation are having an increasingly detrimental effect on women’s mental health and general wellbeing. Many of the women we work with are on low incomes and/or benefits and they already have to contend with the difficulties and inequalities associated with poverty. Reductions in benefits and other cuts will of course have the biggest impact on those already in or on the edge of poverty.”

Kyra Bond, Womankind

6.7 Cuts in Legal Aid

Legal Aid is being reduced or eliminated for a wide range of cases. There are significant potential impacts on women who have suffered domestic violence:

- **The narrow definition of domestic violence** - Legal aid will still be available in domestic violence cases for family law issues (such as divorce, child contact and so on). But the definition of violence for legal aid purposes is limited to cases where an injunction is in place or where there is a recent or ongoing prosecution or other evidence of risk of physical harm. This would exclude most cases where the abuse was primarily financial or psychological, or cases where women have not reported violence to the police, nor applied for a civil injunction under domestic violence legislation.
- **Cuts to other forms of legal advice** - Women who are in, or who have left violent relationships may need legal advice for a number of other issues including debt, housing and welfare

benefits and most immigration advice (see below for examples). Cuts in legal aid will mean that many women who have experienced violence will not get the legal advice or support they need which may make them vulnerable to repeat victimisation.

The Legal Advice chapter of this report explores these issues in much greater detail and demonstrates how they will affect women in Bristol.

6.8 Impact of Welfare Reform

There are also worries about a number of the changes to welfare benefits including:

- **Universal Credit** - The Government is planning to replace out of work and in work benefits with a new ‘Universal Credit’. In couples this will be paid as a single payment to one partner. The Women’s Budget Group has expressed concerns that this will increase women’s financial dependency on their male partners.²²³
- **Benefits for disabled people** - Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic violence as non-disabled women.²²⁴ Changes to benefits for disabled people (see Incomes and Poverty chapter) may increase disabled women’s financial dependence on their partner. This will increase these women’s vulnerability to financial abuse and may make it harder for women to leave violent relationships.

The Incomes and Poverty chapter of this report explores these issues in much greater detail and demonstrates how they will affect women in Bristol.

6.9 Benefits Conditionality

The Government's welfare reform proposals include tougher sanctions, including the loss of benefits, for people judged not to be 'actively seeking work'.

In focus groups run by the Women's National Commission for the Department of Health some women complained that GPs who worked as medical examiners for Jobcentre Plus had no understanding of rape and sexual violence and how this might prevent women from working. Women reported having their benefits cut because Jobcentre plus staff failed to recognise the on-going problems they were suffering as a result of the violence they had experienced:

"I got raped by my manager...in the workplace, so for me to get back to work at the moment is an impossibility. The response I got from the medical response team was that it happened over a year ago and I should just get over it. They have now stopped the money...I couldn't even leave the house to see the doctor, I get panic attacks."²²⁵

There has been no research we could find into whether this has been a problem in Bristol. However since there is national evidence that women who have experienced violence have been sanctioned unfairly it is important to monitor the impact that increased conditionality has on women in this situation in Bristol. This is particularly serious as the removal of legal aid for welfare benefit cases will leave women in this situation with no access to legal advice or help to challenge these decisions.

6.10 Housing Benefit

Changes to Local Housing Allowance will mean that LHA is only payable up to the bottom third of rents in an area (see chapter on Housing for more information on this).

Impact of other cuts on women experiencing violence - A case study

"A woman called our helpline to talk about the increased domestic abuse she was suffering. Her husband had recently lost his job in the public sector and the abuse she was suffering from him had escalated. She believed that this escalation of abuse was due to him drinking more because of the loss of his employment and the subsequent financial hardship and stress on family life. She said that the abuse was mainly emotional and psychological however, she was very concerned about whether he would become physically abusive in the future."

*Womankind*²²⁶

6.11 What is the Cumulative Impact of These Cuts?

The cumulative impact of all these cuts is that there is a high likelihood of significantly worse outcomes for women in terms of the violence they suffer and its impact upon them. The most obvious impacts include:

- **Less successful investigation and prosecution of offenders** – due to cuts in the budgets of the police and CPS and cuts in services to women experiencing violence – which are vital in supporting them through the process of prosecutions.

- **More women trapped in violent relationships** – due to increased financial dependence and changes to housing benefit and less availability of refuges and other accommodation and specialist domestic violence support services.
- **More ongoing mental, physical and sexual health problems for women** – due to cuts in National Health Service funding and potential future cuts to counselling services provided by organisations such as Womankind.

“We understand in the current economic climate that domestic abuse, sexual violence and mental ill health will increase and this will create more demand for our services while at the same time our current services are reduced.”

Carol Metters, Nextlink

6.12 What are the Human Rights and Equality Issues?

Violence against women is clearly a human rights issue. Public authorities also clearly have obligations to tackle domestic, sexual and other forms of violence against women under Article 2 (the right to life), Article 3 (the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment) and Article 14 (the prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights.²²⁷

Domestic and sexual violence disproportionately affects women, and the adverse impacts can be extremely severe: physical and mental suffering that destroys women’s lives; and an average of two women a week are killed by their violent partners

and ex-partners. Therefore public authorities should see tackling domestic violence as an important priority in terms of their duties to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality.

The potential deterioration of services that has been catalogued above therefore raises serious human rights and equality concerns in terms of public authorities’ duties to protect women from domestic and sexual violence and ensure that those who have been victims are appropriately supported.

6.13 Monitoring required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to violence against women.

The impact of the cuts on women’s safety should be monitored on an ongoing basis including:

- Levels of reported violence against women, including through the British Crime Survey and to local agencies as well as reports to the police.
- The number of successful prosecutions for domestic and sexual assault (including rape), and the proportion of these in relation both to a) those assaults reported to the police; and b) those charged with the offences.
- The degree to which services are able to provide support to victims of violence and the proportion of women asking for support who are in fact supported by those services.

- The extent to which changes to benefits, legal aid and other forms of support are in leaving violent relationships or are otherwise negatively impacting upon them.

6.14 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Maria is 30 years old and works in the public sector. She rents a one bedroom flat paying £95 a week. Following a night out with friends a male friend offers to walk her home 'to keep her safe.' He rapes her.

She is referred to Womankind via her GP but has a wait for one to one counselling.(1) There is no Independent Sexual Violence Advocate service to support her making a report to the police.(2) Budget cuts in the police mean that police training in dealing with victims of sexual violence is not up to date.(3) The officer she sees is unsympathetic and without support she drops her case. She is suffering from flashbacks, anxiety and depression which make it hard for her to return to work. There are redundancies at work and she is made redundant.(4) She suspects that it may be because of the time she has had off work but cannot prove anything.(5)

She starts to claim Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit will only cover the cost of a room in a shared house.(6) Because of the rape she finds it difficult to trust strangers. She hasn't told any of her friends about the rape because she is not sure if they will believe her or her attacker (whom most of them are also friends with). She has to make up the shortfall in rent to stay in her one bedroom flat. This costs her £5 a week which she is not sure how she will afford.(7)

She suffers a panic attack on a way to an interview at the Job Centre and has to return home. She calls the Job Centre but is told that as she is not actively seeking work her benefits will be suspended.(8) There is no ISVA to advocate on her behalf. She cannot get legal aid so she is not able to access any legal advice or help to challenge the job centre's decision.(9)

(1) If funding is cut their waiting list may increase.

(2) Funding has been reduced for Nexlink's ISVAs.

(3) Police funding has been cut which may lead to a cut in the training budget.

(4) Public sector jobs are being cut (see Employment Chapter).

(5) An ISVA might advocate on her behalf or refer her to services for legal advice to challenge the decision.

(6) A single person under 35 will only be entitled to housing benefit to cover the costs of a room in a shared house (see Housing chapter).

(7) The Local Housing Allowance maximum rate for a room in a shared house in Bristol is £114.23 (see Housing Chapter).

(8) Sanctions for nonattendance at interview are getting tougher and there is national evidence of women who have been raped being treated unsympathetically by Job Centre staff.

(9) Legal Aid is being cut for benefit cases.

- 195 See for example Women's National Commission., 2010. *A Bitter Pill to Swallow: report from WNC focus groups to inform the Department of health taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against women*. [online] Available at: http://www.thewnc.org.uk/publications/doc_download/430-a-bitter-pill-to-swallow-report-from-wnc-focus-groups.html and Women's National Commission, 2009. *Still we rise: Report from WNC focus groups to inform the cross government consultation 'together we can end violence against women and girls'*. [online] Available at: http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/s/still_we_rise_wnc_focus_groups_report_nov09.pdf
- 196 Fawcett Society., 2009. *Are women bearing the brunt of the recession?* at p.7 [online] Available at: <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Arewomenbearingtheburdenoftherecession.pdf>
- 197 Women's Rape Crisis, [online] Available at <http://womensgrid.freecharity.org.uk/?p=4513>
- 198 British Crime Survey shows a lifetime rate of sexual abuse or rape of 19.7%: Home Office, 2010. *Crime in England and Wales 2009/10 findings from the British crime survey and police recorded crime (Third Edition)* at p.72 [online] Based on Female population of 220000. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/hosb1210/hosb1210?view=Binary>
- 199 Based on a rate of between 7 and 10%. Domestic Violence is often under-reported. The British Crime Survey 2009/10 records a rate of domestic violence of 7% <http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/10/hosb1210.pdf>
- Women's Aid uses the figure of one in ten based on an analysis of over ten different studies: Women's Aid, 2006. *Statistics: how common is domestic violence?* [online] Available at: <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-articles.asp?section=00010001002200410001&itemid=1280&itemTitle=Statistics%3A+how+common+is+domestic+violence> [Accessed 7 April, 2011].
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- 202 Dodd, Tricia et al., (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2003-2004* (London: Home Office).
- 203 Daily Mirror Online 28 July 2011 *Recession blamed for domestic violence increase* Available at: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/2011/07/28/recession-blamed-for-domestic-violence-increase-115875-23301704/>
- 204 Women's Aid. 2011. *Women's Aid's survey reveals fear that over half of refuge and outreach services could face closure*. [online] Available at: <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-press-information.asp?itemid=2599&itemTitle=Women%2s+Aid%92s+survey+reveals+fear+that+over+half+of+refuge+and+outreach+services+could+face+closure§ion=0001000100150001§ionTitle=Press+releases> [Accessed 2 August 2011].
- 205 Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment 2011 *Funding reductions identified re Supporting People (SP) for 2011-12* http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=36276308 [Accessed on 9 August 2011].
- 206 *Ibid*.
- 207 Women's Aid, 2011 Above (Note 204).
- 208 Ministry of Justice, January 2011, *Nearly £30million to help most vulnerable victims of crime*, available online at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease280111a.htm> [accessed 30 April 2011].
- 209 In 2009-10 there were 50 self-referrals to the SARC and in 2010-11 there were 65 [interview with Eithne Burt: Annual Report for the SARC].
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- 221 *Ibid*.
- 222 *Ibid*.
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- 225 Women's National Commission., 2010. Above (Note 195).
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- 227 See: *Opuz v Turkey* [2009] ECHR 870.

7. Health, Social Care and Other Support Services

The Context

There are a wide range of health, social care and other support services currently available to people in Bristol. Most of these services are provided or commissioned by Bristol City Council and local NHS Trusts.

There are cuts to the funds of the Council and the NHS Trusts which will affect the funding for these services including:

- Bristol City Council's £153 million health and social care budget will be cut by £7.3 million
- Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) has to make savings of £19 million on its 2011/12 budget of £761m. In addition to this, local NHS Trusts are required to make efficiencies of 4.0%. For local Trusts this is in excess of £16m.

As a result of this, both the Council and the NHS are making cuts in many of their services – including a range of care and support services.

We have not been able to catalogue all the health, social care and other support services provided in Bristol here for reasons of space. We are concentrating on those areas that were highlighted as most significant for women through our consultation with women's organisations, other voluntary groups and individual women when compiling this report. There are therefore three categories of services we analyse below:

- Adult social care
- Health services
- Services for children and young people.

7.1 Adult Social Care

7.1.1 Overview

Any reductions in adult care, or support for carers will affect more women than men in Bristol because women are the majority of those receiving care and the majority of those providing care (both paid and unpaid).

Bristol City Council's budget cut will leave less money to pay for people with high-cost care packages and to admit people to care homes. Bristol City Council argues that efficiency savings can meet any shortfall in funding; but several voluntary agencies are concerned that some people may receive less care. Therefore there is a need to monitor what actually happens in practice.

Cuts to welfare benefits, legal aid and reductions in support for domestic violence services will also impact on those receiving care and/or carers. The cumulative impacts of these cuts may lead to a range of human rights and equality issues.

7.1.2 What is changing?

- **Bristol City Council's £153 million health and social care budget will be cut** by £7.3 million, which will leave less money to pay for people with high-cost care packages and to admit people to care homes.²²⁸ Social Care services are being cut across the UK. The King's Fund has estimated that nationally there could be a £1.2billion gap in adult social care by 2014/15.²²⁹
- **Other Funding for Carers' Organisations** – Carers' organisations like the Care Forum in Bristol are finding that funding from other sources such as charitable trusts is harder to obtain and this is also putting support services at risk.

7.1.3 Who is Affected by This?

Any reductions in care or support for carers will affect more women than men because women are:

- the majority of those receiving care;
- the majority of those providing care (both paid and unpaid).

Those needing care

There are more older women in Bristol than older men; (31,000 women in Bristol over seventy compared to 24,100 men).²³⁰ Older people are more likely to have social care needs.

Bristol City Council argues that its priority is ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable and that savings will be met through increased efficiency and through personalisation of budgets. The Council is not changing eligibility criteria, but they are asking organisations providing care to be more efficient and they are not funding all they would have done in the past.²³¹

However some voluntary organisations working with carers and disabled or elderly people in Bristol have reported that, although the criteria for assessing need have not formally changed, informally it is getting harder to get a package of care and support agreed.

Voluntary organisations argue that in some cases people with quite severe physical or mental impairments are getting far less help than they need.

Bristol is a multi-cultural city and some minority groups experience a higher prevalence of specific illnesses but are less likely to access services, and services may not always meet their specific needs. Dhek

“A woman (who receives a 1:1 service at Womankind) has 2 disabled children and until recently had a vehicle provided in order to get her children to two different specialist (and therefore not the most local) schools. As her husband is working – although on minimum wage, and in receipt of the maximum tax credits – the local authority is withdrawing the service as part of the cuts in public services. At present she is not sure how she will get the children to school as she cannot afford to use a taxi. This problem is adding to the stress and having a detrimental effect on her already fragile mental health. This maybe the factor that tips this woman ‘over the edge’ and this could result in her children needing to go into residential care – this will have both a human and financial cost.”

Womankind

Bhal supports Asian older people in Bristol and has had funding cut in 2011. Without their support, Asian older people have limited means to communicate with authorities due to language difficulties, and so are more vulnerable, with added mental health pressures.

The Council states that its criteria have not changed. It is therefore important to assess what the actual impact of changes to service delivery will be on those who require care.

People who require adult social care may also be affected by other cuts detailed elsewhere in this report including:

- **Cuts to welfare benefits** (see chapter on Incomes and Poverty for more detail) including:
 - changes to Employment and Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit and the way in which eligibility is assessed;

- changes from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment and a 20% overall cut in funding for those receiving the benefit;
- a cut in the mobility component for people living in residential care homes which, it is argued, will leave many people unable to leave their care home.²³²
- **Cuts to Legal Aid** – There are proposals by the Ministry of Justice for major changes to Legal Aid for England and Wales.²³³ All Legal Aid for welfare benefits will be cut. This will include issues like appealing against decisions to deny Employment and Support Allowance or to reduce or suspend benefit payments or tax credits. 30% of debt advice clients and 63% of people needing legal help with welfare benefit cases are sick or disabled so this will have a particular impact on those receiving care. (See chapter on Legal Advice for more detail).
- **Reductions in support for Domestic Violence Services** - Disabled women are twice as likely as non-disabled women to experience domestic violence,²³⁴ so any reductions in services to tackle domestic violence services will particularly affect them, (See chapter on violence against women for more detail).
- At the last census 20,316 female carers in Bristol were providing unpaid care to another adult compared to 14,807 male carers.
- 4,673 female carers were providing care for more than 50 hours a week and 2,257 were providing care for between 20 and 49 hours a week. 459 of the 20,316 female unpaid carers were aged between 5-17 years.²³⁵
- There are now 2,740 women in Bristol receiving Carers' Allowance compared to 900 men.²³⁶

Carers are already experiencing poverty and physical and mental health problems as a result of their caring responsibilities. A national study by Carers UK has shown that:

- 72% are worse off financially – because of having to give up work, low levels of benefits and additional costs such as heating, laundry and transport;
- 54% are in debt as a result of caring and 74% struggle to pay essential bills;
- over half (52%) report cutting back on food to make ends meet;
- 53% of carers believed that worrying about finances had affected their health;
- people caring for 50 hours a week or more are twice as likely to be in poor health as those not caring;
- 27% of those caring for more than 20 hours a week reported mental health problems.²³⁷

Carers UK also found that many carers felt forced to ignore their own health because of a lack of alternative care for the person they cared for. Cases included people discharging themselves from hospital because there was

Unpaid Carers

Where social care support is not available it is unpaid carers who have to fill in the gaps. So if there is a decrease in services for those needing care, this will lead to more work for unpaid carers. This will have a disproportionate effect on women as there are more female than male carers.

The most recent figure for the number of carers in Bristol is from the 2001 census.

no one else who could care for their friend or relative.²³⁸

Carer's Allowance

Carers who do not qualify for means tested benefits and who care for someone for more than 35 hours a week (and do not earn over £95) can currently claim carer's allowance of £53.90 a week.

If there is an increase in the level of unpaid care as a result of budget constraints these problems are likely to be exacerbated, particularly with increasing numbers of people needing care in the future.

There is also a need to assess how the personalisation of care programmes impacts on carers in Bristol. Some have argued that those receiving care could now employ people with fewer formal qualifications for fewer hours than was previously possible. This may allow poor and marginalised women who would previously have been unable to do so to earn money through caring; but these changes may also have negative impacts – e.g. less organisational support for carers and less knowledge about how to perform their roles.

Carers' support organisations are also worried about how funding cuts will affect their ability to provide support for those providing care. Dhek Bhal provides a wide range of support and advice services to South Asian carers and older people in Bristol. They have had all block funding removed from their budget for 2012 (in 2010 this was £160,894) which will reduce support available to carers, and take away the 'sitting service' they provide to allow respite.²³⁹

Carers may also be affected by other cuts including changes to Disability Living

Allowance. An assessment that leads to a reduction in this benefit could also mean that the carer will lose their carer's allowance; (see chapter on Incomes and Poverty for more details).

"We can't guarantee jobs for our staff due to the block funding cuts which will result in job cuts. Without our support some of the carers who use our services will no longer be able to cope. The older people would find it very difficult to go to a care home due to the language and cultural differences, a standard care home will not cater for the food, religion and language requirements."
Zehra Haq, CEO Dhek Bhal

7.1.4 What are the Equalities and Human Rights Impacts?

Women are the majority of those receiving care and the majority of those providing care to adults (both paid and unpaid). As such they will be disproportionately impacted upon by a range of different cuts and changes (catalogued in this chapter and elsewhere) including:

- **reduction in funding** for organisations supporting carers in Bristol.
- **cuts to welfare benefits** that may affect those receiving care as well as those providing it.
- **cuts to legal advice** on welfare benefits that is heavily utilised by sick and disabled people.
- **reduction in domestic violence support services** which will disproportionately affect disabled women.

There is more uncertainty about what the impacts of cuts to Bristol City Council's Adult Social Care budget will be – the Council has

argued that efficiency savings can meet any shortfall in funding. Others have argued that people who would have previously been eligible for funding are being screened out. Therefore there is a need to monitor what actually happens in practice.

The cumulative impacts of all these changes may also lead to human rights issues for those receiving care. Human rights that could be engaged include the right to life, the right not to be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security of person, and the right to respect for private and family life.²⁴⁰

7.1.5 Monitoring required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to adult social care.

In order to assess the actual human rights and equalities impact, the following areas should be monitored:

- Any changes in actual levels of care provided to adults in Bristol.
- The impact of any reduced care on those receiving care and carers.
- The level of support provided to carers and the impact of any reductions in support.

7.2 Health

7.2.1 Overview

There will be significant savings required in the costs of healthcare services in Bristol that will affect patients, staff and voluntary organisations which currently rely on healthcare funding. There will also be

fundamental changes to the way health services are delivered.

Other than the staff cuts which have already been announced, we do not yet know where the cuts will take place or what impact changes in delivery will have. This section therefore is largely limited to highlighting potential issues that could arise in terms of equality and human rights for women. Changes to health services could have a major impact on women living in Bristol. It is therefore vital that the actual impacts of cuts on health services are closely monitored.

7.2.2 What is Changing?

- The NHS in England has to make £20 billion of savings by over the new spending review period (April 2011-March 2015).
- Bristol Primary Care Trust (PCT) has to make efficiency savings of £19 million on its 2011/12 budget²⁴¹ which include savings of £7m from University Hospitals Bristol and £6 million from North Bristol Trust.
- *In addition* to the Bristol PCT saving of £19 million, all healthcare providers are required to make an efficiency saving in 2011/12 of 4%. Based on the Bristol PCT budgets, this represents savings which include the following:

Provider	Efficiency Savings 4.0% £m
University Hospital Bristol (excluding Specialist Services)	£6.6m
North Bristol Hospital Trust	£5.0m
Avon and Wiltshire Partnership Trust (Mental Healthcare Provider for Bristol)	£1.9m
Bristol Community Health	£1.5m
Great Western Ambulance	£0.6m

- Bristol PCT, along with all other PCTs across the country are having to prepare to close down, to be replaced by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who will be responsible for commissioning services from April 2013. These CCG will be responsible for commissioning a range of local health services, and they will be required to deliver the savings set out in the NHS Operating Framework 2011.
- Public Health will become the responsibility of local authorities.
- Bristol Community Health Services will transfer from Bristol PCT to become a social enterprise in October 2011. In addition to the 4.5% efficiency requirement above, it will need to make additional savings because, as a social enterprise, it will not be able to recover VAT.

The NHS Operating Framework for 2011/12 promised a number of new developments in the NHS despite the reduction in funding growth and the resulting need for efficiency savings. Expansion of the health visiting service is one of these new national requirements, and an increase in funding for carers is another. Bristol PCT stated in its annual plan for 2011/12 that it had set aside a total of £1.3m for these two areas in 2011.

Regarding health visiting, the Health Visitor Implementation Plan requires each PCT to plan for expansion in their service for 2011/12 and up to 2014. North Bristol NHS Trust has advised that 42 additional health visitor posts will be needed in Bristol by March 2014 in order to contribute to the set national target of 4,200. Bristol PCT planned initially to provide 10 of these posts in 2010/11.²⁴² However, for 2011/12 NHS Bristol has actually commissioned only three additional posts. These have been recruited

to at Band 5 of NHS pay scales and were intended to commence training in September 2011. The posts will convert to Band 6 at the end of the one year training course. We estimate that three Band 5 posts for six months will cost around £44,000- far short of the £425,000 shown in the Bristol PCT plan published in April 2011

A similar position applies to carer support. The Bristol PCT plan showed that funding of £830,000 would be provided based on the requirements in the NHS Operating Framework 2011/12. However, the NHS Bristol 2011/12 budget indicates that only 50% of the required amount is planned to be spent in 2011/12. We do not know the actual amount that will be spent, but, like Health Visiting, we suggest that it will be a fraction of the amount required.

Overall, our view of the changes in funding in the NHS show that substantial savings in NHS budgets will be required. It is inevitable that these savings will result in jobs being lost. We also observe that promised service improvements designed to meet identified needs to support families and children (health visitors) and carers, are happening in a limited way and are substantially short of the identified need.

7.2.3 Who is Affected by This?

Staffing

- The majority of staff working in the health service nationally and in Bristol are women; for example, 92% of staff at Bristol Community Health Workforce are women²⁴³ (see section on Employment for more information).

Patients

The detail of how savings will be delivered is not available to us. However, there are local and national indications of increased waiting times:

- National research by the Patients' Association showed a fall in the number of procedures carried out across nine categories in 2010 compared to 2009. This included 11% fewer tonsillectomies, 6% fewer knee replacements, 3% fewer hip replacements and 51% fewer bariatric procedures. The research also showed that patients have to wait longer for some procedures, including hip replacements, knee replacements, hysterectomies, adenoid operations and gallstone operations. On average patients are waiting 8 days longer for hip and knee replacements, and 6 days longer for hysterectomies.²⁴⁴

Both women and men need health services and use the NHS. Any cuts to services will therefore affect both men and women. However, there are certain health issues which are more likely to affect women than men. For example:

- Cuts in mental health services may particularly impact on women who are between one and a half and two times more likely than men to suffer from anxiety and depression.²⁴⁵
- In Bristol 4,927 women were in contact with NHS specialist mental health services compared to 4,648 men. 1,866 women aged 65 and over used the services compared to 981 men aged 65 and over.²⁴⁶
- Health visitors are trained to identify vulnerable women, detect mental health issues including post natal depression, and early intervention in issues with new babies. Depression is thought to affect about one in 10 women following childbirth.²⁴⁷ Without the support they need due to reduced numbers of health visitors, women in Bristol may be more susceptible to mental health issues.

Funding for other services

- Bristol PCT currently funds organisations working on domestic and sexual violence in Bristol. These organisations are seriously concerned about the future of this funding once the PCTs are abolished (see chapter on Violence Against Women).
- Next Link have had cuts in funding to their mental health services and domestic abuse children's service. A small annual budget set aside by Safer Bristol for women with no recourse to public funds (eg Income Support, Housing Benefit, Job Seekers' Allowance etc) due to their immigration status was not funded for this year.²⁴⁸
- Mothers for Mothers (who provide postnatal illness support organisation offering support calls, helpline support, student counselling, and two mother and baby groups in Bristol) have had cuts of 8%.²⁴⁹

7.2.4 What will the Equalities and Human Rights Impacts be?

It is not possible to predict for certain the impact that these changes will have on equality or women's human rights since decisions have not been made about where cuts to services will take place. However, concerns have been raised about what will happen to services for the most vulnerable women.

7.2.5 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to health services

In order to assess the actual human rights and equalities impact, the following areas should be monitored:

- which healthcare services are reduced/ removed as a result of budget cuts and changes to the delivery of services
- the number of staff who lose their jobs
- cuts to organisations who currently rely on healthcare funding
- the disproportionate impact of all of the above on women.

7.3 Services for children and young people

7.3.1 Overview

A range of services for children and young people are also being cut or at risk in the future. Bristol has a high prevalence of child poverty with around 21,835 (26.7% of children and young people) living in poverty. Bristol City Council expect this number to rise due to the current economic climate²⁵⁰ and so the Bristol Partnership has selected child poverty as one of its two key priorities for 2011.²⁵¹

Women tend to be the primary carers for children and who use and benefit from pregnancy support services. Any cuts to services in these areas will therefore disproportionately affect women. However, so far services for children and young people in Bristol have fared better than other parts of the country.

Teenage parents

Each year in Bristol around 310 girls get pregnant before their 18th birthday. This teenage pregnancy rate (one in every seventeen girls between the ages of 15 and 17) is one of the highest in the country.²⁵²

Funding for work on teenage pregnancy which should help reduce these rates has been protected in Bristol.²⁵³ National funding for the Supporting People budget will be cut by 11.5% over three years putting the future of supported housing for teenage parents at risk.

Children's Services

Bristol City Council has protected its early years funding with a commitment to save the Children's Centres, although some cuts have been made around the city. This has resulted in a reduction in the services offered by Children's Centres in Bristol. Hartcliffe Children's Centre, for example, has had to take a decision to stop providing free nursery care for working parents in order to protect family support services. This will impact disproportionately on women, who are normally the primary carers for children.

Cuts to childcare services in Bristol will impact disproportionately on women as will other cuts to Children's Centres' services. They may have impacts on their ability to find and keep employment, particularly for lone parents.

Sure Start Early Years funding for Bristol has been protected for 2011/12, but the removal of the ring-fence on the Sure Start grant in October's Comprehensive Spending Review means this could be under threat in future

7.3.2 What are the Equalities and Human Rights Impacts?

Women tend to be the primary carers for children and also clearly it is women who primarily use and benefit from pregnancy support services. Any cuts to services in these areas will therefore disproportionately affect women. These cuts may also have wider equality impacts (e.g. in terms of women's ability to remain in employment if they lose vital childcare support).

7.3.3 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to Services to children and young people.

In order to assess the actual human rights and equalities impact, the following area should be monitored:

- reduction in services for children and the impact on women who care for those children.

7.3.4 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Aamina is in her late fifties. After her parents died she retired early to look after her sister Hibah who has Downs Syndrome. Aamina has an occupational pension of £120 a week and claims carer's allowance of £53 a week. Hibah receives the middle rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.

Hibah's needs are re-assessed in order to move her onto Personal Independence Payment. She is assessed as being eligible for the lower rate care component only, which means she loses £28.85. Aamina also loses her carer's allowance of £53.90 a week, leaving the sisters £331 a month worse off. Their weekly income is now £138.95 a week. (1)

The stress of caring for her sister and dealing with a significantly reduced income makes Aamina ill. She was receiving advice and support from a local voluntary group but the funding for this project has ended.(2) She contacts the council for help with caring for her sister. Hibah is assessed but the sisters are told she does not meet the criteria for adult social care support.(3) Aamina is worried that her mental health is seriously deteriorating as a result of the stress.(4)

(1) The income projections in this case study are based on a case study by Carers UK briefing on the impact of DLA reforms. See (<http://www.carersuk.org/Professionals/ResourcesandBriefings/Policybriefings>).

(2) Dhek Bhal have had their work supporting BME carers cut (see Health, Social Care and other Support Services Chapter).

(3) The budget for adult social care is being cut. Bristol City Council have argued that savings will be made through greater efficiencies but carers and disability organisations have reported that people who might have received help in the past are less likely to do so now. (See Health, Social Care and other Support Services Chapter).

(4) Concerns have been expressed by interviewees about the future funding of mental health services with cuts to health budgets and the potential for funding via GP consortia (see Health, Social Care and other Support Services Chapter).

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- 238 Ibid.
- 239 Interview with Zerah Haq, Chief Executive, Dhek Bhal.
- 240 See the 'Health and Social Care' section on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's website for more details at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/guidance-for-service-users-pre-october-2010/health-and-social-care/>. Cases where breaches of human rights have been found with regard to adult social care services include R. (on the application of McDonald) v Kensington and Chelsea RLBC [2010] EWCA Civ 1109; (2010) 13 C.C.L. Rep. 664 (breach of Article 8).
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- 253 Information from Anne Colquhoun: Bristol's Teenage Pregnancy Co-ordinator.

8. Legal Advice Services

8.1 Overview

Legal advice services in Bristol are facing cuts to civil legal aid funding and changes to the way in which advice is provided.²⁵⁴ East Bristol Advice Services, Immigration Advisory Services and the Central Eastern European Advice Services have all closed. Key services such as Refugee Action have also been cut by other funders. The cumulative effect will be a great decrease in the level of expert advice available. These cuts will disproportionately affect women, particularly those who are poor and otherwise disadvantaged. There are also a range of human rights concerns raised by lack of availability of legal advice in complex and difficult cases.

8.2 What is Changing?

What legal advice services are currently available in Bristol?

There are a variety of law firms and other independent agencies offering legal advice in Bristol. But legal advice is very expensive unless it is publicly funded through legal aid or other public funding. Agencies such as Avon & Bristol Law Centre, Neighbourhood Advice centres and the CAB are particularly important for vulnerable and otherwise disadvantaged people in Bristol. Between them, they offer free legal and related advice in many areas including housing, immigration, debt, employment, discrimination, community care and welfare benefits.

Legal Aid

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has proposed major changes to civil legal aid for England and Wales.²⁵⁵ These changes will potentially affect

- the scope of legal aid (what can be covered by legal aid)
- eligibility criteria (who will be able to receive legal aid)
- access to legal aid (how you get legal advice).

In addition the MoJ has issued a reduction of 10% for fixed fee legal aid cases.

Changes to scope of legal aid

The main proposals for changes to the scope of civil legal aid which will have a significant effect on women in Bristol are:

- **Debt** - Legal aid will not fund debt advice except where a person's home is at 'immediate risk'.
- **Welfare benefits** - All legal aid will be cut. This will include issues like appealing against decisions to deny Employment and Support Allowance or to reduce or suspend benefit payments or tax credits.
- **Education** - All legal aid will be cut. This will cover issues like appeals against exclusions or admissions, bullying, special educational needs or disability discrimination.
- **Employment** - All legal aid funding will be cut except for cases of discrimination.
- **Family law** - All legal aid will be cut except in cases of domestic violence - but with a narrow definition of domestic

violence (see below). Changes will cover issues such as divorce, child contact and/or maintenance.

- **Housing** - Legal Aid will no longer cover issues like protection against harassment by landlords. It will only fund advice on homelessness or serious disrepair threatening health, or for people facing eviction.
- **Immigration** - Legal aid will only cover cases where someone is detained or seeking asylum. It will no longer cover issues such as applying for citizenship or extending visas. However, legal aid will remain available for partners fleeing violent relationships (where they are reliant on their partner's status) in order to apply for indefinite leave to remain under the domestic violence concession.
- **Medical negligence** – Legal aid will be cut.

Eligibility

- People on benefits and pensioners will no longer be automatically entitled to legal aid. Everyone will have savings and assets assessed.
- People with a disposable income of more than £315 a month will be required to pay more towards legal costs.
- People with assets over £1000 will be required to pay at least £100 towards legal costs.

Access

- Rather than being able to approach solicitors or advisors directly, it is proposed that people needing legal aid will have to call a telephone advice line for a referral.

Rates of Pay

- In addition the proposals will reduce the amount paid to lawyers and agencies for giving advice by 10%. Rates will then be frozen until 2015.

Other cuts to funding which will impact legal advice services in Bristol

- Reform and cuts to the funding of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) threatens the funding they provided to a number of voluntary organisations (e.g. funding for Avon & Bristol Law Centre for discrimination cases)
- Plans to cut debt advice have recently been averted by emergency 12 month funding. This will allow independent advice agencies to continue their debt advice service for another year, but funding for the service thereafter remains unclear.
- The Home Office is cutting advice for newly arrived asylum seekers by over 60% from March 2011. This advice covers applying for asylum, support and housing. It also helps people suffering from harassment or domestic violence.

Bristol City Council has agreed to ring fence £600,000 to the main providers of advice, therefore continuing their support without inflation for the next three years under a commissioned contract to North Bristol Advice Centre, South Bristol Advice Services, Bristol CAB, Bristol Debt Advice Services and St Pauls Advice Centre. The smaller grants under their Investment and Grant Programme are currently under consultation, but this pot will be reduced.

8.3 The Impact in Bristol

8.3.1 Less Capacity to Provide Legal Advice

Figures are not available for all the publicly funded legal advice currently provided in Bristol, although this is in excess of £700,000.

Advice Network estimates that proposed cuts to the scope and rates of legal aid will lead to a £539,000 reduction in funding for advice agencies. Up to 2,988 cases will be taken out of the scope of funding by advice services alone (many more will be lost to law firms in Bristol).²⁵⁶ The cases lost will be the most complex where specialist legal advice is required including difficult debt, housing, welfare benefits, immigration, and employment cases.²⁵⁷

Many advice services in Bristol fear they will be affected by cuts in legal aid, even if the work they do themselves is not covered by legal aid. Womankind, for example, raised concerns about what would happen to the people they refer to Refugee Action for advice:

“Refugee Action have had an 80% cut in their budget, also the local Immigration Advisory Service, who provide free legal advice and support in asylum claims etc. This organisation has had a complete cut and no longer exists. We would very often signpost the clients we see in our women’s refugee and asylum seeking counselling service to the above organisations. This is no longer possible resulting in clients missing out on vital help, support and information.”

Kyra Bond, Womankind

There is already pressure on the existing legal advice structures within Bristol. During the last 12 months East Bristol Advice Services has closed (the money from Bristol City Council was redistributed to the main providers) and the Central Eastern European Advice Services has closed. There were proposed cuts to Bristol City Council’s In-house Welfare and Money Advice Service (WRAMAS) and the Brigstowe Project (HIV/Aids) due to cuts in Supporting People, but after much lobbying these were reversed for the 2011/12 financial year. It is still unclear what proposals will be made under this budget for next year.

8.3.2 Fewer People Able to Seek Legal Advice

Restricting eligibility and access to services is also likely to prevent a considerable number of people from seeking legal advice.

Most obviously, the requirement to use a telephone advice line for a referral will have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people in Bristol. Financial Inclusion Fund (administered through BIS) which provides an approximate £600,000 to advice agencies in Bristol for frontline advice was rescued at the last minute in March 2011, for a further year.

Shelter has had to reduce their services significantly due to losing a tender in South Gloucestershire and losing their Legal Services Commission contract. This means that they are no longer able to offer drop in services for advice and are restricted to 2 workers on an appointment only basis.

Shelter agrees the changes to accessibility don’t work for everyone:

“Cuts to legal aid will make it harder for Shelter clients to get advice when they need it. The advice sector is being hard hit from all sides – cuts to local authority funding, cuts to LSC funding. If the Government pushes through its reforms there will be no more legally aided benefits advice at all, 40% less housing advice and very little debt advice. Many vulnerable clients will be forced to have telephone only advice on matters such as debt. This is much harder for vulnerable groups who prefer to walk in and talk to someone face to face. Research has shown that the rapport built up in face to face advice is essential in building up trust. It is this trust which enables women to share relevant personal information such as details of domestic violence, which then enable appropriate advice to be given.”

Karen MacVean, Shelter

8.3.3 The Extra Burden of Cuts and Other Changes to the System

A number of organisations in Bristol suggested that changes to benefits, cuts to services and harsher sanctions regimes imposed (described throughout this report) were all likely to lead to an increased need for exactly the kind of legal services that are now being cut.

For instance, according to WRAMAS the changes to welfare benefits are likely to lead to an increase in demand for legal advice in welfare cases.

“Our advisors have been successful in overturning almost all of the ESA refusals. We have come across some shocking examples of people being refused ESA when they are completely unable to work. My concern is that people with mental health problems seem to be particularly affected by the current problems with the way ESA is assessed as well as those people who don’t get advice. It is particularly worrying for those people who will fall through the safety net who are unable to meet the requirements for job seekers allowance and ESA”.

Ruth Frost, Manager of Bristol City Council Welfare Rights and Money Advice Service

All agencies in Bristol are also concerned that they already see large numbers of people who have been given the incomplete or incorrect advice by local authority or DWP staff, or wrongly sanctioned for failure to actively seek work. Many of these people are vulnerable and can suffer from a range of physical and mental health problems so the impacts can be devastating – raising serious human rights concerns. With the move to a harsher sanctions regime more people are likely to face sanctions, but will not be able to get legal advice to challenge them.

8.4 Who will be Affected by the Changes?

The Impact on Women

Overall women are more likely than men to be affected by the changes to civil legal aid. 57% of those affected by the changes will be women, compared to 43% of men.²⁵⁸

More women than men apply for civil legal aid – for example 62.2% of applications for civil legal aid were made by women.²⁵⁹ In some areas of law it is even higher:

- 65% of those who will no longer receive legal aid for family law cases are women,
- 60% of those in housing cases.
- 73% of those in education cases (often bringing a case on behalf of a child).²⁶⁰

There are no overall numbers available for legal aid cases brought by men and women in Bristol. Bristol Advice Network has had roughly equal numbers of cases brought by men and women in the last year. But particular areas such as housing and community care have seen far greater numbers of women.

Impact on Particular Groups

Cuts to legal aid and other funding for legal advice are likely to have disproportionate effects on a range of vulnerable, poor and otherwise disadvantaged groups:

- The vast majority of women (and men) who receive legal aid in Bristol are the poorest and most disadvantaged.²⁶¹
- The cuts will also disproportionately impact on BME communities. BME women and men are disproportionately likely to claim legal aid. Of all civil legal aid clients, 64% are white, 26% are BME; (the ethnicity of the rest was not known).²⁶² 31% of those receiving legal advice on education matters are BME.
- People suffering from illness or disability will be particularly badly hit by cuts to advice on debt or welfare. 30% of debt advice clients and 63% of people needing legal help with welfare benefit cases are sick or disabled.²⁶³

- The proposal to withdraw legal aid from clinical negligence cases will also disproportionately impact on sick and disabled clients with 30% of cases currently being brought by people from this group.²⁶⁴

8.5 What are the Equalities and Human Rights Impacts?

The Ministry of Justice's Equality Impact Assessment claims that there is no disproportionate gender impact of the changes because the figures for those affected (57% women, 43% men) are in line with the figures for the numbers of women and men claiming civil legal aid. This completely ignores the reasons why more women might be seeking legal aid – e.g. because their legal rights are more often violated and/or they have less ability to pay for assistance.

A disproportionate number of women in Bristol will be affected by cuts to civil legal aid and other funding of legal services. These cuts will also have a particularly negative impact on some of the most vulnerable groups of women as highlighted above. There are also many ways in which these changes could lead to negative human rights impacts. For instance:

- Women in violent relationships will be particularly vulnerable to removal of legal aid and current proposals may lead to breaches of their human rights; (see box study of this issue).
- Liberty, the human rights organisation, has argued that “important human rights are at stake in many of the areas of law earmarked for removal from scope. In family and immigration matters; for

example, the right to respect for family life is frequently at issue.”²⁶⁵

- Lack of legal advice could also amount to a violation of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to fair trial) where “...such assistance proves indispensable...by reason of the complexity of the procedure or of the case.”²⁶⁶

- It is also argued by Liberty that “the cuts are likely significantly to restrict the local availability of services effectively creating ‘advice deserts’”²⁶⁸ If this were to happen in Bristol then this would be in violation of Article 13 of the ECHR (effective remedy) and the human rights issues identified above would be greatly increased.

Information Box: Legal Aid and Domestic Violence

Women in violent relationships will be particularly vulnerable to the removal of legal aid. Although legal aid will still be available for domestic violence and related family law cases, the definition of violence that will be used by the Ministry of Justice in determining eligibility for legal aid is very narrow and limited to cases where non-molestation orders or occupation orders are in place, or there is a conviction for an offence of violence towards the family thus demonstrating “physical harm” (see reference for precise details).²⁶⁹

This is significantly narrower than currently accepted definitions of domestic violence. The Government defines domestic violence as “Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”²⁷⁰

This broader definition is supported by international practice including general recommendation 19 of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and the UN General Assembly Declaration on Violence against Women.

The narrower definition proposed by the Ministry of Justice will exclude a great number of women including:

- **Women in violent relationships who have not reported violence to the police or where no further action has been taken.**
- **Women suffering psychological or financial abuse. In these cases the perpetrator may use child contact or a refusal to pay maintenance in order to exercise control over their former partner.**

Even if a woman is able to obtain legal aid, or pay for her own representation she may face further victimisation in court by being cross examined by her former partner if he has to represent himself because he cannot claim legal aid.

Women who are in, or who have recently left violent relationships may also need legal advice on a range of other problems including housing, debt and welfare benefits. Women living in poverty may find it harder to leave violent relationships. Amnesty International has found that ‘poverty and marginalisation are both causes and consequences of violence against women’.²⁷¹

- Removal of advice on complex welfare benefits issues, housing issues and immigration issues which lead to homelessness and destitution may also amount to human rights violations under Article 3 of the Human Rights Act.²⁶⁷

8.6 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we

focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to legal advice services.

In order to assess the actual human rights and equalities impact, the following areas should be monitored:

- Any decrease (in type and number) of cases in areas where legal aid is no longer available
- The impact of changes to access and eligibility requirements on the cases that are brought through the legal aid system

- Lack of availability of advice for women seeking legal help
- The impact of any of the above on the rights of women
- How other cuts to funding of legal advice services (e.g. City Council or EHRC funding) may impact upon the situation.

8.7 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Zainab is in her twenties, married with a three year old and a new baby. Her husband works in a minimum wage job and she is at home with the children. The couple receive tax credits.

They gain £349 over a year from the increased tax allowance and the increase in child tax credit.

(1) However, they are £1045 worse off during their baby's first year than they would have been if their baby was born in 2010. (2)

Zainab does not speak very good English and has been planning to start an English course. She remembers hearing about a course locally at a women's centre with childcare available, but learns that there is no longer a free crèche.(3)

Zainab suffers from post natal depression. She had been attending a local children's centre with her older child where she could have accessed support but the drop in centres she used to go to are no longer running (4). She feels even more isolated.

(1) Rise in tax threshold by £1,000 since April 2011 means anybody earning more than £7,475 pa will gain £3.84 a week. Increases in the child element of child tax credit (CTC) of £150 a year or £2.88 a week per child from 2011 (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter)

(2) Before the changes to benefits for families they would have received £545 baby tax credit until their child was a year old and £500 Sure Start Maternity Grant. Both of these have stopped (See Incomes and Poverty Chapter)

(3) Free ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses will be available for women with child caring responsibilities (see Education Chapter)

(4) A cut in Surestart funding is leading to groups becoming referral only. Many women in need of a bit of additional support will fall through the gaps (see Health, Social Care and Other Support Services Chapter).

254 In this chapter, we concentrate on legal advice services.

255 Ministry of Justice, November 2010 [online] 'Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid in England and Wales' available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/legal-aid-reform-consultation.pdf>

256 In addition South West Law, a private practice who form part of the LSC Consortium (with the partners listed above) for Social Welfare Law, hold 800 housing matters and 300 welfare benefits matters, 100 matters in Immigration and 80 in Asylum. The Immigration Advisory Service which is a VCS agency holds 380 matters in immigration and 385 in Asylum. There are also a range of private practices that hold family matters which advice agencies do not undertake but which form part of the package of cuts proposed by the consultation paper issued by the Ministry of Justice.

257 For examples of many of the complex cases that will be out of scope see "Coventry Law Centre 'Proposals for the reform of Legal Aid in England and Wales: Consultation Response" available from CLC.

258 Ministry of Justice, November 2010 [online] at p.11 Legal Aid Reform : Scope Changes Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/eia-scope.pdf>

259 Rights of Women, 2010 [online] at p.1 Briefing on the Ministry of Justice proposed changes to legal aid available at http://www.row.org.uk/pdfs/Policy/Rights_of_Women_briefing_on_Ministry_of_Justice_proposed_changes_to_legal_aid.pdf

260 Ministry of Justice, November 2010 [online] at p.46 Above (Note 258).

261 "The vast majority (97%) of community legal aid recipients in 2008-09 were in the bottom two income quintiles, with almost 80% in the bottom quintile and a further 17% in the second bottom quintile for Legal Help" See Ministry of Justice, November 2010 [online] at p.11 Legal Aid Reform in England and Wales, Cumulative Legal Aid Reform Proposals available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/docs/legalaidiacumulative.pdf>

262 Ministry of Justice, November 2010. Legal Aid Reform: Scope Changes. Above (Note 258) at p.11.

263 *Ibid* at p.63.

264 *Ibid* at p.11.

265 Liberty, February 2011. [online] at p.7 Liberty's response to the Ministry of Justice Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid available at <http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/pdfs/policy11/response-to-ministry-of-justice-consultation-on-legal-aid.pdf>

266 *Airey v Ireland* 32 Eur Ct HR Ser A (1979): [1979] 2 E.H.R.R. 305.

267 See case of *R (ex parte Adam) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2005] UKHL 66 Lord Bingham (para 7) "... the threshold [for a breach of Article 3] may be crossed if a late applicant with no means and no alternative sources of support, unable to support himself, is, by deliberate action of the state, denied shelter, food or the most basic necessities of life ..." Baroness Hale commented that to have to endure the indefinite prospect of rooflessness and cashlessness in a country where it was not possible to live off the land, was inhuman and degrading (para 78).

268 Liberty, February 2011 Liberty's response to the Ministry of Justice Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid. Above (n.14) at p13.

269 The Ministry of Justice proposals on legal aid state: 'In domestic violence cases involving, for example, non-molestation orders and occupation orders, the victim is at risk of physical harm and we therefore view these proceedings as at the high end of the spectrum in terms of importance of the issues at stake... We have therefore concluded that the importance of the issue and the characteristics of the litigants are such that funding is justified.'

Legal aid will also be available for 'ancillary relief, or private law children and family proceedings, where the LSC is funding ongoing domestic violence (or forced marriage) proceedings brought by the applicant for legal aid, or has funded such proceedings within the last twelve months and an order was made, arising from the same relationship;

- ancillary relief, or private law children and family proceedings, where there are ongoing domestic violence (or forced marriage) proceedings brought by the applicant for legal aid, where the applicant has funded proceedings privately or has acted as a litigant in person, or where there have been such proceedings in the last twelve months and an order was made, arising from the same relationship;
- ancillary relief, or private law children and family proceedings, where there is a non-molestation order, occupation order, forced marriage protection order or other protective injunction in place against the applicants ex-partner (or in the case of forced marriage, against any other person); and
- ancillary relief, or private law children and family proceedings, where the applicants partner has been convicted of a criminal offence concerning violence or abuse towards their family (unless the conviction is spent)."

See Ministry of Justice, November 2010. [online] Proposals for the Reform of Legal Aid in England and Wales. Above (Note 255) at p.40.

270 For instance see the Ministry of Justice domestic violence definition Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/domesticviolence.htm>

271 Amnesty International, 2004. [online] at p.15 It's in our hands. Stop violence against women. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ACT77/001/2004/en/d711a5d1-f7a7-11dd-8fd7-f57af21896e1/act770012004en.pdf>

9. Women's Voluntary and Community Organisations

Women's Services in Bristol
The services provided by women's voluntary and community organisations in Bristol include: rape counselling and support (Bristol Rape Crisis), housing, counselling and support services for vulnerable women and their children, including teenage mothers and women leaving violent relationships (Nextlink), services for women experiencing domestic violence (Wish, NextLink), support groups for BME women (Awaz Utoah, Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group), care and support to women who are involved in street-based sex work (One25), and counselling and support for young women (Platform 51).

9.1 Overview

Many voluntary and community sector organisations in Bristol expect to see a drop in funding over the next three years. Women's organisations appear to be particularly vulnerable to cuts with some expecting cuts of up to 70% of their funding in the next year.

This section examines the impact of the spending cuts on voluntary sector and community organisations providing services to women in Bristol. We interviewed representatives from a range of women's organisations and other groups for this report. Not all of them wanted to be quoted - either because they were worried about the impact of their comments on future funding, or because they were hoping to avoid cutting services and did not want to worry service users. The quotes used in this section are

indicative of the comments made by all the groups we contacted.

9.2 What is Changing?

There are a number of ways in which funding for women's organisations in Bristol are being placed under major strain:

- A number of funding streams from central Government for voluntary organisations have ended or are due to end. Acevo estimates that charities will lose up to £4.5bn due to public spending cuts.²⁷²
- Bristol City Council is facing a £70 million spending cuts programme over four years and in November 2011 £240,000 will be cut from Bristol City Council's health and social care funding to the voluntary and community sector.²⁷³
- Those voluntary groups that retain their funding will still have at least a 6% cut.²⁷⁴
- Although the Council has not made the disproportionate cuts to the funding of voluntary organisations seen in some areas, some grants have been cut, and the future of others is under review and currently uncertain.
- There is a drop in charitable donations from individuals.²⁷⁵
- Many charitable and non-charitable trusts are receiving an increasing level of grant applications. At the same time a falling return on investments means the success rate for applications is falling.
- Many voluntary organisations are facing increased demand from the communities they serve as a result of the recession and the impact of other public spending cuts.

“Cuts [by] both local and national government are impacting on Voluntary and Community Sector groups providing front line support; those working with the most vulnerable are particularly affected.”

Wendy Stephenson, Chief Executive, VOSCUR²⁷⁶

Bristol City Council is working with the voluntary sector to develop a consortium that will involve voluntary organisations in assessing need and co-designing services as part of the commissioning process. Some voluntary organisations have praised the Council for avoiding the ‘slash and burn’ approach of Councils on other parts of the country. However, the majority of voluntary organisations in Bristol are concerned about their future funding and are doubtful whether smaller organisations will be able to survive this model.

9.3 The Impact on Women’s Organisations in Bristol

Women’s organisations do not only face problems with funding from public bodies. A number of organisations commented upon how much more difficult it is becoming to secure funds from charitable and non-charitable trusts. The cuts to statutory funding have meant more and more organisations are chasing the same money. Research has shown that 70% of women’s organisations felt that being women-only is a barrier to accessing funding, despite the documented benefits of women-only services in the community and voluntary sector.²⁷⁷ Women’s charitable organisations are more financially vulnerable and less likely to survive than other, similar service charities.²⁷⁸

Not surprisingly the funding cuts are expected to lead to a similar decrease in the organisations’ capacity to deliver services to

Case Study 1: Kinergy

Kinergy provides a counselling service for survivors of sexual abuse and rape in the area. They also work in partnership with Ashfield Young Offenders Institute and Horfield and Leyhill Prisons providing counselling within those establishments.

The number of new clients referred to them has risen by over 60% for the first seven months of 2011 compared to last year’s figures. A few paid counsellors are funded by the prison services and grants but the majority of counsellors are volunteers. The number of volunteers has doubled from 12 to 24 to meet the increased demands over the last two years. There is a three to six month waiting list to see a counsellor after the initial consultation.

Kinergy is mostly funded by grants plus a small percentage from client donations. Most clients cannot afford to pay for this service and without volunteer counsellors they would not receive the help they need.

Overall, the charity has half of its funding supplied by grants until 2013, but still needs to achieve the balance to maintain current service levels. Nothing is certain post 2013. With reduced funding from the local council across the board, many more organisations are all competing for a diminishing pot of money.

In the new NHS framework it is uncertain how smaller organisations, such as Kinergy, will fit into the model.

women. Women's voluntary organisations argue that there is little or no spare capacity to make savings without cutting services. A national WRC survey found that 52% of

women's organisations believed the cuts will lead to a restriction on the services they can provide, while 25% believe it will lead to the closure of their organisation.²⁷⁹

Case Study 2: One25

One25 reaches out to women trapped in street sex work in Bristol, supporting them to break free and build new lives away from violence, poverty and addiction. They provide four main services:

- Night Outreach sends a van out 5 nights per week and provides nutritious food, hot drinks and a chance to talk and get advice in a safe space. They give access to a mobile phone to contact emergency hostels, information on 'ugly mugs' (perpetrators of street violence), warm clothes, personal alarms, first aid, condoms and more.
- A drop in service where women can gain expert advice and help from visiting professionals including doctors, addiction workers, basic skills tutors, etc.
- Casework which supports women on a one to one basis to establish themselves in the basic aspects of life such as accommodation, health, benefits, family support, education.
- Naomi House: residential addiction treatment and parenting programme for mothers and their babies, offering intensive support to mums committed to a life free from substance misuse and sex-work and giving their babies a better start in life.

One25 is funded through a mix of government and voluntary grants, local council funding, and donations. In 2009/10, Government grants made up over a third of the funding for One25 but in 2010/11 no new government grants were made available due to the spending cuts. The charity is fighting hard to continue their essential services.

One caseworker is funded by Bristol City Council, out of a staff of 24 people. This vital post supports women through their Community Care Assessments (CCA) which help them obtain drug and alcohol misuse rehabilitation. This role is currently exceeding all targets set by the council. Getting women into rehabilitation and off the streets saves money in health care, social work, the prison system and policing.

At a recent count One25 found that there are 220 women working on the streets in Bristol, which is more than the 170 they previously estimated. Potential increases could be due to increased pressure from benefits cuts, increased levels of violence or substance misuse. Last year, 241 attacks were reported to One25, who work closely with the police and court systems to promote justice for these women. Bristol now has the second highest conviction rate for attacks against sex-working women and was the first city to secure victim compensation for this group – previously deemed 'undeserving due to their character'.

Providing a 'women only' space in Bristol for these women is essential due to their issues. The women need a space to discuss their concerns, which are often related to attacks by men, childhood traumas or health issues, and they state that they would not feel comfortable being seen by a male support worker. Appropriate male volunteers are included in more relaxed settings, such as their annual summer outing or Christmas mum and children's party. One25 is reliant on volunteers to continue its service. The Outreach and Drop in service work has around 130 volunteers, and in addition there are around 8 office staff who deal with the charity management, admin and fundraising.

One25 are concerned about future funding but are committed to continuing the service for women on the streets in Bristol. "We have to continue to support women on the streets in Bristol; we have no choice, so we have to do more with less."

Case Study 3: BCSW

Bristol Crisis Service for Women is a charity set up in 1986 to support women in emotional distress. BCSW particularly helps girls and women who harm themselves (often called self-injury).

In February 2011 BCSW closed its helpline, which had been running since 1986, for the last time.

“We are very sad to see this day come. We were hoping that we would be able to generate funds to keep the helpline going, but unfortunately we haven’t been able to achieve this. We are hoping to raise funds in the future but it seems particularly difficult in today’s economic climate.”

Hilary Lindsay, Director, BCSW²⁸⁰

9.4.1 The Importance of Women-Only Space

Women-only space is particularly important to some women in Bristol. Support groups which work with young women such as Platform 51 see this as particularly important:

“Our Platform 51 women-only centre in Knowle West provides services, activities and programmes tailored to the needs of girls and women in Bristol. The fact that it is a women only service means we can deliver specialist programmes which meet individual women’s needs in a non-judgmental, supportive environment. Whether they come to us for accredited training, counselling, art therapy, or sports activities women appreciate the safe space they can have to themselves.”

Cezara Nanu, Platform 51

9.4 The Impact on Women in Bristol

Women’s voluntary organisations play a unique role in supporting and empowering women. Research by the Women’s Resource Centre has shown that women’s voluntary organisations provide a particular benefit to women through:

- provision of women-only space.
- focus on empowerment and independence.
- service user involvement and high level of peer support.
- integrated ‘one-stop-shop’ service.
- a needs-based approach.
- reaching ‘hard to reach’ women.²⁸¹

Without this women-only space, some women in Bristol may become even more isolated and marginalised.

9.4.2 Tackling Violence Against Women

Women’s organisations are particularly important for women who have experienced violence. The reduction or loss of these services could have a potentially devastating effect on the women who need them.

See the Violence against Women section (chapter 6) for more information about cuts to services dealing with violence against women.

“The cases we address cover incidents such as assaults, ill health, as well as domestic violence which is often a taboo subject within the community. If this project was to cease, the impact of the local community would be highly destructive. South Asian women would not have culturally appropriate service provision that caters for their specific needs and relieve them from victimisation. This would cause victimisation within the South Asian communities to increase which would directly influence mental health and unemployment to increase within the South Asian community.”

Simi Chowdhry, Awaz Utaoh

9.4.3 Increasing Women’s Skills and Confidence

Women’s organisations also run projects to give women new skills and help them find work.

“If we can’t secure funding, there will be a direct impact on the women we support. We are already feeling the impact as an organisation regarding our capacity and resources to deliver. For example we used to deliver an employment project covering CV writing, confidence building and so on, to empower women in gaining employment. The funding stopped, so we can’t offer this invaluable support at the moment. Our drop-in, signposting and advice service is mainly accessed by South Asian women.

Our volunteers are made up of isolated and vulnerable South Asian women. Awaz Utaoh would have to decrease its volunteering opportunities if we experience a reduction in funding. This would result in many South Asian women being isolated in their homes unable to take part in civic life due to language and cultural barriers.”

Simi Chowdhry, Awaz Utaoh

Projects of this type can have a big impact on women’s confidence and self-esteem.

“Miss X came to us fleeing domestic abuse from her husband and extended family members from another city. She has no English skills and was very lonely, isolated, vulnerable and living on the streets. By supporting and working in partnership with her she has managed to build a new life for herself. Through our project she felt empowered to turn her life around. She has not only remarried, but is a mother of four children, owns her own home and runs a successful catering business. We have many more service users like Miss X which without our service may become forgotten by mainstream services”.

An Awaz Utaoh team member

This in turn can lead to improvements in mental health outcomes for women.

9.4.4 Services to BME Women

Bristol is a diverse city. BME women’s organisations in Bristol work to ensure that the specific needs of BME women are recognised and addressed by statutory and voluntary organisations delivering services.

Nationally, 40% of ethnic minority women live in poverty, twice the proportion of white women, and current government policy looks set to exacerbate ethnic minority women’s poverty.²⁸² Ethnic minority women are more likely to report ill-health than other groups in the population, and mental health is an area of particular inequality.²⁸³

Research by Oxfam has highlighted the vital role of ethnic minority women’s organisations:

- They know and understand their communities and the women they work with.

- They work with women in need who have little or no other support and tackle the deep disadvantage at the intersection of race and gender.
- They act as advocates for, and can guarantee policy-makers access to, one of the most marginalised and under-represented groups in the UK.
- Crucially, because these organisations belong to the communities they work with, they can legitimately raise issues particular to their ethnic community, and lobby for improved policies and services that respond to the reality of ethnic minority women's lives.²⁸⁴

Ethnic minority women's organisations are already an under-funded sector.²⁸⁵ In some ways, small and grassroots women's organisations will be less hard hit by the cuts because they were already reliant on unpaid volunteers and had less infrastructure. However the cuts to public funding are likely to mean that the streamlining of services will see more specialist provision being offered by a limited number of larger organisations, especially where it may not be possible to fund targeted support to BME VCS organisations to assist with competing for contracts and monitoring outcomes.²⁸⁶ For example in Bristol Next Link – which is a specialist women's organisation but not a specialist ethnic minority women's organisation - is funded to provide a South Asian Crisis Response service and a BME Training, Rights, Empowerment and Employment service. While it can be important for support around culturally sensitive subjects to be available 'outside' communities it is vital that the work of small community organisations is also sustainable.

9.5 What are the Equalities and Human Rights Impacts?

Women's voluntary organisations are playing many vital roles in Bristol in advancing equality between men and women, reducing discrimination and improving women's rights, including:

- Tackling social, health and economic inequalities through training, education, employment and healthcare projects (e.g. Silai for Skills)
- Tackling domestic and sexual violence and its impact which disproportionately affects women (e.g. Next Link, Wish, Womankind)
- Working with some of the most vulnerable, isolated and otherwise disadvantaged women in the community (e.g. Awaz Utoah, Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group)

Other chapters of this report catalogue how budget cuts, job losses and other changes in relation to education, employment, domestic violence, care and support services, health services and legal advice threaten to increase inequality between men and women and even threaten women's human rights. Many women will want to turn to women's organisations for support, but these organisations are anxious and uncertain about their future.

The disproportionate impact of the cuts on women makes it particularly crucial that women's organisations which are fighting discrimination and protecting the rights of women are able to carry on providing these services to the women who use them.

9.6 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to women's organisations and voluntary organisations providing services to women.

The impact of the cuts should be monitored on an ongoing basis including:

- The level of (reduction in) funding for women's organisations and voluntary organisations providing services to women as compared to other voluntary organisations in Bristol.
- The impact of any reduction in funding on these organisations and their provision of services to women.
- The impact on women who have lost access to services or had services reduced.

272 Guardian, 20 October 2010. Spending review: questions over charities and the 'big society' <http://tinyurl.com/66b7p4j> [Accessed 2 October 2011].

273 VOSCUR magazine Thrive Sept 2011 Editorial p2

274 Reductions in 11/12 are limited to 1-year funded groups that end in 10/11 and a 7% reduction (£78K) to groups on 3-year funding that ends in 11/12. Bristol City Council Budget Saving proposals [online] Available at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/City%20council%20budget%20savings%20proposals-%20October%202010.pdf> [Accessed 29 August 2011].

275 The total amount of charitable giving declined during the recession, down by 11% from 2007/08. A combination of fewer people giving and smaller average donations led to the decline. NCVO, 2009. The Impact of the Recession on Charitable Giving in the UK [Accessed 2 October 2011].

276 Quote from Voscur magazine Thrive! April 2011, Editorial p4. Available online at <http://issuu.com/voscur/docs/thriveapril2011> [Accessed 2 October 2011].

277 Women's Resource Centre, 2007. Why women-only?: The value and benefit of by women, for women services. [online] <http://tinyurl.com/3cohxg6> [Accessed 2 October 2011].

278 WRC, 2010. Assessing the Financial Vulnerability of Charities Serving Women. Available online at http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/a/assessing_the_financial_vulnerability_of_charities_serving_women.pdf [Accessed 3 October 2011].

279 Women's Resource Centre, 2011. Survey on Women's Organisations and Funding. Quoted in WRC, 2011. Women and the Cuts. [online] http://www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/f/factsheet_women_and_the_cuts_word.doc [Accessed 2 October 2011].

280 From BCSW website, <http://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/news/bcsw-very-sad-see-end-their-23-year-helpline-service> [Accessed 2 October 2011].

281 Women's Resource Centre, 2007. Why women-only?: The value and benefit of by women, for women services. [online] <http://tinyurl.com/3cohxg6> [Accessed 2 October 2011].

282 Fawcett Society, 2009. Poverty Pathways: Ethnic Minority Women's Livelihoods. Available online at <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Povertypathways.pdf> [Accessed 3 October 2011].

283 Ibid.

284 Oxfam, 2011. Hidden Voices: Including Ethnic Minority Women in Policy-Making. Available at <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/download?Id=366295&dl=http://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/oxfam/bitstream/10546/127935/1/hidden-voices-women-policy-uk-080411-en.pdf> [Accessed 3 October 2011].

285 see for example Birmingham Race Action Partnership, Black Women's Network, 2001. Still on the margins: mainstreaming Black women's issues.

286 Commons Select Committee Session 2010-11. Parliamentary Select Committee on Communities and Local Government: Localism: Memorandum from One North West (LOCO 075). Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmcomloc/writev/localism/loco075.htm> [Accessed 3 October 2011].

10. Transport

10.1 Overview

In deciding whether and where to make cuts in transport spending, Bristol City Council is starting from a position where there are already inequalities between women and men in the provision of services. Careful monitoring and provision of support is therefore required to mitigate equality and human rights impacts of any cuts. However, there is no evidence that the different transport needs of women and men in Bristol are being investigated or influencing budget decisions.

We already disadvantage non-car owners: Bristol is ranked 13th out of 19 cities for car dependency and 18th of 19 for quality and uptake of local transport.²⁸⁷ Even car owners are feeling the cost of fuel increases and turning to public transport. Bus transport here is some of the most expensive in Europe and the patchy bus routes can leave women isolated and unable to get to work, education centres or support organisations (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, women's drop in centres).

Because transport connects women to the workplace and to their support network (support services, family and friends) transport has an impact on their life chances and social mobility. Key issues for women are the cost of public transport, the poor availability of local buses on non-radial routes and poorly-linked timetables for multi-leg journeys.

10.2 What is changing?

Bristol has already had a 20% cut in bus service operators' grants and reductions in the government's concessionary travel reimbursement since 2006.²⁸⁸

10.2.1 Public Transport

Most of the bus services in Bristol are run commercially. However, bus services are under threat from local spending cuts because Bristol City Council subsidise 81 routes that are socially necessary but not commercially viable²⁸⁹. The following changes have already occurred:

- Cuts to Bristol Transport budget of £2.2 million for 2011/12.²⁹⁰
- Bristol City Council had a budget of £5 million for transport subsidies but has planned to cut its support by £1m over the next two years.²⁹¹
- The Easyrider Bus Service, which was dedicated to helping the elderly and less-abled get to the local shops and central areas, has been scrapped from end of August 2011.²⁹²
- Cuts to several bus services have already been announced which will result in fewer evening services, no subsidised bank holiday services and removal of the commuter ferry.²⁹³
- Nationally local authority bus cuts amounted to £34 million. In addition some city councils are planning to cut all their supported services, and 14 councils are cutting support by more than £1 million each.²⁹⁴
- Bristol City Council is reducing the budget for supporting transport to schools and colleges.²⁹⁵

Furthermore, the spending cuts make it less likely that the Council will consider further subsidies to mitigate the gender inequalities in the current commercial services. These inequalities would emerge and could be addressed if there were an adequate gender impact assessment.

Bristol's bus fares are already amongst the highest in Europe.²⁹⁶ There has been growing dissatisfaction with the reliability, quality and frequency of the local transport. In a survey where women were 61% of the respondents, only 38% said they felt the buses were value for money. Personal safety at the bus stop, safety on the bus, and length of time to wait for a bus among were some of the key areas where Bristol scored lower than the national average.²⁹⁷

10.2.2 Fuel Prices

Bristol residents have a reliance on cars, but not everyone has access to a car. In 2005 84% of men lived in a household with a car nationally, compared with 78% of women.²⁹⁸ For those women who can afford a car the cost of fuel has risen dramatically in the last two years meaning that 61% of people who drive or use a car are definitely or probably considering using public transport following the recent increase in petrol and diesel prices.²⁹⁹

Single women gain the least from the changes to the fuel escalator and reduction in fuel duty announced last year. Single women parents and female lone pensioners will have the smallest increase to these changes.³⁰⁰ When added to the cumulative impact of the other changes (e.g. cuts to benefits, unemployment) this will have a disproportionate effect on women.

“High transport/fuel costs has meant that women are finding it extremely difficult to use public transport because of increased costs and we as an organisation have had to reduce the use of Community Transport. All this makes it impossible for vulnerable and isolated women to access the much needed support services available for them”.
Simi Chowdhry, Awaz Utoah

10.2.3 Cycling

This year Bristol will be spending between £1 million and 1.5 million on cycling infrastructure in the city. Bristol City Council spent £22 million investment in Bristol cycling on improvements to routes and signage.³⁰¹ Whilst improvements have been made to cycling in Bristol as part of the Cycling England award, there are large groups of women for whom cycling is not possible (for example women with a baby or more than one child, and disabled women) or times when cycling would not work (e.g. shopping).

10.3 Who is Affected by This?

Women use buses more than men so changes in these areas will have a disproportionate effect on women.³⁰² Shift workers, people going on a night out, and elderly and disabled people wanting to go out at the weekends are all at risk from these changes to services. The frequency and reliability of public transport is particularly important for women, who often have to combine journeys to work, school, childcare and shopping, thus punctuality and speed is at a premium.

10.3.1 Women living in Isolated Areas

Bristol bus services cut across the borders of South Gloucestershire and Bristol councils and there is currently no organisation that oversees the end to end passenger services for Bristol.

Social isolation has been linked to mental health issues. Women are more vulnerable to social isolation because of higher levels of poverty, lone parenthood, lack of mobility (being unable to drive or to own a car), longer life expectancy, and fear of going out alone.³⁰³

“Many more bad landlords are appearing on the scene leading to unsafe insecure housing being the only option for many of the poorer families in society. This will often be isolated from the rest of Bristol and rising travel costs as well as reduction in public transport and travel subsidies will make certain poorer communities even more isolated and provide a barrier to the inhabitants trying seeking work/training in other parts of the City.”

Karen MacVean, Shelter

Bus timetable incompatibility and reduction in frequency of night bus services means more women will spend longer waiting at bus stops, especially during the evenings. Reflecting their lower access to cars³⁰⁴, women are more likely to rely on walking and public transport in travelling to local services.

“In general less money for transport will make women more vulnerable to isolation and to street intimidation/violence.”

Susan Lawrence, Rape Crisis

10.3.2 Disabled Women

Disabled people use buses more frequently than any other equalities group, and women use buses more than men, so disabled women will be more disadvantaged from the cuts to services and price increases. Disabled people use Community Transport the most and so cuts to these services would affect this group more than others.

Coupled with the reduction in benefits for some disabled women this could create a disproportionate cumulative impact.

10.3.3. Women Accessing Services

Since women use public transport more than men in Bristol, there are a number of issues facing female passengers:

- Two out of five jobseekers say lack of transport is barrier to getting a job.³⁰⁵
- Nationally 31% of people without a car have difficulties travelling to their local hospital, compared to 17% of people with a car.³⁰⁶
- On-going research by the University of East London, which is focusing on women’s experiences of antenatal care, suggests a link between transport problems and failure to attend appointments.³⁰⁷
- In addition, motoring costs account for 24% of the weekly expenditure of households in the lowest income quintile who have cars, compared with 15% for all households in the UK.³⁰⁸
- Low levels of English language and literacy skills can prevent people from being able to access transport. This can be a particular problem for people from black and minority ethnic communities.
- Removal of Education Maintenance Allowance will restrict student’s ability to get to schools or colleges. 16-18-year-olds were spending on average £370 a year on transport in 2003. 47% of 16-18-year-olds experienced difficulty with this cost.³⁰⁹

“We’ve got no shopping facilities so you’ve either got to have your own transport or use public transport. It’s easy going with empty bags – it’s coming back that’s the problem never mind if you’ve got kids with you”

Lone mother quote (National)³¹⁰

Women use public transport more than men and this is set to increase as more women will be adversely affected by the changes to benefits and a reduction in employment opportunities. This may impact on women's safety and vulnerability to violence whilst travelling or waiting for buses. This is not only from strangers, but also from people women know. Women might be more likely to accept lifts or offers to walk home if public transport is restricted; making them vulnerable to attack from people they know.

10.4 What are the Human Rights and Equalities Issues?

The cuts to services and high fares are present at a time when women's employment is already suffering. There are other problems with access to health and education services, and women are more reliant on public transport taking them across Bristol to fulfil their multiple roles as parents, carers, employees and accessing key services within the city.

In addition to the cuts to benefits for disabled women the transport issues may cause mobility issues due to lack of appropriate transport and high cost of public transport.

10.5 Monitoring Required

The main mechanisms through which action can and should be taken to deal with all the equality and human rights described in this report are set out in Chapter 11. Here we focus on setting out the specific monitoring required with regard to transport.

To assess the actual human rights and equalities impact of changes to transport in Bristol the following areas should be carried out:

- Undertake a gender budget analysis of proposed spending cuts so that cuts balance out rather than exacerbate existing inequalities.
- Undertake a needs analysis to find out whether people can get to work, learning, health care or other activities in a reasonable time and cost, and whether the differing needs of women and men are being equally met in order to decrease social exclusion and gender inequality in transport provision.

The following metrics should also be monitored:

- Price of public transport in Bristol relative to other core UK cities.
- Public transport take up.

10.6 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential impact of the cuts

This is a fictitious scenario. It is an example of a situation that *might* happen if the concerns raised in this report about the impact of the cuts prove to be justified.

Rachel lives in Hartcliffe and is a mature student training to be a nurse. She is the single parent of a 2 year old son. She uses a mix of family support and a nursery to enable her to attend university.

She travels by a series of two buses on the outward and return journeys to classes at UWE which takes an hour each way. She cannot afford the outlay for an annual pass and so has to pay higher fares on a monthly basis of £39 a month.

After class the bus does not arrive on time so she is late returning to pick up her son and her childcare costs increase and she feels very stressed knowing that she will be late. With the loss of her Education Maintenance Allowance and a reduction in Local Housing Allowance the cost of transport and childcare become untenable and she has to withdraw from university.

Consequently Rachel is unable to improve her career prospects and feels more isolated.

287 2010 Car Dependency Scorecard [online] Available at: http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/car-dependency-scorecard_1.pdf [Accessed 31 August 2011].

288 West of England Partnership Joint Transport Executive Committee Minutes 21 January 2011. Available at: <http://www.westofengland.org/media/200935/jtec%20public%20forum%2021.01.11.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

289 BBC News 27 May 2011 [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-13568322> [Accessed 31 August 2011].

290 Campaign for Better Transport website [online] Available at <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses/list#2867> [Accessed 29 August 2011]

291 As above (Note 288).

292 Bugler Coaches website [online] Available at <http://www.buglercoaches.co.uk/pagedraw.aspx?id=93> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

293 BBC News 2 June 2011 [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-13625846> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

294 Daily Mail [online] Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1353160/Budget-cuts-leave-parts-UK-NO-public-transport.html> [Accessed August 29 2011].

295 City council budget savings proposals: October 2010 Available at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/bristol-city-council-budget-savings-plan> .

296 FreeBus Research [online] Available at: <http://www.freebus.org.uk/research.html> [Accessed August 29 2011].

297 Passenger focus Bus Passenger survey [online] Available at: <http://www.passengerfocus.org.uk/research/bus-and-coach/content.asp?dsid=4548> [Accessed 31 August 2011].

298 Department for Transport inclusion checklist [online] Available at: <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/public-transport-and-women/checklist.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

299 The Guardian 31 July 2008 Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/jul/31/petrol.diesel.publictransport?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

300 WBG The Impact on Women of the Budget 2011 Available at: http://wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports_7_282363355.pdf [Accessed 6 September 2011].

301 BBC News 7 March 2011 Bristol Cycling City scheme misses target [online] Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-12663323> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

302 As above (Note 298).

303 As above (Note 298).

304 As above (Note 296).

305 Department for Transport, 2010 Social Impacts and social equity issues in transport workshop. Available at: <http://www.tsu.ox.ac.uk/research/uktrcse/UKTRC-fendotchin.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

306 Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion Unit, February 2003., Interim findings from the Social Exclusion Unit Available at: <http://www.developbromley.com/public/HomeandNeighbourhood/Evidence/Transport.and.Social.Exclusion.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

307 *Ibid.*

308 Feasibility Study of Road pricing in the UK: a Report to the Secretary of State Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roads/roadpricing/feasibilitystudy/studyreport/annexsocialinclusion> [Accessed 5 September 2011].

309 As above (Note 306).

310 As above (Note 306).

11. Conclusions and Action Required

11.1 Overview

The human rights and equality impacts of the cuts in public spending on women in Bristol have been catalogued in each of nine chapters of this report. This chapter summarises the main impacts and sets out the key mechanisms for tackling these issues on an ongoing basis.

11.2 Main Equality Impacts

The main equality impacts of the public spending cuts identified in this report are as follows:

- **Employment** - Women in Bristol are less likely to be in paid work than the national average and the pay gap between men and women in Bristol is larger than the national average. Budget cuts are predicted to lead to both lower rates of employment for women and an increased pay gap. This will exacerbate overall inequality in Bristol between men and women. (See chapter on Employment).
- **Housing** - Women in Bristol are more likely than men to rely on housing benefit. Caps on housing benefit rates are likely to lead women having to make up a shortfall in rent out of other income. There are also worries about how increased pressure on family budgets will disproportionately affect women (See chapter on Housing).
- **Benefits and Tax Credits** - Women in Bristol depend on benefits and tax credits for a larger proportion of their income than men do. Cuts to tax credits and benefits will increase women's poverty in Bristol relative to men's. (See chapter on Incomes and Poverty).
- **Education** - Changes to funding for further and higher education may reduce women's ability to access education and/or increase the long term costs of education to women. There are also concerns that the indirect impact of cuts to school budgets may disproportionately impact on women who tend to be the primary carers of children. (see chapter on Education).
- **Carers and those they care for** - Women are the majority of those receiving care and the majority of those providing care to adults in Bristol (both paid and unpaid). As such they will be disproportionately impacted upon by a range of cuts and changes to social care services (See chapter on Health, Social Care and Other Support Services).
- **Children and young people** - A range of services for children and young people are also being cut or at risk in the future. Women tend to be the primary carers for children. They also use and benefit from pregnancy support services. Any cuts to services in these areas will therefore disproportionately affect women (see chapter on Health, Social Care and Other Support Services).
- **Legal advice** - A disproportionate number of women will be affected by cuts to civil legal aid and other funding of legal services (see chapter on Legal Advice Services).
- **Transport** - Women in Bristol use public transport more than men so a disproportionate number of women will be affected by changes to the public transport in Bristol. (See chapter on Transport).

- **Impact on particular groups** – This report has also identified the particular disproportionate impact that the cuts will have on particular groups (e.g. lone parents, carers, BME women) as a result of a combination of different cuts. While the evidence demonstrates that women of all social classes and ages and across all communities will bear the brunt of the cuts in loss of employment and services, those who suffer most as a result of the loss of publicly financed services will be those without resources to purchase alternatives – and the impact of this loss will be shared by women and men in disadvantaged families and communities.

11.3 Main Human Rights Impacts

For some women in Bristol the public spending cuts may have a negative impact on their human rights. In particular this assessment has highlighted the following issues:

- **Women victims and survivors of violence** may be affected by cuts to voluntary sector services, cuts to the budgets of the police, Crown Prosecution Service and NHS, cuts to welfare and housing benefits and cuts to legal aid. These may mean less successful investigation and prosecution of offenders, more ongoing mental, physical and sexual health problems for women and more women trapped in violent relationships. This engages a broad range of human rights issues. (See chapter on Violence against Women).
- **Cuts to legal aid** may leave women in vulnerable situations with no legal advice or support making it difficult in practice for them to exercise their rights and potentially violating their right to fair trial and an effective remedy. (See chapter on Legal Advice Services).
- **Women’s Income** - Cuts to welfare benefits and housing benefit may push women into poverty, impacting on their right to health or even their right to life. (See chapter on Incomes and Poverty).
- **Women needing care** - The combined impact of changes to health and social care budgets, and cuts to welfare benefits may lead to human rights issues for women needing care. Human rights that could be engaged include the right to life, the right not to be subject to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, the right to liberty and security of person and the right to respect for private and family life (see chapters on Health, Social Care and Other Services and Incomes and Poverty).
- **Cumulative impacts** – There is also the potential for cumulative effects of all the cuts and changes identified in this report to lead to further human rights issues arising for women in Bristol.

11.4 Action Required

Throughout this report we have noted some actions that have already been taken to tackle some of the equality and human rights impacts of the cuts, at least in the short term. However, serious equality and human rights concerns remain as highlighted above.

Recommendations about specific cuts that should or should not be made or specific policies that should or should not be undertaken are outside the scope of this report. We recognise that there are often multiple different authorities that could

take action (local government, national government, primary care trusts etc.) In addition there are often multiple courses of action that could be taken to deal with human rights and equalities issues identified above.

We focus therefore on highlighting the obligations on public authorities to address these issues and describing the key mechanisms through which public authorities can be held to account for their actions.

11.4.1 Actions of Public Authorities

Policy making

Public authorities are under a legal obligation to promote equality and not to violate human rights.

- **Equality Duty** - Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, and advance equality (including between women and men) in the course of developing policies and delivering services.
- **Human Rights obligations** – Under the Human Rights Act 1998, it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way that violates the rights of individuals which are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. The United Kingdom has also signed up to a number of other international human rights obligations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Therefore, all public authorities who are involved in budget cutting measures should be making sure they respect their human rights and equality obligations in taking these decisions.

This report has also highlighted the importance of thinking about equality and human rights impacts cumulatively. In particular, this report has identified:

- a number of areas where there are cumulative impacts that together will lead to increased inequality between men and women;
- how cuts and changes in a number of policy areas may collectively impact on particular women (e.g. lone parents, carers, victims of violence, etc.).

Public authorities should make sure that they create coherent and collective strategies for dealing with such issues. This will include:

- ensuring that they co-ordinate their policies and practices where multiple agencies have an impact on a particular issue (e.g. for violence against women - the City Council, health services, police, CPS and voluntary services);
- ensuring that policies and practices are not seen in isolation from another in any individual agency.

Funding for women's organisations and voluntary organisations providing services to women

Public authorities should also recognise the important role played by women's organisations and other voluntary organisations providing services to women in tackling discrimination and in promoting women's human rights. In particular, they should make any decisions about funding for these organisations in light of the current threats to equality and women's human rights in many of the areas where these organisations work.

Monitoring of impacts

In each of the individual chapters of this

report, recommendations were made about the further monitoring of the equality and human rights impacts of the public sector spending cuts that is required.

The primary responsibility for undertaking this monitoring should fall on public authorities. A lot of monitoring is already done by public authorities (some of this is required by law, some of it is not).

The Government's proposals for the Specific Duties under the Equality Act suggest a weakening of the obligations that previous equality legislation placed on public authorities to assess and monitor policies for their equality impact. In the words of the Equality and Diversity Forum, this may give 'public bodies the inaccurate impression that they do not have to do much in order to comply with the statutory equality duty'³¹¹.

However, it is difficult to see how public bodies can meet their obligations under the Equality Act without undertaking some monitoring of impacts. The Government's consultation paper on the specific duties states:

'Under the requirements of the general duty to have "*due regard*" to the matters set out in the Act, public bodies will need to understand the effect of their policies and practices on equality – this will involve looking at evidence, engaging with people, staff, service users and others and considering the effect of what they do on the whole community.'³¹²

These processes are the main elements of a good Equality Impact Assessment, suggesting that EIAs should remain an important tool for public authorities to ensure they are meeting their legal obligations under the Equality Act. A similar process should also be undertaken with regard to human rights impacts.

A great deal of EIA practice was reviewed in preparation for this report. Mostly it was found to be of very poor quality. Public authorities generally need to improve this practice or find other ways of monitoring impacts if they are to be seen as taking their responsibilities seriously.

11.4.3 Actions by Other Actors

All actors who are concerned about the human rights and equality impacts of the spending cuts on women need to continue to take action to reduce and eliminate negative impacts. Actions include:

- **Monitoring** - central government is currently moving to a different model of equality monitoring where "challenge from the public will be the key means of holding public bodies to account for their performance on equality".³¹³ Voluntary sector and other bodies have an important role to play in monitoring the impact of policies on the people in their communities. This is particularly true when so many Equality Impact Assessments currently undertaken by public bodies are so weak.
- **Campaigning and advocacy** – Voluntary and community groups can use the evidence of impact they gather through their work, and research projects such as this to increase public pressure for action to be taken to combat human rights and equality issues.
- **Legal action** - Where violations of equality duties and human rights obligations are identified, then cases can be brought to the courts in order to enforce obligations. There have already been successful challenges through the courts to the public sector spending cuts.³¹⁴

11.5 Concluding Comments

This report has provided a projection of the likely impact of the spending cuts on women in Bristol.

The report demonstrates that women will suffer unfair, disproportionate and cumulative impact as a result of the cuts that have been made, that are being made and are yet to be made in Bristol.

Interviews with women in Bristol as well as with service providers and campaigners, and a number of public sector workers in the frontline as well as in senior management, have convinced us that there are few who consider this impact to be fair or reasonable. Some local decision makers are carrying out robust impact assessments, while others are not. Some are working in partnership across the public sector to address cumulative impact, while others have yet to engage in this way. Some are doing their utmost to avoid passing on the worst of the unequal impact resulting from the decisions being made at a national level.

In 2011, 92% of respondents to a questionnaire were unsure, or said no, when asked whether decision makers in Bristol take full account of women's equality issues.³¹⁵ Meanwhile women's representation in public life and in decision-making roles is far from equal, and we have recently seen progress stall and even go into reverse.³¹⁶ Women's under-representation in positions of power, in politics and elsewhere, does not help to guard against the forfeiting of women's equality and human rights in the current economic climate.

We publish this report with the intention that decision-makers in Bristol will take full account of its findings and will take active

steps to do all in their power to counter the unequal impact of the cuts on women, which are threatening to turn the clock back for women's equality in our city as they are across the country.

We hope that this report will be of use to decision-makers – as they prepare to take decisions, as they take decisions, and as they communicate with or lobby those who are passing down unfair policies. We hope this report will be of use to local groups and those in other geographical areas who are affected by the cuts, for the purpose of lobbying and to assist in building the case for legal action where appropriate or necessary.

Bristol Fawcett will continue to campaign at a local and national level against the unequal impact that the public sector cuts are having upon the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society.

³¹¹ *Equality and Diversity Forum Submission in response to the Public Sector Equality Duty: Reducing Bureaucracy consultation 20 April 2011 at <http://www.edf.org.uk/blog/?p=11010>*

³¹² *Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: reducing bureaucracy. At p.4 Available at: <http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/110317%20Public%20sector%20Equality%20Duty%20-%20Policy%20review%20paper.pdf>*

³¹³ *Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: reducing bureaucracy at p.4 available at http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/public_sector_equality_duty.aspx*

³¹⁴ *Birmingham City Council's plans to limit social care for disabled people were ruled unlawful. See Birmingham City Post, Birmingham City Council social care cuts ruled unlawful by High Court. Available at: <http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2011/04/20/birmingham-city-council-social-care-cuts-ruled-unlawful-by-high-court-65233-28557053/#ixzz1L6tNhiPx>*

³¹⁵ *GEM consultancy Bristol, March 2011. Enabling Women's Voice and Influence in Bristol.*

³¹⁶ *For example in the most recent Bristol City Council elections, fewer women were returned as councillors in 2011 than in the previous year. There are fewer women in the Government's Cabinet than in most other Western democracies worldwide. See, e.g., <http://www.cfwd.org.uk/resources/fact-sheets>*

Appendix 1

What is a Human Rights and Equality Impact assessment (HRIA) and why was Bristol Fawcett interested in undertaking one?

A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment is a process for ensuring that the human rights and equality implications of a policy are taken into account in the development and/or revision of that policy.

It is based on legal principles. In our case, because the HRIA is taking place in the UK, the primary legal principles are the equality duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the human rights obligations protected by the Human Rights Act as well as the UK's other international human rights obligations, in particular the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This assessment seeks to identify what will be the impact of the public spending cuts on legally protected equality and human rights obligations.

The HRIA that we are describing here is an 'ex ante' assessment – it assesses the potential impacts of the budgeted public spending cuts on women in Bristol.

The Specific Duties on public authorities under the Equality Act do not specify the same level of monitoring and assessment required under earlier equality legislation. However we believe it will be difficult for public bodies to meet their general duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality if they do not monitor potential and actual equality impact and consult with affected groups. Public authorities also need to ensure that they do not violate human rights. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments are a potentially important tool in this endeavour.

For more information on how to complete a similar report in other areas of the UK, refer to the Appendix in the report 'Unravelling Equality?' published in May 2011 by the University of Warwick and Coventry Women's Voices. A toolkit to support additional report production will be available soon.

