

**“Cutting Women Out in Bristol”**

**Bristol Fawcett Press Release on their Report on the Government Cuts**

**Bristol Fawcett offer a stark warning as coalition cuts cost Bristol’s women nearly £45 million (*and that’s double the cost to the city’s men*)**

A report compiled by the local gender equality activist group Bristol Fawcett has found that the coalition spending cuts are costing the city’s women nearly **£45 million** – twice as much as the cost to men. The group fear that the impact of the spending cuts on women will entrench and increase gender inequality in the city.

Bristol Fawcett and their supporters will be gathering on **College Green** between **12.30 – 1.30pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> November** to protest the impact of the cuts on women, ahead of the council’s budget announcement.

But where is this huge cost coming from? The report explains how the cuts are impacting on Bristol’s women. Key findings include:

- The changes to the benefits and tax system will cost Bristol’s women a shocking **£44,825,450**.
- This includes cuts to tax credits, benefits to pregnant women, family and care benefits and unemployment benefits.
- Cuts to housing benefit leave Bristol women up to £15 a week worse off.
- The cuts to the Educational Maintenance Allowance will leave around 3,000 Bristol students without the support they need to continue their education.
- The council are cutting the health and social care budget by £7.3 million and the PCT’s budget is being cut by £19 million. The number of women needing these services outnumber men by several thousand.
- Women make up 65% of public sector workers nationally and 63% of council workers in Bristol. The council are planning 240 job cuts in 2011/12 alone.

Bristol Fawcett believe that *“These cuts are unfair and unnecessary. The impact on women’s lives will further entrench economic and social inequalities between men and women living in Bristol.”*

The report was produced with the aim of illustrating just how dramatic the impact of the cuts has been, and continues to be, on Bristol’s women. The results are clear – women are bearing the brunt of the Government’s deficit reduction plan, and it’s costing them dear.

The National Fawcett Society, an organisation dedicated to fighting gender inequality, has praised the report and the reasons for writing it:

*“Drastic reductions in public spending have left women facing a triple jeopardy of cuts to jobs, benefits and services that have over recent years helped to narrow the gap between women and men. This report spells out the real impact of cuts on the ground in Bristol, and*

*shows clearly how many will have a disproportionate impact on women. It's reports like this that help us make sense of what's actually happening to people around the country."*

*Anna Bird, Acting Chief Executive, Fawcett Society*

Bristol Fawcett have worked closely with a number of local organisations to collect their data and develop the report, including:

- Shelter
- Child Poverty Action Group
- Unison
- Bristol Citizens Advice Bureau
- Voscur (a voluntary services organisation)
- Bristol Violence and Abuse against Women and Girls Strategic Group
- Bristol Partnership Equalities Action Group
- Bristol Rape Crisis
- NextLink (support housing for domestic violence survivors and victims)
- Platform51 (formerly the YWCA)

In response to the report, Bristol City Council have told Bristol Fawcett:

*"We are consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of our own decision-making on our Medium Term Financial Plan. The Equality Duty will be one of a number of factors that we need to consider. We will therefore be looking closely at this report which will assist us in making our recommendations."*

*Barbara Janke, Leader of Bristol City Council*

Bristol Fawcett hope that their report will be a wake-up call to decision-makers, and bring an end to budget policies that deepen gender inequality in our city.

### **Fears for the city's most vulnerable, as domestic violence charities lose funding**

A local domestic violence support service, Wish for a Better Future, lost all its local council funding as a result of cuts to local government spending. One independent domestic violence advisor told Bristol Fawcett:

*"the funding cuts mean we will have lost our core work of supporting victims and survivors."*

### **Women facing a choice of pay-cuts, redundancy and reduced pensions in the public sector**

*"I'm a local government employee and over the last eighteen months there have been reductions in staff numbers through the ending of temporary contracts. This has meant huge gaps have appeared in the work of the organisation with either no one to do them at all, staff covering for absent posts and areas of important work simply not being done. We are constantly being presented with schemes to "encourage" us to leave with varying incentives like voluntary redundancy, part-time working and early retirement, yet no forward planning to direct who is eligible to leave nor information about who will cover the work if people do*

*leave. All colleagues are concerned about their jobs and futures and management just don't seem to understand the level of fear and worry people have. Now we are told the government are introducing a pension tax on public sector workers to help pay off the debt. I'm in line to lose an extra £1000 per year along with having my pay frozen for the last three years, inflation and the VAT rise, I'm experiencing about a 20% pay cut in real terms and now they want to punish us even more for something that was nothing to do with us. The public sector has been successfully demonised by the government but we are the people providing services for those most in need - you can't privatise everything. This country is going back 30 years and no one seems to be standing up to try to stop it."*

Launch event details:

Where? College Green

When? Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November

What time? 12.30 – 1.30pm (press call for photos at 1pm)

Who'll be there? Bristol Fawcett, the report authors, supporters and the women affected by the cuts

#### **About Bristol Fawcett:**

Bristol Fawcett is a local branch of the National Fawcett Society. They campaign and lobby to improve policy and services for women and girls and bring an informed gender equality perspective to local decision making bodies.

#### **About the report:**

From 3<sup>rd</sup> November, the report will be available to download from Bristol Fawcett's website at <http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/Economy/BristolCuttingWomenOut.pdf> - an advance media copy, embargoed until 3<sup>rd</sup> November, will be available on request from [cuts@bristolfawcett.org.uk](mailto:cuts@bristolfawcett.org.uk) shortly.

The summary is available now at

<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/Economy/2010CutsReportSummaryPriorTo3rdNov.pdf>

#### **The cuts nationally:**

Last year, the National Fawcett Society challenged the coalition government's emergency budget. They believed that the budget would disproportionately have a negative impact on women, and estimated that 70% of the cuts would hit women's purses directly. A judicial review of the budget was called, and the Government admitted they had not conducted a gender equality impact when creating the budget. In response to this, Coventry produced a report on the impact of the budget cuts on women (<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/chrp/projects/humanrightsimpactassessments/cwv/>) which motivated Bristol Fawcett to create their own report.