

Cutting Women Out in Bristol

A Report on the Impact of the Public Sector Spending Cuts on Women in Bristol

Fawcett Society Bristol Local Group (Bristol Fawcett)
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This report is available online at
<http://www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/Economy/BristolCuttingWomenOut.pdf>



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

Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group, NextLink, One25, Bristol Woman, Shelter, Voscur, Avon & Somerset Police, SARSAS.

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1. Introduction

This is a summary of the key findings of the human rights and equality impact assessment (HREIA) carried out by Bristol Fawcett. In 2011 we developed an assessment of the public spending cuts currently underway and their impacts on women in Bristol.¹ We have updated the findings for 2014.

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.

Bristol Fawcett concludes that:

- Many of the spending cuts underway in Bristol have a disproportionate impact on women.
- Other cuts affect both women and men equally but have a potentially damaging impact on certain groups of women (for example changes to benefits for disabled people which affects 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 charity for women's equality and rights – at home, at work and in public life. The organisation traces its roots back to 1866, to Millicent Fawcett's peaceful struggle for women's right to vote. Fawcett's vision is:

"We believe that as a society we will be stronger, healthier and happier when all people – women and men – enjoy full equality and respect."

But although over a century of campaigning has made a huge difference to many women's lives, we are still a very long way from true equality. 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 work.² The pay gap between women and men in Bristol is slightly smaller than the national average pay gap, and has decreased, yet women are still paid less than men.³ Women form the majority of public sector workers in Bristol; for instance, 62% of City Council staff are women.⁴ The public sector has, so far, experienced the most severe job cuts. The West of England Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030 does not address any gender inequality, or women's access to employment.⁵

The Cuts:

- Budget cuts are leading to public sector job losses in Bristol including at Bristol City Council, and Avon and Somerset Police.
- There is a two year pay freeze across the public sector.
- Cost of childcare rose by 19% in 2013; Bristol was the top city outside London where unemployed parents would like to work but can't afford to.⁶
- Children's Centres are removing wrap around childcare availability across the city.

The Impact: Women are suffering 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. Women benefit the least from opportunities arising from the government's investment in the areas selected by the West of England LEP.⁷

3. Housing

Background: Single women (including single parents) are the main recipients of housing benefit. In Bristol around 20,270 single women and 7,222 women in couples receive housing benefit, compared to 13,407 men.⁸ There is also a shortage of accommodation for single homeless women in Bristol.

The Cuts: Since April 2011 there have been a number of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) including:

- LHA cuts to cover the bottom 30% of rents rather than bottom 50%.
- LHA is linked to Consumer Prices Index rather than local rents meaning its value is likely to go down over time.
- Single people under 35 years old can only claim housing benefit to pay for a room to rent in a shared property

The Impact: Cuts to LHA have had a disproportionate impact on women since women are the main recipients.⁹ This may 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 2021.¹⁰

4. Incomes and Poverty

Background: Women in Bristol (as in the rest of the country) are poorer than men¹¹ and receive on average a higher proportion of their income from benefits.¹² 38,080

households in Bristol receive tax credits¹³ and 44,460 receive out of work benefits.¹⁴

The Cuts and Changes: The changes to the tax and benefit system that have impacted on women include:

- Cuts to benefits for 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 are now required to seek work once their youngest child is five, a reduction from seven (2010) and twelve (2008).
- Disabled people are being moved from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance and will have to be re-assessed.
- Disability Living Allowance replaced by Personal Independence Plan with tighter eligibility conditions.
- 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 tax and welfare changes raise a net £3.047 billion (21 per cent) from men and £11.628 billion (79 per cent) from women.¹⁵ 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.

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

5. Education and Training

Background: The impact on women of the cuts remains disproportionate because their lifetime earnings continue to be lower than men's. Analysis shows an annual gap in salary from £5,000 to £16,000¹⁶ making it harder for women to 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:

- In Bristol, a review of Children's Centres and Early Years support is planned, with proposed savings of £1.52m between 2014 and 2017.¹⁷
- Funding for ESOL classes has been reduced over the last few years whilst at the same time it is a requirement to pass an English test to claim Job Seekers Allowance. Those who fail to start, participate in, or complete their training face a benefit sanction despite no childcare provision to attend classes, and few within school hours, so mothers, especially single parents, struggle to attend.

The Impact: 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: Services in Bristol have been protected from larger budget cuts. Bristol has strong advocates for addressing violence against women and girls in the city's Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner. However, demand for services has risen and organisations are struggling to meet increased needs. 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 have been raped or sexually abused at some point in their lifetime.¹⁸
- 68,800 women in Bristol are likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime.¹⁹

The Cuts: Women experiencing violence and abuse in Bristol are affected by limited cuts to funding of services, on top of changes to welfare benefits and legal aid funding. 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 further reduce the support

available to victims and survivors of violence.

- **The National Health Service** is facing further budget cuts, which may reduce their capacity to respond quickly and effectively to victims of violence.
- **Cuts to legal aid** have reduced 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. 11% of women in Bristol provide unpaid care.²⁰

- Depression is more common in women and women are twice as likely to experience anxiety as men.²¹

The Cuts and Changes:

- Introduction of Personal Health Budgets to personalise care plans.
- Health and Wellbeing Boards created to decide where to spend £1.2bn on health and care.
- A positive change has been the teenage pregnancy rate in Bristol has dropped significantly in recent years.

The Impact: Women in Bristol have been 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.²² This is because their legal rights are more often violated and/or they have less ability to pay for assistance.

The Cuts:

- **Legal aid** has been cut for welfare benefits, education and medical negligence advice and severely reduced for debt, employment, family law, housing, and immigration advice.

- There have also been significant 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 have a significant impact on advice services and those seeking advice in Bristol which disproportionately affects 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.²³
- 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.²⁴
- Women in violent relationships are 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,

some grants have been cut and the future of others is under review and currently uncertain. Funding to the voluntary and community sector services (VCS) is set to reduce by further £60,000 for financial year 2015/16.

- Other sources of funding such as grants from charitable and non-charitable trusts and donations from individuals are becoming harder to obtain. There has been a drop in charitable donations from individuals.²⁵
- 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: 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:

- A £350,000 saving against local bus subsidies is planned for 2015/16 reducing supported bus services funding by 33% through contracts for 'commercial add-ons', predominantly evening and Sunday journeys that

supplement the commercial network.²⁶

- Bus fares have been reduced in a positive move to get more people using the buses
- 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.²⁷

The Impact: Women use buses more than men; therefore changes in these areas have a disproportionate effect on women.²⁸ Women living in isolated areas and disabled women will be particularly affected. Women have less access to private cars, and often need access to work, childcare, schools and health as women are often in a caring role, juggling work and family commitments. Women are more likely to work part-time.²⁹ Cuts in public transport outside peak hours may be particularly difficult for women working shift patterns who may not be able to get to or from work.

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Foreword by National Fawcett Society

Since the financial crisis in 2008 and the subsequent recession, Fawcett has warned of the disproportionate impact that austerity measures that focus heavily on cutting public spending, as opposed to tax rises, would have on women. At the time of the recession we were by no means starting from a point of gender equality, but it is fair to say that austerity has had a dramatic impact on progress towards women's equality.

An effect known as the 'triple jeopardy' is seeing women being hit hardest by the Coalition Government's programme of deficit reduction measures: through cuts to public sector jobs, wages and pensions where women dominate; through deep cuts to welfare benefits which women rely on more due to their greater caring responsibilities and lower earnings; and through drastic reductions in the provision of many vital support services, such as child and elder care, which have left many women filling the gaps.

With the recent widening of the gender pay gap and in-work poverty now outstripping out-of-work poverty for the first time, it is clear: austerity is turning back the clock on the vital gains made by women in recent decades and has placed women in an increasingly precarious position in the economy.

For two years now, the government has been hailing our economic recovery yet, as our recent research has shown, many women are not feeling the benefits. Instead we are seeing women bear the brunt of what many are calling a 'low wage recovery'. Since the recession almost a million (826,000) extra women have moved into types of work that are typically low paid and insecure and, according to our 2014 survey, 56% of low paid women feel worse off than ten years ago – this is due to both stagnating wages and dramatic cuts to welfare spending.

While few areas of government spending have been truly protected from cuts, none have seen their budgets cut as deeply as local governments. By 2015/16, local government budgets will have been cut by £11.3bn yet they are responsible for vital services on which so many women rely. Women from all walks of life are more likely to use public services and use them more intensively to meet their needs.

Cuts to local government have hit women on both sides. Three-quarters of local government workers are female and as such they are struggling with low pay, increasingly heavy workloads and the threat of further redundancies.

Cuts to services mean that there is less help available for women, forcing many to go without the support they need. Sure Start Centres, public transport networks, women's refuges and community centres have closed across the country leaving women isolated from their communities and responsible for filling the holes in service provision.

Whilst the Fawcett national team continue to record and lobby on women's economic and political inequality, many of our regional groups across the country have been working hard in their local communities to do the same. However, no local group has provided such a comprehensive analysis of their economic situation locally as Bristol Fawcett. We commend this excellent group and their relentless campaign for gender equality in and around the Bristol area.

Dr Eva Neitzert

Deputy CEO Fawcett Society

1. Introduction

1.1 The Assessment

This report analyses the public spending cuts which are currently underway and how they impact on women in Bristol.

Many 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 position in September 2014. 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.³⁰ It has high levels of inequality.³¹ It also contains large numbers of the people potentially hardest hit by the cuts – for example public sector workers, lone parents, carers and the unemployed.

Women in Bristol (as in the rest of the country) are disproportionately affected by the cuts in public spending. Women in Bristol:

- are more likely to lose their jobs.³²
- are also hit hardest by cuts in services.³³
- are hardest hit by cuts in welfare benefits and other changes to the tax and benefit system.³⁴

Many of the issues raised in this report are not exclusively faced by women – many

men are also suffering 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 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.³⁵ They are more likely than men to rely on benefits and tax credits.³⁶ The spending cuts are likely to widen the equality gap between women and men³⁷ and may have a serious impact on women's human rights.

This report therefore focuses on cuts in public spending that 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 have a disproportionate impact on women. It highlights other changes which 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 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 the 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 which each focus 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 negative impacts of the cuts on women. At the same time, 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 is affected in Bristol.
3. What monitoring should take place in order to assess the ongoing impacts of the cuts.
4. 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.

30 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

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

32 65% of public sector workers are women – Trade Union Congress. 2010. The gender impact of the cuts. [online] Available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/genderimpactofthecuts.pdf>

33 Women will be harder hit by cuts to public services. In particular, lone parents and single pensioners will be hit hardest. 92% 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].

34 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]

35 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>

36 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 an 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>

37 Fawcett and Women's Budget Group, the Impact on women of the Budget 2011, available on line 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 further 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 are experiencing pay freezes. This will worsen existing inequalities in the workplace for women in Bristol.

Bristol employers carrying out redundancy programmes must monitor actual job losses and the impact of pay freezes by gender. 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 exacerbated by job losses and pay freezes. This must be addressed to improve equality in Bristol.

Part-time and full-time working for men and women

The majority of men (56%) are full-time employees, whereas only 36% of women work full-time. By contrast, nearly a quarter of women work part-time, whereas only 1 in 12 (7%) men do. The persistent gap in rates of full- and part-time working, largely an artefact of the greater role that women continue to play in bringing up children and caring for other dependents, is a significant contributor to the gender pay gap, which widened again last year. The contrast in self-employment levels is also stark, with men more than twice as likely to be self-employed than women.

Women are also far more likely to work in the public sector, with 65 per cent of public sector workers female. In the private sector, which makes up 77 per cent of all employment, men account for 59 per cent of employees.³⁸

Women in the public sector now work more unpaid overtime hours than men (a 3.9% increase since 2003, compared to 0.5% increase in men's unpaid overtime hours).³⁹

2.2 What Has Changed?

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

Budget Responsibility predicted 1.1m jobs would need to be removed between 2010-11 and 2018-19, of which only around 25% have been lost so far.⁴⁰

In Bristol, public sector employers who have publicised job cuts include:

- Bristol City Council - plans to cut 800 more posts in the next three years through voluntary and some forced redundancies.⁴¹
- Police – Avon & Somerset Constabulary are due to cut 134 further police officer posts, of which 61 will be police constables.⁴²

Bristol Women's Voice expressed concern at the Council's proposal to cut its Equality and Diversity team by £90,000 and to "mainstream" equalities throughout the council as an alternative. The quality of Equality Impact Assessments is varied across

council departments and BWV argued: "there is no evidence to support that the Council locally is able to sustain its ability to meet its legal duty to promote equality with the reductions proposed."⁴³

In 2013 pay rises in the public sector were limited to 1% up to and including 2015/16. This limit comes after a 2 year pay freeze. Public sector workers will not get an above-inflation pay rise for another four years.⁴⁴

Bristol Women's Voice report over 40% of women in Bristol East and Bristol South are earning less than the living wage per week (£280).⁴⁵

"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 are also hit by cuts to childcare funding:

- Childcare tax credit was cut to cover 70% of childcare costs from the previous 80% (see chapter on Incomes and Poverty).
- Cuts to funding for services for children have already led to some providers cutting services.⁴⁶
- Cuts to school budgets have led to a reduction in after-school and holiday club provision.

The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) makes no analysis of gender in its economic plans, nor does it highlight how proposals might improve things for women in Bristol. The report references the large increase in births projected for Bristol, but makes no comment about how childcare provision or services for women will be improved.⁴⁷

2.3 Who is Affected by these Changes?

Women are 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 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 have been 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 62% of Bristol City Council staff are women.⁴⁸ Job losses in Bristol have disproportionately affected women – in 2013 69% of those made redundant by the council were women out of a workforce made up of 61% women).⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰

Compared to national figures, unemployment for men in Bristol is worse. Men have lower employment in Bristol than nationally. Overall unemployment in Bristol stands at 7.2% which is the national average; this represents 11,100 men and 6,400 women in Bristol

being unemployed.⁵¹ However, in our city 8.1% of men are unemployed compared to 7.6% nationally. Locally, women do better than elsewhere: 5.5% of women are unemployed compared to a national average of 6.7%.⁵²

The proportion of women in paid work in Bristol is at the national average (66.8%) but the proportion of men in Bristol in paid work is below the national average (73.7% compared to 76.8% nationally).

Thus, Bristol women might feel they are doing relatively well. This would be to misunderstand the data. Women are still employed less than men and, as can be seen below, their work is also considered to be of less value.

2.3.2 Increasing the Pay Gap Between Men and Women

Although the pay gap between men and women is better than the national average in Bristol, the gap is still substantial and likely to increase. Specifically, women working full-time in Bristol earn on average £12.18 per hour compared to £13.14 per hour for men.⁵³ The full-time pay gap in Bristol has decreased since 2011 to 8 percentage points which is now better than the national average of 11 points.⁵⁴

Pay gaps are likely to increase as a result of pay freezes because more women work in the public sector and therefore 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. 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.

2.3.3 Impact on Women Working Part-time

Nationally the pay gap including part-time work has widened from 19.6% to 19.7% in 2013 for the first time in 5 years.⁵⁵ This means the average woman will earn 19.7% less than the average man per hour across the UK.

Women working part-time in the private sector have been particularly badly hit as job losses as part-time jobs in the private sector tend to be less well paid. In 2009 the national average pay for women working part-time in the private sector was £6.78 an hour compared to £9.34 in the public sector.⁵⁶ This has now increased to £9.40 compared to £13.46 in the public sector, but lags behind male part-time working which averages at £9.57 in the private sector and £18.45 in the public sector.⁵⁷

Women are more likely than men to work part-time, particularly if they have dependent children. 37% of women with dependent children work part-time, compared with only 6% of men.⁵⁸

2.3.4 Occupational segregation

ONS data shows men tend to work in professional occupations associated with higher levels of pay (for example programmers and software developers) and women tend to work in lower paid jobs such as nursing. Programmers and software development professionals earned £20.02 per hour (excluding overtime) while nurses earned on average £16.61 according to the 2012 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.⁵⁹ Increases to the National Minimum Wage have lagged behind inflation. Women make up two-thirds of those on low pay so this fall in wages in real terms has a gender impact.⁶⁰

Nationally 78% of those working in Health and Social Care⁶¹ are women (this is borne out in Bristol where 77% of those working at the North Bristol NHS Trust are women, predominantly in the nursing and administrative fields).⁶² The Fawcett Society note that industries which employ more men have benefitted from regeneration investment:

“Given this persistent occupational segregation, the growth during the recovery of particularly low wage feminised sectors is concerning as it is likely to widen gender inequalities. It is also worth noting that the male-dominated sectors are also those that have benefitted from continued investment during the recession, with physical infrastructure projects in particular receiving a boost.”⁶³

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in the West of England has been allocated £86.2m for new projects in 2014/15. This will be spent on industries including telecommunications, robotics, marine energy, construction and transport. The West of England Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030⁶⁴ does not address gender inequality, the needs of women, or women's access to employment.

Bristol Women's Commission (BWC) is concerned that the areas chosen for investment do not represent or create opportunities for women in Bristol. The number of women in leadership roles in manufacturing, science, engineering and technology (SET) firms remains very small. Nationally, only 5.3% of working women are employed in the SET sectors, compared with 31.3% of working men. They make up only 12.3% of the SET workforce, but 45% of the workforce overall.⁶⁵

The Bristol Women's Commission raised concerns that the LEP has not identified “how women and others not well represented in these sectors will be supported to achieve GVA (gross added value) jobs”. BWC also highlights the lack of planning around tackling the proliferation of zero hours, low paid, low skills employment in servicing these selected services and in other services such as health and social care and retail. Areas where women do work, e.g. Health and social care, are not highlighted for investment.⁶⁶

2.3.5 Cuts to Childcare

The position is worse for families on lower incomes, who have already been hit by a 10% reduction in childcare tax credits and were given tax credit rises pegged well below inflation at 1%. A 2013 survey shows nursery, childminder and after-school club costs all rising at more than 6%, more than double the inflation rate (2.7%).⁶⁷ This has 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.⁶⁸

Paid childcare places in Children's Centres in Bristol have been reduced due to budget cuts which can make it more complicated to extend the free hours to cover work commitments.⁶⁹ The Equality Impact Assessment notes that “The greatest impact could be on the sustainability of some Children's Centres which are positioned in pockets of deprivation but are delivering to mixed communities and this could affect the range of service delivery for these families.” But it is not clear how this disadvantage will be dealt with. The report also recognises that a reduction in the universal offer could lead to a public perception of stigmatisation with a lower voluntary take up of services by families that need them the most and

missed opportunities for prevention and early intervention.⁷⁰

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. Nationally the cost of childcare rose by 19% in 2013, and Bristol was the top city outside London where unemployed parents would like to work but can't afford to.⁷¹ 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.⁷²

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.⁷³

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.⁷⁴ This is slightly higher than the national average of 12.5%.⁷⁵ 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.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ 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.
- Disabled female lone parents are particularly affected, with 30% employed (compared to 65% among those who are non-disabled). So while lone parenthood reduces the female employment rate across the UK by 15 percentage points (from 80% to 65%), disability reduces employment for both female lone parents and female non-lone parents by around 40 percentage points (from 65% to 30% and 80% to 40% respectively).⁷⁸

2.5 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

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. 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 £233.01 and will have to make up the difference herself.⁽¹⁾ 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 Support Commission (CMSC) 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 CMSC would make if they enforced payment. He makes a few payments, and then stops again. She contacts the CMSC again and is told she will have to make another £100 payment.⁽²⁾

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.⁽³⁾ 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.⁽⁴⁾

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

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

(3) In the last three years the number of landlords letting to tenants receiving LHA dropped from 46% to 22% with a sharp decrease during 2013 (see Housing Chapter).

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

38 Fawcett Society, 2014 'The Changing Labour Market 2' [online] Available at <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-Changing-Labour-Market-2.pdf> (Accessed 1 September 2014)

39 (28.3% of women work unpaid overtime compared to 25.9% of men in the public sector. TUC 'Women workers in public sector drive increase in unpaid overtime' [online] Available at <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/women-workers-public-sector-drive-increase-unpaid-overtime> (Accessed 29th July 2014)

40 The Guardian 14th February 2014 'Public sector jobs are set to be cut by 40% throughout Britain' [online] Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/14/public-sector-jobs-cuts-britain> (Accessed 28th July)

41 Bristol Evening Post [online] 'Bristol council cuts involve more than jobs' Available at: <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-council-cuts-involve-jobs/story-21003409-detail/story.html> (Accessed 26 Aug. 2014)

42 BBC News, 29 January 2014 'Avon and Somerset Police to cut more than 134 police officer posts' [online] Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-25941763> (Accessed 1 September 2014)

43 Bristol Women's Voice, 2013, Response to 2014-2017 Budget Proposals [online] Available at: <http://www.wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BWV-Budget-response-2014.pdf> (Accessed 2 October 2014)

44 Daily Mail 'No inflation-busting pay rises until 2018, public sector is warned as teachers and council workers strike over austerity' [online] Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2682329/No-inflation-busting-pay-rises-2018-public-sector-warned-teachers-council-workers-strike-austerity.html> (Accessed 26 Aug 2014)

45 Bristol Women's Voice, 2013, [online] Available at http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/lord_mayor_of_bristol/mayoral_information/BWC%20Comments%20on%20WoE%20Strategic%20Economic%20Plan%20Final_0.pdf (Accessed 4 October 2014)

46 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>

47 Bristol City Council - Corporate Priorities and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/13 – 2014/15 http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/council_budgets_and_spending/FINAL%20Corporate%20Priorities%20and%20%20MTEFP%20v8.6_.pdf

48 (4508 out of 7,280 - 61.92%) BCC Workforce Diversity Statistics, HR Management information report 31 March 2014, p31 [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/data_protection_and_foi/freedom_of_information/Workforce%20Diversity%20Report%2031%20March%202014.pdf (Accessed 12 September 2014)

49 (162 out of 234 – 69.23%) BCC Workforce Diversity Statistics, HR Management information report 31 March 2013, p31 [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/data_protection_and_foi/freedom_of_information/HRMI_BCC_WDS_310313%20%28web%20ver%29.pdf (Accessed 12 September 2014)

50 Trade Union Congress. 2011. The gender impact of the cut revisited. at p.9 [online] Available at: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tucfiles/genderimpactofcutsrevisited.pdf>

51 (% are for those aged 16-64) ONS – 'Official Labour Market Statistics Bristol (Apr 2013-Mar 2014)' [online] Available at: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157348/report.aspx#tabempunemp> (Accessed 29th July 2014)

52 Ibid

53 Ibid

54 Based on % difference of £12.18 per hour for women and £13.14 for men in Bristol (92%), and £12.26 for women and £13.68 for men nationally (89%)

55 The Telegraph 12 December 2013 Gender pay gap widens with women earning an average of £5,000 less, reports ONS [online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-business/10513636/Gender-pay-gap-widens-with-women-earning-an-average-of-5000-less-reports-ONS.html> [Accessed 11 Feb 2014]

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57 Office for National Statistics., Annual survey of hours and earnings 2013. [online] Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-328216> [Accessed 21 Feb 2014] We have used the mean average. Men's part-time gross hourly pay for part-time working has risen by 3.6%, whilst the same figure for women has risen by 2.9%.

58 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]

59 ONS, 2013 'Women in the labour market' [online] Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/women-in-the-labour-market/2013/rpt---women-in-the-labour-market.html?format=print> (Accessed 15 September 2014)

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63 Ibid Fawcett Society 'The Changing Labour Market -2'

64 West of England LEP, 2013, 'West of England Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030', [online] Available at: <http://www.westofenglandlep.co.uk/about-us/strategicplan> (Accessed 5 October 2014)

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68 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]

69 Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment 18/11/13 'Increased Targeting and Integration of Early Years Services to achieve savings identified in the Budget Planning process 2014-2017' [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children_and_young_people/about_bristol_child_and_young_people_service/information_about_cyps/cyps_services/R-PP-003%20Children's%20Centres%20and%20Early%20Years.pdf [Accessed 14 May 2014]

70 Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment 18/11/13 'Increased Targeting and Integration of Early Years Services to achieve savings identified in the Budget Planning process 2014-2017' [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/children_and_young_people/about_bristol_child_and_young_people_service/information_about_cyps/cyps_services/R-PP-003%20Children's%20Centres%20and%20Early%20Years.pdf [Accessed 14 May 2014]

71 Annual Childcare Report 2013 [online] Available at: <http://www.findababysitter.com/assets/resources/fab-annual-report.pdf> [Accessed 13 March 2014]

72 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]

73 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]

74 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&q=398712&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1310046794740&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1811> [Accessed 5 July 2011]

75 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]

76 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 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.womens.cusu.cam.ac.uk/campaigns/bem/fawcett_ethnicminoritywomen.pdf [Accessed 5 July 2011]

77 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>

78 Poverty Site [online] 'Work and Disability' Available at: <http://www.poverty.org.uk/45/index.shtml> (Accessed 26 Aug 2014)

3. Housing

3.1 Overview

Over the last three years a number of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) have been implemented. These changes reduced the amount of LHA that tenants can claim on average by £14 a week.⁷⁹ The cost of accommodation in Bristol is high at £909 per month⁸⁰ and buying a house is unaffordable for many people. The cost of the average house in Bristol has risen by 39%⁸¹ in the last 10 years, far outstripping the rise in wages.⁸²

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.⁸³ Careful monitoring and provision of support is required to mitigate impacts incompatible with equality and human rights.

3.2 What Has Changed?

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

- From April 2014 LHA is set at the following rates in Bristol:⁸⁴

Bedrooms	Weekly Rate	Monthly Rate
Shared room	£66.70	£289.04
1 bedroom	£116.53	£504.98
2 bedrooms	£145.67	£631.25
3 bedrooms	£168.98	£732.26
4 bedrooms	£233.01	£1,009.72

- Non-dependent deductions will increase. This is 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.
- Since April 2012 single people under 35 years old can only claim housing benefit to pay for a room to rent in a shared property (Shared Accommodation Rate, SAR)
- LHA rates are now up-rated in line with the Consumer Prices Index of September 2012, rather than on the basis of local rents. Rates increase either by CPI inflation or to the 30th percentile of market rents, whichever is the lower.⁸⁵
- Limits introduced to the amount of rent housing association tenants can claim for (Bedroom tax). Housing benefits reduced by 14% for one spare bedroom, or 25% for two or more spare bedrooms.

In 2013 there were 14,360 households on the waiting list for a home, a large rise from 2011 before the changes were introduced when there were 11,167.⁸⁶ Data from the government also shows in Bristol there are 2,170 people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions whilst waiting for a new home.⁸⁷ Rehousing people temporarily cost Bristol City Council £431,584 between March 2013 and Feb 2014.⁸⁸

“Housing changes mean it is becoming much harder for our service users to access affordable housing. For example, a current service user is trying to move into shared accommodation, but finding this very difficult as demand exceeds supply. More and more people with mental health needs are forced into shared housing due to general affordability.”

Quotas introduced by Bristol City Council reduce women’s opportunities to move on into affordable secure housing – for some this means they move into the private sector with reduced security which can often exacerbate & lead to a deterioration in their mental well-being”

Nextlink

There are plans to build 2,500 new houses in Bristol by 2018, with 465 of these to be affordable homes for people who are unable to afford to rent or buy on the open market.⁸⁹

3.2.1 Homelessness Services in Bristol

A research project from Bristol University found homeless women were struggling to survive the impact of a large number of traumatic, and often gendered, life events. This research recognises that the experience of being ‘homeless’ may well be different for women than for homeless men. This is partly due to the ‘invisibility’ of women who may not sleep rough but end up in precarious, and often dangerous, places instead, and because the notion of ‘home’ has different gendered connotations for men and women. “Homeless women are used to making themselves invisible in order to survive.”⁹⁰

A Bristol Fawcett volunteer spoke to five women in a Shelter Service User Group in June 2014 to listen to recent experiences of women who have used Shelter’s services for the homeless. All of the women attending the service user group had some experience of homelessness or being required to move house in the last 2-3 years, and more than one woman had experienced multiple moves. These were due to the impact of the bedroom tax, compulsory moves for demolition and fleeing domestic violence. They talked about:

- The stress and health impacts resulting from feelings of constant instability and lack of control over their family situation:**

“my eldest child will move out and I guess we will have to move across town, again. The youngsters will have to move school, again.”

“we had to move for a compulsory demolition notice. Then we had to move because of the bedroom tax. It’s very unstable.”

“I check the HomeChoice (Bristol’s Housing Register site for finding properties) but there’s no smaller houses on there, or they go really quickly.”

“It’s take it or lose your banding, whatever the impact.....on schools, travel to work, family support, friendships....”

- The negative impact on family life and children:**

“there’s no right to our own privacy”

“I won’t make my two teenage girls share a room - it would be awful. Those MPs don’t have teenagers sharing rooms.” [This woman loses £14 a week for ‘under-occupying’].

3.2.2 Bedroom Tax

Two thirds of households affected by the bedroom tax cannot find the money to pay their rents, according to the National Housing Federation.⁹¹ An Ipsos MORI survey of 183 housing associations found that 66% of their residents affected by the bedroom tax are in rent arrears, with more than a third (38%) reported to be in debt because they were unable to pay the bedroom tax.⁹² 57% of claimants spent less on household essentials since the reduction in housing benefit. Just over a quarter (26%) of single parents interviewed said they have looked for work to deal with the reduction in housing benefit.

In Bristol, 2,682 households are affected by the bedroom tax (figures from December 2013).⁹³

Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR)

Restricting Housing Benefit for individuals under 35 to fund shared accommodation presents issues for some women. Crisis report that for SAR claimants ‘the prospect of sharing with strangers was a source of considerable anxiety.....especially for female claimants.’⁹⁴ The Women’s Safety Commission quotes a concern raised in Bristol about SAR and the impact on women fleeing domestic violence:

“In Bristol we heard a further concern that when women flee domestic violence, their children sometimes have to be taken into care. If a mother has children in care, she will only be allowed to have her children back when she can accommodate them. Yet, she will only be able to claim the SAR until she does so and this means she may be presented with serious difficulties in re-assembling her family and resettling. At the very least, the local authority should be challenged to overcome this dilemma, although, as we have reported above,

women’s organisations are finding that financial pressures are making councils unwilling to give support even where they have a statutory obligation to do so.”⁹⁵

3.3 Who is Affected by these Changes?

In Bristol there are 43,120 households claiming housing benefit. This has increased by 4,490 since our last report in 2011. The increase is broken down into 3,350 claimants in the private rented sector and 1,560 in the social rented sector.⁹⁶

In 2014 there are 13,392 households in the private rented sector who have been affected by the changes.⁹⁷ **These changes have a disproportionate effect on women** since single women are still the main recipients of housing benefit. This includes elderly women, women with caring responsibilities and single mothers.

Data from 2014 shows 50.5% of housing benefit claimants are single women. 21.7% of claimants are couples and 27.2% are men.⁹⁸

In Bristol this equates to 20,270 single women and 7,222 women in couples receiving housing benefit, compared to 13,407 men.⁹⁹ Of these single women 47% (9,457) have dependent children.

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.¹⁰⁰ Housing in Bristol will become ‘very unaffordable’ to those on LHA by 2021.¹⁰¹

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 in 2011.¹⁰²
- In Bristol 1229 eviction notices were served in 2012, a rise of 39% since 2012, and above the national average of 26% increase.¹⁰³
- Bristol has 1.8 Homeless acceptances per 1000 population (considered statutorily homeless and accepted by Local Authority for assistance programme).¹⁰⁴
- Bristol’s particular shortage of 2, 3 and 4+ bed affordable homes.¹⁰⁵
- The danger of women who are joint tenants (who may have little control over household finances) becoming liable for rent arrears if the man leaves the household.

“Many of our service users are experiencing debt & financial difficulties which exacerbates their poor mental health – they often come with rent arrears which impacts on their ability to move on as both social landlords and the private rented sector are less tolerant about housing individuals with a history of rent arrears.”

Nextlink

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%.¹⁰⁶ 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.¹⁰⁷ In the last three years the number of landlords letting to tenants receiving LHA dropped from 46% to 22% with a sharp decrease during 2013.¹⁰⁸

The DWP Equality Impact Assessment for limiting the LHA uprating to 1% notes that families with school age children are experiencing difficulties meeting a shortfall in rent because of restrictions to LHA, and may find it difficult to relocate to a cheaper property as they are potentially less mobile. However, no solutions are provided for how to address this impact on significant numbers of families. Some children may be required to change schools if a family moves a significant distance away.

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:

- 19% will be disabled.¹⁰⁹
- 63% of those impacted by the bedroom tax are disabled.¹¹⁰
- 8% will be pensioners;¹¹¹
- 13% will be from BME groups who will also be disproportionately affected by the 4 bedroom cap as they often live

with extended family.¹¹² In Bristol this equates to estimated average loss per LHA recipient in a 4 bed house of £67 per week.¹¹³

- People with non-dependents (like elderly relatives) living in the same households will also incur extra charges.¹¹⁴

“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

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

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:

“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 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

- The supply of social housing in Bristol is limited and there are only between 2300-2600 vacancies each year. In June 2014, there were already 13,590 households on the Bristol Housing Register. There are limited options for good rehousing for those made homeless or forced to move.¹¹⁵
- Women are usually the parent 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.

Increased pressure on budgets has 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.¹¹⁶ (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).

3.5 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

Janet is a single parent and has two daughters aged 5 and 13. The children are required to share a room under the new legislation as same sex children under 16. She has applied for a smaller house, but there are no suitable properties available and so she is now charged £16 per week as a reduction in her Housing Benefit.⁽¹⁾

She wants to stay close to the children’s schools and near her job, but is unsure where a new property would be if it came available. She cares part-time for her mother who is disabled and lives close by.

She doesn’t want to move house because her bus fares may increase, cancelling out any saving in the bedroom tax.

In four years’ time her daughter will qualify for her own room, when she’s 16. It’s a long time to wait but she feels it would be expensive to move.

The removal costs, and decorating, could be expensive, and in four years’ time they would be able to have three rooms and they would have to move again.

1) Bedroom tax means Janet must pay 14% of the eligible rent (£114.15 per week for a 3 bedroom in Horfield)

⁷⁹ BBC News. *Impact of housing benefit changes ‘worse than feared’*. [online] Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-23122369> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

⁸⁰ Home.co.uk [online] http://www.home.co.uk/for_rent/bristol/current_rents?location=bristol [Accessed 5th March 2014]

⁸¹ Nationwide [online] http://www.nationwide.co.uk/~media/nationwide.co.uk/pdf/hpi/Q4_2013.pdf [Accessed 5th March 2014]

⁸² Evening Post 7 January 2014, ‘Bristol sees house prices go up by 39% in the last decade’ [online] <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/BoomHouse-prices-39-decade/story-20408006-detail/story.html> [Accessed 5th March 2014]

⁸³ Department of Work and Pensions. 2010. *Equality impact assessment housing benefit*. [online] Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf> [Accessed 21 April 2011]

⁸⁴ Bristol city Council, 2013, *Housing benefit (Local Housing Allowance)* [online] Available at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/financial-help-and-benefits/housing-benefit-local-housing-allowance> (Accessed 30 September 2014)

⁸⁵ Department for Work and Pensions, 2013, ‘Equality Analysis for restricting increases in Local Housing Allowance to 1 per cent in 2014-15 and 2015-16’, [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/262034/lha-uprating-equality-analysis.pdf (Accessed 18 September 2014)

⁸⁶ Department of Communities and Local Governments Table 600 numbers of households on local authorities’ housing waiting lists, by district: England 1997 to 2013 [online] Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-rents-lettings-and-tenancies> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

Households requiring 1 bedroom	8,221
Households requiring 2 bedrooms	3,882
Households requiring 3 bedrooms	1,447
Households requiring more than 3 bedrooms	395
Households requiring an unspecified number of bedrooms or those on the register more than once	415

⁸⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government [online] *Local authority housing statistics dataset, England 2012 to 2013* Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2012-to-2013> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

⁸⁸ Bristol Evening Post [online] *City council facing housing crisis as homeless numbers increase* Available at <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/City-council-facing-housing-crisis-homeless/story-20619558-detail/story.html> Accessed 28 March 2014

89 Bristol City Council website, 2013, 'Mayor of Bristol and city MP launch new plans to build 2,500 affordable new homes by April 2018' Available at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/mayor-bristol-and-city-mp-launch-new-plans-build-2500-affordable-new-homes-april-2018> (Accessed 12 September 2014)

90 NIHR School for Social Care Research, 2013 'The TARA Project: A longitudinal study of the service needs of homeless women' [online] Available at: http://sscr.nihr.ac.uk/PDF/Findings/SSCRResearchFindings_13_.pdf (Accessed 12 September 2014)

91 National Housing Federation [online] Two thirds of households hit by bedroom tax are in debt as anniversary approaches Available at: <http://www.housing.org.uk/media/press-releases/two-thirds-of-households-hit-by-bedroom-tax-are-in-debt-as-anniversary-appr> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

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93 Bristol 247, February 2014, 'Hundreds of Bristol families wrongly targeted by bedroom tax' [online] Available at: <http://www.bristol247.com/2014/02/27/hundreds-bristol-families-wrongly-targeted-bedroom-tax-96101/> (Accessed 22 September 2014)

94 Crisis, 2011, 'Crisis Policy Briefing Changes to the Shared Accommodation Rate in Housing Benefit' [online] Available at <http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Crisis%20briefing%20on%20the%20Shared%20Accommodation%20Rate.pdf> (Accessed 28 September 2014)

95 Vera Baird QC, 2012, 'Everywoman Safe Everywhere - Labour's Commission on Women's Safety' Available at: http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Everywoman_Safe_Everywhere_FINAL.pdf (Accessed 28 September 2014)

96 Office for National Statistics. 2014. 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=1395352174760&enc=1&dsFamilyId=1037&njs=true&nsc=false&nssvg=false&nswid=1366> (Accessed 5 September 2014)

97 Ibid.

98 Department for Work and Pensions, 2014, 'Housing Benefit Claimants' [online] Available at: <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml> (Accessed 12 September 2014)

99 Department for Work and Pensions 'Gender (single claimants only), Family Type and National - Regional - LA - OAs by Month and Private or Social Rented' [online] Available at <https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml> (Accessed 12 September 2014)

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

101 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

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103 Inside Housing [online] Eviction notices surge by 26% 13th December. Available at: <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/eviction-notices-surge-by-26/6529938.article> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

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107 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]

108 The Telegraph 11th Jan 2014, Why Landlords are shunning profitable benefit tenants [online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/investing/buy-to-let/10563064/Why-buy-to-let-landlords-are-shunning-profitable-benefit-tenants.html> [Accessed 28 March]

109 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010 Above (n.5) 26% of people receiving housing benefit are disabled, but a smaller proportion are in private rented accommodation

110 National Housing Federation [online] Two thirds of households hit by bedroom tax are in debt as anniversary approaches Available at: <http://www.housing.org.uk/media/press-releases/two-thirds-of-households-hit-by-bedroom-tax-are-in-debt-as-anniversary-appr> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

111 Department of Work and Pensions, 2010. Above (n.1). (34% of people receiving housing benefit are pensioners, but only 8% of those in private rented accommodation)

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

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4. Incomes and Poverty

4.1 Overview

There are 42,020 working-age people in Bristol who claim out-of-work benefits, which at 14.3% of the resident population aged 16-64 is 1% higher than the average for Great Britain.¹¹⁷

Despite reports of a recovery, the poorest families continue to suffer, with real household incomes still around 7% below peak levels prior to the financial crisis in 2008. Poorer households have suffered higher effective inflation rates on average due to the rise in food and energy prices which represent a relatively high percentage of their budgets.¹¹⁸

The government's welfare reform proposals are intended to save £18 billion by 2014/15, and based on Bristol's population as a percentage of the UK this could mean a loss of around £125 million by the end of this period.¹¹⁹

4.2 Benefits and Tax Changes

Austerity under the Coalition has been imposed through a balance of 90% spending cuts versus 10% tax increases. This has had a disproportionately high effect on women, with the tax and welfare changes raising a net £3.047 billion (21 per cent) from men and £11.628 billion (79 per cent) from women. £12 billion additional cuts to social security benefits per annum are planned over the first two years of the next parliament.

Most working age social security benefits and tax credits have been restricted to an increase of 1% from April 2013, and in 2013 the Government 'welfare spending cap' was announced, placing a limit on spending on social security and tax credits. This also has a

Personal Tax Allowance Increase
The personal tax allowance increased in April 2014 by £560 from £9,440 to £10,000, with a policy objective of supporting those on low and middle incomes and 'rewarding work'. The government estimates that 25.4 million individuals will gain, 57% of whom are men. Those on means-tested benefits will also lose out because part of the increased income will be withdrawn, and this situation will be exacerbated by an increase to £10,500 planned for April 2015.

Auto-enrolment, whereby workers are enrolled into employer-supported pension schemes, was introduced in October 2012 to tackle growing concerns about poverty in old age. However, the threshold for those who qualify rises with the tax threshold. The increase in April 2014 means that around 120,000 fewer women will no longer qualify, losing out on valuable employer contributions (typically 3% of salary) and tax relief which cancels out the tax gain altogether.

disproportionately high impact on women as a higher percentage of their individual income is made up of benefits (often being claimed on behalf of others such as children).¹²⁰

Women's Budget Group estimate that around 80% of the revenue raised and expenditure saved through changes to personal taxes and social security since 2010 will come from women.¹²¹

Deprivation in Bristol's poorest areas is entrenched. Over half of the children in poverty here live in households where the youngest child is under age five. Average life expectancy for women in Bristol has improved with women living 3.3 years longer

than 20 years ago. The life expectancy in the 10% most deprived areas (compared with the 10% least deprived areas) is 5.8 years lower for women.¹²²

4.3 Benefits to Families

More children in Bristol live in poverty – 25% - than anywhere else in the South West.¹²³ This is defined as a child living in a household where the income is below 60 per cent of the average household income. This is not evenly distributed across the city – some wards have low incidences and others, such as Lawrence Hill, have almost 2,300 children (60%) living in poverty meaning it is in the bottom percentile of all wards nationally.¹²⁴ This is set against a rising child population, with the numbers of children under 5 rising by 34% between 2002-12 (almost double the rise nationally), with a birth rate 22% higher in 2012 than 2005.¹²⁵

Free school meals (FSM), often used as a proxy indicator for deprivation, have increased from 21.5% in 2008 to 24% in 2012 with nearly half (47%) of all schoolchildren in Lawrence Hill being eligible.¹²⁶

In Bristol 16,900 children and young people live in families receiving either Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance (77% of all 0-19 year-olds living in poverty).¹²⁷

A report by Action for Children, The Children's Society and the NSPCC claims that the changes to the tax and benefits systems and resulting negative impact on family income will, on average, have a negative impact on every type of vulnerable child analysed.¹²⁸

Childcare - Tax-free childcare for children under the age of 12 will be introduced from September 2015, worth 20% of eligible childcare costs up to £10,000 and replacing

the current system of Employer Supported childcare.¹²⁹

Pregnancy – Pregnant women, those with a child under 4 and/or those who are breastfeeding and claiming certain benefits are eligible for vouchers under the Healthy Start Scheme.¹³⁰ The maximum is £6.20 per week to spend on milk, fruit and vegetables and formula, with some eligibility also for free vitamins.

Child Benefit – the freezing of child benefit in 2010 for three years, with inflation and a steep cost of living increase, has meant that a family with three children will be £285 worse off per annum by 2014. The benefit was increased by just 1% in April 2014. This restriction hits low-income families hardest (particularly lone parents, most of whom are women) for whom this represents a larger proportion of overall income.¹³¹

Tax credits – following a reduction in the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit from 80% to 70%, a survey by Workingmums.co.uk (2011) found that 24% of mothers had stopped working as they are unable to cover childcare costs.¹³²

Abolition of Council Tax Benefit – from April 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was abolished and replaced by Council Tax Support, but with 10% less funding.¹³³ This development brought a change from a nationally devised system to different schemes for each local authority. Bristol City Council fully funded a means-tested Council Tax Reduction scheme during 2013/14 and 2014/15, protecting the poorest families from an increased Council Tax Bill. This is not, however, guaranteed for future years.¹³⁴

Benefit Cap – This was applied from 2013, and introduced in Bristol on 12th August 2013. Limits the total of benefit that most

working age people can get, with the benefits counting towards the capped total including key out-of-work benefits (eg, Jobseeker's Allowance), Carer's Allowance, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit. The cap is currently administered through Housing Benefit, with a household's Housing Benefit reduced to adjust the total amount of benefit. There are some exemptions, for example, households with a current award of Disability Living Allowance. Since its implementation, 298 households in Bristol have had their housing benefit capped on amounts ranging from £50 per week to £250 per week. All of these households had three or more children, with 172 of them being lone parents.¹³⁵

Housing – As well as being subject to the benefits cap, Housing Benefit is subject to the 'bedroom tax' from 1st April 2013 which cuts the amount of benefit entitlement for those deemed to have a spare bedroom in their council or housing association home. Bristol was the hardest hit in the South West with 3,939 families affected losing an average of £768.95 per annum. This affects more women than men, both because a higher proportion of these claimants are female, and they often remain in housing which has 'spare' rooms when children have moved on.¹³⁶

4.4 Lone Parents

Approximately 92% of lone parents are women, and a number of cuts, for example, to Working Tax Credit, have particularly affected women in lone parent households, as they are more likely to be recipients of these benefits. They are likely to be more vulnerable than other groups - in a DWP survey (2013), 28% reported a long-standing illness or disability (LSI) and 30% had a child with an LSI.¹³⁷ Lone parents make up 1.5%

of total out-of-work benefits claimants in Bristol, slightly above the national average of 1.2%.¹³⁸

Lone parents are underrepresented among owner occupiers (29% compared to an average of 65.3%) and overrepresented among social renters (41% compared to an average of 17.3%). They are also overrepresented among those in receipt of housing benefit, which is subject to the social security spending cap.¹³⁹ A high proportion (75.5%) of Bristol's children who live in poverty live in lone parent families (compared with 67.4% in England as a whole).¹⁴⁰

Income Support to Jobseekers

Allowance – from May 2012, only those lone parents whose youngest child is under five years old (instead of 7 as previously) are able to claim Income Support. Those with children aged five or over moved to Jobseekers Allowance if they are able to work.¹⁴¹ This amounts to £72.40 per week (£57.35 for those aged under 25; these rates apply from age 18 for lone parents).¹⁴²

The Benefits Cap limits the benefits which single parents whose children live with them may claim to £500 per week regardless of how many children they have (or £350 for those whose children do not live with them).¹⁴³

Despite CPAG bringing a case for two lone mothers escaping domestic abuse and the Court of Appeal finding that the cap discriminates against women it was found to be lawful.¹⁴⁴

Charges for the Use of the Child Support

Scheme – over the next three years there are plans to move most claimants to a new, 'gross income scheme' which requires the payment of an application fee of £20

to obtain a calculation of the maintenance payable and collection charges, and a 'collection fee' of 4% on any maintenance paid via the CSA.¹⁴⁵

4.5 Disabled People and their Carers

In 2012/13, 21% of females (6.6 million) and 18% (5.5 million) males were disabled in the UK.¹⁴⁶ Benefits for disabled people and carers (or elements relating to these situations), are eligible for increases in line with inflation (unlike other working age social security benefits). However, these increase by the Consumer Price Index and is lower than the Retail Prices Index by which they were previously uprated.¹⁴⁷ Disabled people make up 1.1% of total out-of-work benefit claimants in Bristol, slightly less than the average for Great Britain of 1.2%.¹⁴⁸

Campaigners have expressed concern at the inclusion of disability and carers' benefits in the 'welfare spending cap' which could be imposed on Severe Disablement Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Disability Allowance amongst others.¹⁴⁹

4.5.1 Disabled People

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) – from April 2013 the abolition of DLA started to be replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP). These have tighter criteria for eligibility and assessment, with potential losses to disabled people of between £20.55 and £131.50 per week, and 600,000 disabled people losing £2.62 billion of support as a result of the changes.¹⁵⁰

Campaigning organisations have expressed concern at the delays in PIP payments. For example only a quarter of all new registered claimants had a decision made about their claim between April 2013 and March 2014.

This can cause great hardship, particularly as everyday items can cost more for those with disabilities as well as often having higher energy bills. There are also concerns about the assessment process, conducted by private companies, and inclusion of PIP in the welfare spending cap.¹⁵¹ PIP is being piloted for new claimants in some areas such as Merseyside and North East England, to be rolled out in 2015.

In February 2014, there were 22,660 DLA claimants in Bristol, 11,020 of whom were women.¹⁵²

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

– This replaced incapacity benefit. There are concerns about the demands being made on lone parents as a condition of being paid their ESA, which requires that they undertake work-related activity and attend work-focused interviews or face a cut to their benefits, and gives greater discretionary powers to DWP employment advisers to set conditions.¹⁵³ Recent reports have shown a 'shocking' increase' in the number of individuals sanctioned and losing their ESA,¹⁵⁴ and about the unfairness of assessment practices.¹⁵⁵ Recent statistics show 7,000 women in Bristol as ESA claimants,¹⁵⁶ with 1,930 still claiming Incapacity Benefit.¹⁵⁷

4.5.2 Carers

Many people provide informal care to others, with 5.6 million people reported as being carers, 59% of whom were women.¹⁵⁸ Cuts to benefits for carers will result in them losing over £1bn in support by 2018.¹⁵⁹

Carers make up 1.1% of all out-of-work benefits claimants in Bristol, slightly lower than the national average of 1.4%.¹⁶⁰

Available data show that 44,930 individuals in the South West were in receipt of Carer's Allowance in 2012.¹⁵¹

Carers Allowance – The Carer's Allowance earnings limit was increased from May 2014 to allow carers to work 16 hours per week on minimum wage whilst claiming Working Tax Credit and their Carer's Allowance (currently £59.75 per week). Prior to the increase, a 'cliff edge' existed, where those working over 16 hours faced losing their tax credits and benefits. Carers UK is calling for the introduction of an 'earnings taper' so that benefit is gradually reduced with earnings.¹⁵²

4.6 Older People

- State Pension Age for women, which was due to rise gradually from 60 to 65 by 2020 is being raised more rapidly, reaching 65 by December 2018 and 66 by April 2020 bringing it in line with men. A group of women in their 50s were given a very short period of time to adapt to the change and face losing a significant amount of income. Following a campaign the second rise will now come into force in October 2020; giving a slight improvement to the worst-hit who will now wait 18 months instead of two years.¹⁶³
 - A significant number of women therefore still face up to an 18 month delay in their state pension.¹⁶⁴
 - Female pensioners are still poorer, on average, than men with an average original income 20% lower than their male counterparts.
 - The Winter Fuel Allowance has been frozen under the 2014 budget and included in the cap on social security benefits. This is "a savage cut given soaring fuel prices, [which] will hit women pensioners harder than men, due to their lower income, higher average age and greater prevalence of disability". Single
- female pensioners, also, are slightly more likely than their male counterparts to have low levels of savings.¹⁶⁵
 - From 2015, women of 55 or over may take any pension 'pots' without being forced to buy annuities at potentially poor rates. However, many women will have small amounts, with women more likely than men to have restricted earnings due to caring responsibilities. This, combined with higher State Pension Ages and low levels of state pension available will leave many future women pensioners either reliant on means-testing or at risk of poverty.¹⁶⁶
 - Introduction of a single tier state pension from 2016 will generally help low-paid women, but excludes existing women pensioners and those approaching retirement. Moreover, the qualification period required of 35 years means some women will receive a reduced amount if they have taken time out for caring responsibilities.¹⁶⁷
 - The TUC report on a rise in the number of 50+ women in the labour market, some of whom are past retirement age and may need to work because of falling living standards and a decline in workplace pensions.¹⁶⁸
 - Women who are 50+ make up 11.7% of Bristol's workplace population.¹⁶⁹

4.7 Other Changes that May Affect Incomes

4.7.1 Conditionality and Sanctions

Single Parents Action Network in Bristol, in their studies on the effect of sanctions on lone parents, found that sanctions do little to motivate them into work with a lack of support and some being sanctioned because

they were unable to fulfil work programme criteria due to childcare issues.¹⁷⁰

Under the current regime, the welfare state is shown to preside over a ‘culture of fear’, which is “systematically failing single parent jobseekers” by withholding benefits.¹⁷¹

4.8 Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit payment which brings together the main means-tested benefits such as income support and child and working tax credits in an attempt to simplify the benefits system and provide greater incentive for those on benefits to move into work. It will be paid monthly, into a single household bank or building society.

There are concerns, however, that: the proposals will affect women’s financial autonomy if theirs is not the designated account for payment; the withdrawal of benefits as incomes increase will be a disincentive to work for women who are often the ‘second’ wage-earners in a household; and monthly payments do not fit well with the way many low-income families manage their money which often has a greater effect on women as the ‘shock absorbers’ in a family.¹⁷² Furthermore, the proposed changes will have a highly detrimental effect, through cuts to benefits, for lone parents who are under 25 or who have a disabled child.¹⁷³ Some have questioned the basis of its design. As Universal Credit is based on net income, any tax cuts intended to help those in low-income households would have no effect as any gains would be taken away immediately.¹⁷⁴

It is being trialled in different areas of the country (for example, Bath, Harrogate and North West England) as part of a process to roll out nationally, and Bristol is unlikely to be affected until 2016.¹⁷⁵ As a result of the

trial so far, there are concerns that landlords are increasingly rejecting tenants on housing benefit as the move to universal credit will mean they are no longer paid directly.¹⁷⁶ In addition, universal credit rules were recently adjusted to remove adverse effects for residents in refuges.¹⁷⁷

4.9 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

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 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, losing £58 per week.⁽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 is not running every day.⁽³⁾

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

(2) 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 are under threat

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5. Education and Training

5.1 Overview

The impact on women of the cuts remains disproportionate because their lifetime earnings continue to be lower than men's: analysis shows an annual gap in salary from £5,000 to £16,000 in 2012.¹⁷⁸ In Bristol, 7.1% of the working age population has no qualifications, compared to an average of 9.3% across all of Great Britain.¹⁷⁹ A DWP survey that interviewed a group of lone mothers also found that 31% of the group had no formal qualifications.¹⁸⁰

5.1.1 Early Years and Family Support

The BookTrust scheme, which funds free books, received cuts to its funding in 2011/12 and will be maintained at the reduced level until 2015. In addition, BookTrust has been tasked with targeting disadvantaged two-year-olds.¹⁸¹

Nationally, Children's Centres have been undergoing reform with movement from universal to targeted services and the introduction of charging for services. The Children's Centre Census¹⁸² found that although circumstances are difficult for local authorities and those operating Children's Centres, the Centres have not suffered to the degree that overall cuts to funding and budget might suggest. This is despite cuts of a third since the start of the decade. This reflects local protection and the resilience and creativity of the Centres themselves.

The Children's Centres Census also found increasing demand for Children's Centre services, with a suggestion that more than one million families are being supported. This includes the most vulnerable families with

children of 0-5 years. This increased demand is set against cuts of 15% that are expected during 2014-15, leaving many Centres vulnerable. There are fears of an acceleration in closures, with the potential loss of around 60 Centres across England.

In Bristol, a review of Children's Centres and Early Years support is planned, with proposed savings of £1.52m between 2014 and 2017.¹⁸³

5.1.2 Schools

There is currently a shortfall in the number of primary school places in Bristol, with 631 places required by 2017 (plus an additional 841 to meet the needs of planned housing developments).¹⁸⁴

In addition, from 2013 two-year-olds who meet the Free School Meal criteria or are looked after by the Local Authority will be eligible for free early years education, with a need to create an additional 370 places for 2014/15.¹⁸⁵

A significant increase is expected in the number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including increases in those with a medical diagnosis of autism and severe language and communication needs.¹⁸⁶ The budget for speech and language therapy has been reduced across the country due to cuts to council services and the NHS, leaving many parents struggling to help their children.¹⁸⁷ In Bristol the way in which speech and language therapy is commissioned is under review with the aim of saving money. It is not yet clear what headline savings are anticipated by reviewing it or how the unit rate cut in this commissioned service is going to avoid impacting on the quality of the service and the number able to access it.¹⁸⁸

Budget reductions agreed by Bristol City Council will impact on school-age children, for example, the cessation of non-statutory library services that includes the School Library Service at a total saving of £30k during 2014/15.

A review of the Home-to-School transport service is expected to save £1.28 million between 2014-17. However, Bristol has 10,000 children with Special Educational Needs, almost a fifth of the school population, and reductions in services such as home-to-school transport will likely have a significant effect.¹⁸⁹ The proposed changes will have a knock on effect for parent/carers working and life arrangements, especially single parents, who are predominately women.

5.2 Further Education and Training

5.2.1 Access to Higher Education (HE)

43,155 people were studying in England and Wales in 2012-13, 73% of whom were women. This is a popular route into HE for vocational students, with 50% of the UCAS applications for Access students being for nursing courses.¹⁹⁰ This is lower than those for 2010/11 prior to the introduction of loans, which totalled 45,000 applications, 72% of whom were women.

Further funding cuts will be imposed on the FE sector nationally, with 40% cuts to the adult skills budget in the next four years and 17.5% cuts to the funding for 18-year-olds. The expectation that this shortfall will be met by learners has raised concerns that this will be a barrier to education for some students.¹⁹¹

Since 2010/11, more apprenticeships in England have been started by women than men, with 55% of those starting in 2012/13 being women. The number of these increased by 2,780 between 2011/12 and 2012/13. In the South West, the number of apprenticeships started has steadily increased, although by a smaller amount than all other regions in England.¹⁹²

In Bristol, cuts have led to redundancies in colleges, including City of Bristol College.¹⁹³

5.2.2 Higher Education

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) research used the Labour Force Survey and the British Household Panel Survey to simulate predicted earnings and employment status, showing that a university degree means there is a higher probability of a person being in employment. A degree can also have a significant effect on a woman's lifetime earnings, increasing these by up to 53% (approximately £252,000).¹⁹⁴ The social benefit is also demonstrated as £318,000 - far in excess of the likely cost to the exchequer.¹⁹⁵

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data for 2012/13 shows that 60.5% of 658,130 part-time students who are likely to be studying for qualifications other than a first degree, are female.¹⁹⁶ This is similar to the 2010/11 rate of 61.1%, although the number of part-time HE students - 823,955 - was considerably higher,¹⁹⁷ providing evidence for widespread concern about the availability of higher education to support social mobility.

A Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) briefing on the impact of the 2012 reforms shows that mature students have been much more affected than younger people, with acceptances

of applicants for those aged 20 and over dropping by 7.1% between 2011-12 and 2012-13. Returning to university as a mature student has traditionally been important for social mobility, with mature students more likely to be female and/or hold non-traditional qualifications or come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. For younger students, however, although there is a decline in overall numbers of applicants, figures suggest that, within this group, women are a third more likely to apply for university than men.¹⁹⁸

In 2012/13 sat the University of the West of England (UWE), mature students made up 26% of full time degree entrants; in Bristol University mature students were 4/7%.¹⁹⁹ UWE offer a bursary with priority to particular groups, including Access students (often mature).²⁰⁰

The University of Bristol offers a small number of fee waivers and a bursary giving priority to individuals from the 'Low Participation Areas' in Bristol. These are for those low-income

families whose children are state educated and part of the first generation of their family to go to university.²⁰¹

The latest available data show that, whilst participation in Higher Education has risen by 2.5 percentage points since 98-99, the South West had the smallest increase of 0.8 percentage points across that period: participant rates in Bristol South amongst the lowest in the country at 18%.²⁰²

5.3 English as a Second Language (ESOL)

In April 2014, a new policy introduced a requirement for claimants with a low level of spoken English to be identified at the beginning of their claim, and referred to the most appropriate English language training. Those who fail to start, participate in, or complete their training face benefit sanctions.²⁰³

Yet, the funding for ESOL classes has been reduced over the last few years. The

spending on ESOL trebled between 2001 and 2008 to £300m,²⁰⁴ and enrolments trebled as well, providing more people with access to English support. In 2011 the government cut back, developing a policy that only people on 'active' benefits would be eligible for free ESOL classes. This means any woman coming to Bristol without English skills with her family would not have access to the means to integrate herself into the community, find and obtain employment or support her children with schooling.

For people who are not flexible enough to attend classes at any hours, the benefits are

stopped.²⁰⁵ Single parents and mothers with young children are particularly hard hit. The only venue in Bristol to offer ESOL classes with childcare is SPAN, and all funding for crèches in other colleges has been cut.

When a woman does get a job, one that she can manage with very basic English skills, the ability to learn English is stopped. This creates a barrier to career development, and with low paid, manual jobs there is lack of job security and high turnover. Women who are mothers need help to support their children with school work, and navigating the school administrative forms.

5.4 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

Leila is a lone parent in her forties and lives with her son. She came to Bristol 6 years ago with her ex-husband from Sudan. She was planning to start ESOL classes when they arrived but her classes were not prioritised within the family budget and with no income of her own she was not able to attend. She does not have strong literacy skills in Arabic and needs basic skills in writing and reading.

She separated from her son's father last year and they do not currently get any support from him. Her English is poor and she has struggled to understand the process to access the Child Support and Maintenance. She cannot afford the fee of £100 to get the process started.

Her son is five and has just started school so she is moved onto Job Seekers Allowance.⁽¹⁾ Her son is having problems settling in at school. He has speech and language problems and Leila tries unsuccessfully to get additional support through the school.⁽²⁾ His speech problems make him frustrated and he starts misbehaving. Leila frequently has to go to the school at short notice to talk to teachers about her son's behaviour. She does not know how she can find a job that fits around her care needs, and she struggles to get to the ESOL classes as they do not fit with school hours and are in a different part of Bristol.

Leila doesn't have a strong support network of family close by to help with childcare. She is worried about what will happen if she misses an ESOL class, the impact on her ability to support her son whilst also meeting the criteria for Job Seekers' Allowance.

(1) Lone parents with children over five have been moved to Job Seekers Allowance and therefore be actively seeking work (see Incomes and Poverty Chapter)

(2) Funding for speech and language support in schools has been cut

"It is difficult to find places like SPAN, where there is childcare and ESOL classes are provided. As a result, once they have to look for work, they are not prepared. At SPAN, we do initial assessments with all our ESOL learners. We find out about their education background, their previous ESOL learning and their literacy skills. When a single parent has not been able to go to school in their country of origin, due to war or poverty, it will be impossible for them to learn English quickly. They will need a lot of input and a lot of support to gain skills which will prepare them for work in the UK. However, the current employability agenda and back to work initiatives fail this client group miserably as their needs are so poorly understood.

The threats of sanctions are hanging over these parents as a dark cloud. They are set up to fail the agreements in their claimant's commitments. If they are sanctioned, other benefits are also affected and parents are left wondering how they are going to feed the children. The short- and long-term impact on the children of this group of single parents, and others facing sanctions, are rarely discussed or reflected upon. What kind of message are they given when their families are punished, not due to lack of effort, but due to lack of opportunities and a system that looks at people as numbers rather than as human beings?"

Tove Samelius, Director of Services, Single Parent Action Network UK

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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.²⁰⁶

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.

6.2 What Has Changed?

Women experiencing violence and/or abuse in Bristol are 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.

The scale of the problem

- 43,340 women in Bristol are likely to have been raped or sexually abused at some point in their lifetime.²⁰⁷
- The Avon & Somerset Constabulary recorded crime rate for rape is 22.9 per 100,000. This number is in line with the average across England and Wales.²⁰⁸
- Only 15% of victims said they had reported offences to the police.²⁰⁹
- 14,273 women and girls aged 16-59 in Bristol are estimated to have been a victim of domestic abuse in 2013. An additional 2,905 older women could have been victims of domestic violence and abuse in the last year.²¹⁰
- 68,800 women in Bristol are likely to experience domestic violence in their lifetime.²¹¹
- 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.²¹²
- 4,758 women and girls aged 16-59 in Bristol have been a victim of sexual assault in the past year.²¹³
- 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.²¹⁴
- Attacks on women have risen by more than 2,000 a week nationally since the start of the recession.²¹⁵
- The cost of domestic abuse to the health service is £1.7 billion per year with the major costs being to GPs and hospitals. This does not include mental health costs, estimated at an additional £176 million.²¹⁶

- **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 further budget cuts which agencies fear may reduce the support available to victims and survivors of violence.
- **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 resulting from 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 to a different area 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.

6.3 Services for Women Experiencing Violence

6.3.1 Domestic Violence services

There are a range of services in Bristol supporting people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.

- Nextlink provides a full range of specialist domestic abuse services for women and

children in Bristol including dedicated BME, South Asian and Somali services and a GP referral service.

- St Mungo's runs the Freedom Programme, a group work programme for women who have experienced domestic abuse.
- 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 (which may include suffering domestic abuse).
- Victim Support provides support to all victims of crime – which again includes domestic and sexual assault when it has been reported to the police and treated as a crime, but is not a specialist women's or domestic violence agency.
- Safer Bristol Partnership co-ordinates Bristol's response to Violence and Abuse Against Women and Girls. The Domestic and Sexual Abuse Commissioning Board is commissioning services for domestic violence, sexual violence and street sex worker support to the value of £1.2m from 2015-2020.²¹⁷

Stopping Violence is a voluntary perpetrator programme in Bristol offering group work sessions for male perpetrators as well as a women's safety service for their partners or ex-partners. In 2012-13, 28 men attended the programme and 19 completed the programme successfully. 20 partners/ex-partners accepted support from the women's safety worker.²¹⁸

6.3.2 Sexual Violence Services

The main agency providing services to victims and survivors of sexual violence is Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS, formerly Bristol

Rape Crisis). The organisation was awarded £60,000 for 2014 and 2015 to deliver services in Bristol and the surrounding areas for women and girls who have experienced any form of sexual violence, at any point in their lives.²¹⁹ They provide free services which include a helpline, one to one support, e-support, and complex needs support. SARSAS report an increase in self and professional referral over the last year, and have recently had to recruit a complex needs worker with no additional funding due to the increase in referrals of women with complex needs. This seems to be an effect of the cuts to mental health services. This service is currently being recommissioned in Bristol.

Statutory services in Bristol for women who experience sexual violence are provided through Avon and Somerset's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), The Bridge, 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. This includes information and referral services, forensic medical facilities, counselling for people who have experienced sexual violence within the last year, and support through the criminal justice system.

Numbers of people accessing the SARC are growing year on year with significant increases around self-referrals²²⁰ attributed to funding for communications and outreach work. The SARC ("The Bridge") is jointly funded by the Avon and Somerset PCC and NHS England.

The Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service is funded by the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner. In 2014/15 the PCC secured additional funding from the Ministry of Justice for this service to increase capacity. This service is currently being recommissioned to be on a more

stable contractual footing, with additional funding being made available to meet need. The new service will commence on the 1st April 2015.

"I want to ensure that victims of domestic and sexual violence get the help they need when they need it. I will do this by encouraging and enabling reporting, supporting early intervention and improving access to support and services, particularly amongst those most vulnerable to harm".

I want the people and agencies across Avon and Somerset to understand and play their part in tackling this priority which includes crimes such as and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), human trafficking, child abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

My approach will be to:-

- **Encourage victims of domestic and sexual abuse to report their victimisation, and access the support services available to them**
- **Improve the way agencies work together to prevent domestic and sexual abuse, particularly through early intervention, and work with children and young people**
- **Support, monitor and oversee improvements in the consistency, quality and stability of the critical services being provided to victims of domestic and sexual abuse.**

Sue Mountstevens, Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Bristol Safeguarding Children board estimates about 2,000 girls in the city are at risk of FGM.²²¹ In 2013, North Bristol NHS Trust asked midwives to check all their patients for the procedure and 117 cases were found. Integrate Bristol is a local

charity which campaigns against all forms of Violence and Abuse Against Women and Girls, and promotes gender equality. They aim to raise awareness and education around these issues through creative projects and had a large publicity campaign around FGM in 2014.

Since 2000 Bristol has been working with a multi-agency approach to educate young people, train professionals such as nurses and police officers and empower communities to stop FGM.²²² The Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group funded the Rose Clinic - a community-based service that provides specialist care and support for Bristol women who are experiencing problems because of FGM. It is staffed by female doctors and nurses who understand the sensitive and complex issues surrounding FGM, and the helpline and appointments are confidential.

6.3.3 Impact of increased demand for services

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. A woman may have no family or friends with whom she can stay, or may not be safe staying somewhere where her partner or ex-partner can find them. She may be forced to continue staying with her violent partner, putting both herself and her children at further risk.

Bristol needs 43 safe house places for women fleeing domestic violence and abuse, but currently has only 33.²²³ This will be increased to 40 as part of new commissioning arrangements from April 2015.²²⁴ During 2012-13, 119 women and 88 children were accommodated in the Safe Houses. This is a slight increase from 2011-12 when 114 women and 94

children were accommodated. During the first six months of 2013-14, 30 women were accommodated, but 21 women were unable to be accommodated as the Safe House was full.²²⁵

Women who have experienced violence and/or abuse may face a huge range of financial, legal, employment related or housing problems. These problems may be exacerbated by statutory services which fail to meet their needs. Without specialist outreach and advocacy services such as those provided by Nextlink and Victim Support IDVAs and other specialist services such as those for BME women, women

Over the last few years and for the foreseeable future BCC have chosen to re-commission services via competitive tendering process – rather than renegotiate or remodel through discussion. As this process is time consuming and expensive for all parties it is often excluding of smaller providers. The budget/spend is reducing, they want more or the same for less money.

Each year on existing contracts providers have been expected to make savings of between 5-15%.

Length of support time that we are able to offer women has been cut and is often limited to 6 months. This limits the work and support that can be given which in turn can affect the ability of some service users to make or sustain changes necessary to be able to move on safely or manage in the community without sufficient support – their health or circumstances deteriorates and they end up coming back through services. The drive to increase throughput of women through services via time limited support rather than needs led support is a false economy.

Nextlink

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.²²⁶ Specialist counselling services such as those provided by Womankind are vital in helping women deal with the long term impact of violence.

Bristol City Council has increased funding for organisations working in this field since last year. Work is being commissioned from April 2015. Agreements will be in place for 3 years, with the option of extending for a further 2 years to March 31st 2020, providing the successful organisations with stability. This funding has been designed as a mixture of contracts and competitive grants in order to allow organisations of different sizes to engage in the process.

6.4 Cuts to Policing

Avon and Somerset Constabulary have to make a saving of £46 million which could include closing police stations. To find £8 million in savings over the next year, the force is proposing to lose 134 police officer posts, of which 61 will be police constables (see Employment chapter)

Research into women's experiences of the criminal justice system shows that large numbers of women who have suffered domestic or sexual violence 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.²²⁷

For every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded, there were 70 arrests in Avon & Somerset. For most forces the number is between 45 and 90.²²⁸ Tackling domestic abuse is a clear priority for the Avon &

Somerset PCC and the police. It is one of the four top priorities in the PCC's police and crime plan, and the constabulary's control strategy also reflects this priority. The constabulary has developed a 'violence against women and children' delivery plan which sets out how they plan to respond to domestic abuse.²²⁹

However, in the same report, HMIC found that there is a tendency to prioritise other offences, such as burglary, over domestic abuse when sending officers in response to a call out. This may contribute to the low arrest rate of domestic abuse offenders in Bristol, which is well below the constabulary average, and where the time taken to respond to priority incidents is at its lowest.²³⁰

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 (CPS has been subject to a national cut of 25% (£118 million) between 2010/11 and 2014/15, with an estimated loss of 1,800 staff.²³¹ Nationally the Crown Prosecution Service legal teams have been cut by 31% since 2010. Higher court advocate numbers have been reduced by 44%, and the number of barristers reduced by 27% since 2010.²³²

President of the Law Society, Linda Lee, supports the view that those who will be hardest hit are those in need of most help with housing, mental health and domestic violence, the majority of whom are women.²³³

In Bristol the system to prosecute perpetrators of violence and abuse of women and girls is well structured. Nationally the picture is not so good. It is clear that, if the police cannot afford an officer in place who is

trained to identify cases as domestic abuse, if the CPS have fewer specially trained lawyers still in post, if court staff do not know that these cases should be listed separately from others and there is no IDVA, or only one who is over-stretched, then this highly successful system will fracture.²³⁴

Director of Public Prosecutions Alison Saunders highlights a picture of improving statistics on violence against women: “referrals from police are up, prosecutions are up, and convictions are up. This is in no small part due to the leadership shown by dedicated specialist coordinators in every CPS area and the determination of our prosecutors and case workers to see justice done for victims of crime.”²³⁵

6.6 Health Service Cuts

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.²³⁶ Women who experience domestic violence require twice the level of general medical services and three to eight times the level of mental health services.²³⁷ Half of the women of Asian origin who have attempted suicide or self-harm are domestic violence survivors.²³⁸

Health professionals have a vital role to play in identifying women who are experiencing abuse, and signposting them to appropriate services. A pilot project in Bristol, providing specialist domestic abuse advocates in GP surgeries, demonstrated how important such links are. IRIS (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) was the first European randomised controlled trial of an intervention to improve the health care response to domestic violence and abuse. It aimed to

determine the cost-effectiveness of a general practice based domestic violence training and support programme.

The trial found the prevalence of domestic abuse is substantially higher in a GP population than that found in the wider population. 80% of women in a violent relationship seek help from health services so the role of the GP is critical in identifying and referring people to specialist providers.²³⁹

Bristol also has domestic violence specialists located within both A&E departments in the Bristol Royal Infirmary and Southmead Hospital.

Research by the Women’s National Commission (WNC) for the Department of Health demonstrated the ways in which health services fail to meet the needs of women experiencing violence.²⁴⁰ 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 pressure on mental health services available 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 used by the Ministry of Justice 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. Cuts in legal aid means that many women who have experienced violence will not get the legal advice or support they need for these associated issues, and which may therefore make them vulnerable to repeat victimisation.

The Legal Advice chapter of this report explores these issues in much greater detail and demonstrates how they are affecting 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.²⁴¹
- **Benefits for disabled people** - Disabled women are twice as likely to experience domestic violence as non-disabled women.²⁴² 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 are affecting 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.”²⁴³

We could find no specific research on whether this has been a problem in Bristol. However, there is national evidence that women who have experienced violence have been sanctioned unfairly; it is therefore 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

In a study by Shelter, 40% of all homeless women stated that domestic violence was a contributor to their homelessness. Domestic violence was found to be “the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless”.²⁴⁴

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 client ²⁴⁵

In 2012-13, the Crisis Response Service at Nextlink supported 295 women at risk of homelessness. Homelessness was prevented in 96% of cases – 270 victims and their children were made safe in their own homes with safety measures in place, and 14 were found a refuge space or alternative accommodation.²⁴⁶

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

“The demand on our services has increased as other services are cut. We are working with women with an increasing range of complex needs; due to the budget cuts we increasingly have to advertise posts at a lower salary level which means we are unable to attract and secure experienced support staff to manage and respond to these needs.”

Clare Perriton, Nextlink

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.

6.12 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 impacting on women leaving violent relationships, or are otherwise negatively impacting upon them.

6.13 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

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 Nextlink via her GP but has to 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⁾ 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 £28.30 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 Jobcentre 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 Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (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 £66.70 (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

206 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://wnc.equalities.gov.uk/work-of-the-wnc/violence-against-women/news-and-updates/309-a-bitter-pill-to-swallow-report-from-the-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://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100418065544/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/vawg-womens-commission/wnc-report-strategy-focus-groups?view=Binary> (Accessed 5 September 2014)

207 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>

208 (England and Wales average is 22 per 100,000 population. Number includes all adult rapes including men) Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 'Rape Monitoring Group, Adult and child rape for 2012/13' [online] Available at: <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/avon-and-somerset-rmg-adult-and-child-rape-data-2012-13.pdf> (Accessed 23 Aug 2014)

209 Ibid

210 Based on a population of 432,500 (ONS 2012 Mid-Year Population Estimate). This model does not account for the victims who are male and/or aged over 59 years old. There are 41,500 women aged 60 years or older are living in Bristol which would result in an additional 2,905 women.

Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment [online] https://www.citizenspace.com/bristol/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services/consult_view [Accessed 28 April 2014]

211 31% of women have experienced domestic violence since the age of 16. Women's aid, 2014, 'Statistics on Domestic Violence' [online] Available at: http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic_violence_topic.asp?section=0001000100220036sionTitle=statistics (Accessed 23 Aug 2014)

212 Walby, Sylvia and Allen, Jonathan (2004) *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey* (London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate)

213 Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment [online] https://www.citizenspace.com/bristol/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services/consult_view [Accessed 28 April 2014]

214 Dodd, Tricia et al., (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2003-2004* (London: Home Office).

215 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/>

216 Walby S. *The cost of domestic violence: update 2009*, Lancaster University

217

Service	Value £pa	Funding method
1 Domestic Violence & Abuse Support Service	790,000	Contract
2 Complex Needs Safe House*	100,000	Contract
3 Adult and children survivor groupwork	85,000	Competitive Grant
4 Men's Domestic Violence and abuse Support Service	80,000	Competitive Grant
5 Sexual Violence Support Service	115,000	Competitive Grant
6 Street Sex Workers Support Service	38,000	Direct Award
Total:	£1,208,000pa	

Safer Bristol, 2014, 'Commissioning support services for victims and survivors of Domestic and Sexual Abuse in Bristol' [online] Available at: <http://www.bava.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Bristol-Domestic-Sexual-Abuse-Commissioning-Plan-June-2014-1.pdf> (Accessed 29 September 2014)

218 Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment [online] https://www.citizenspace.com/bristol/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services/consult_view [Accessed 28 April 2014]

219 Ministry of Justice Organisations awarded funding from the Rape Support Fund 2014-16 Published 7 [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/301701/organisations-awarded-funding-from-the-rape-support-fund-2014-16.pdf [Accessed 28 April 2014]

220 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]

221 BBC News, 13 March 2013, 'Female genital mutilation: Bristol study finds 117 cases' [online] Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-21766729> (Accessed 4 October 2014)

222 Bristol City Council, 2014 [online] 'Bristol highlights change in attitudes towards female genital mutilation' Available at: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/press/bristol-highlights-change-attitudes-towards-female-genital-mutilation> (Accessed 5 October 2014)

223 The recommended number of refuge spaces by population is 1 unit per 10,000 population (Government Select Committee 1997 on domestic violence). There are currently 33 bed spaces in Bristol, 10 short of this recommendation. Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment [online] https://www.citizenspace.com/bristol/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services/consult_view [Accessed 28 April 2014]

224 Comment from Crime Reduction Project Officer (Violence and Abuse Against Women and Girls) Bristol City Council, Oct 2014

225 Safer Bristol Partnership Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment [online] https://www.citizenspace.com/bristol/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services/consult_view [Accessed 28 April 2014]

226 Department of Health, 2006. Tackling the health and mental health effects of domestic and sexual violence and abuse at p.17 [online] Available at: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4136610

227 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

228 HMIC, 2014 'Avon and Somerset Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse' [online] Available at <http://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/avon-and-somerset-approach-to-tackling-domestic-abuse.pdf> (Accessed 28 September 2014)

229 Ibid

230 Ibid

231 Vera Baird QC, 2012, 'Everywoman Safe Everywhere - Labour's Commission on Women's Safety' Available at: http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Everywoman_Safe_Everywhere_FINAL.pdf (Accessed 28 September 2014)

232 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 2014, 'CPS under fire from judges as its ranks are cut by a third since 2010' [online] Available at: <http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2014/04/15/cps-under-fire-from-judges-as-its-ranks-are-cut-by-a-third-since-2010/> (Accessed 28 September 2014)

233 Quality Solicitors News July 2010 [online] Available at <http://www.qualitysolicitors.com/news/cps-cuts.html> [Accessed 2 August 2011]

234 Vera Baird QC, 2012, 'Everywoman Safe Everywhere - Labour's Commission on Women's Safety' Available at: http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/Everywoman_Safe_Everywhere_FINAL.pdf (Accessed 28 September 2014)

235 The Guardian, 2014, 'Domestic violence convictions at record high' [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/02/domestic-violence-convictions-record-high>

236 Home Office. 2007. Cross government action plan on sexual violence and abuse. Available online at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexual-violence-action-plan2835.pdf?view=Binary>

237 Women's National Commission., 2010. Above (at 206)

238 Ibid.

239 IRIS [online] Available at: <http://www.irisdomesticviolence.org.uk/iris/> (Accessed 1 October 2014)

240 Women's National Commission., 2010. Above (n.1)

241 Women's Budget Group, 2011, 'Universal credit: the gender impact' [online] Available at: http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG_Poverty140_UniversalCreditGender_0.pdf (Accessed 30 September 2014)

242 1995 British Crime Survey quoted in Women's Aid. The survivor's handbook. [online] Available at: <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/domestic-violence-survivors-handbook.asp?section=000100010008000100350003> [Accessed 7 April 2011]

243 Women's National Commission., 2010. Above (n.1)

244 Against Violence and Abuse, 2011, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates: information briefing March 2011, Domestic violence and housing' [online] Available at: <http://www.avaproject.org.uk/media/62315/dva%20policy%20briefing%20march.pdf> (Accessed 23 Aug 2014)

245 correspondence with Womankind

246 Bristol City Council, 2014, 'Bristol Domestic & Sexual Abuse Needs Assessment 2014' [online] Available at <https://bristol.citizenspace.com/neighbourhoods/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-services> (Accessed 28 September 2014)

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.

On 31 March 2013, NHS Bristol - like all Primary Care Trusts across the country – ceased to exist. In its place the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Commissioning Support Units, and the National Commissioning Board were created. These groups take on the responsibility of commissioning and providing healthcare services for the population of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The combined cluster budget of almost £1.5 billion provides healthcare needs for a combined population of almost 1 million people.²⁴⁷

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 of 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 affects 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.²⁴⁸ Bristol City Council argues that efficiency savings can meet any shortfall in funding; some voluntary agencies are concerned that some people may receive less care. Therefore there is a need to monitor what actually happens in practice. The Council is spending over £10m every year on the cost of providing support to around 100 people.²⁴⁹

Cuts to welfare benefits, legal aid and reductions in support for domestic violence services 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 Has Changed?

- Social Care services have been cut across the UK. In 2011 the Kings Fund estimated that nationally there could be a £1.2billion gap in adult social care by 2014/15.²⁵⁰
- In 2014 a survey by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) found "cash invested in Adult Social Care will reduce by a further 1.9% (£266m) in 2014-15 to £13.68bn". This is the third year of continuing cash reductions and the fifth year of real terms reductions in spending.²⁵¹
- 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 these Changes?

Any reductions in care or support for carers affects 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 (31,300 women in Bristol over seventy compared to 24,600 men).²⁵² Older people are more likely to have social care needs and the number of older people in Bristol is expected to rise by 3,200 or 6 % in the next 5 years.²⁵³

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.²⁵⁴

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.

“A woman (who receives a 1:1 service at Womankind) has two 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 may be 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

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.

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;
 - From April 2013 Disability Living Allowance changed to Personal Independence Payment which includes planned cut of 20% overall in funding for those receiving the benefit. Nationally there will be almost 10,000

fewer carers by 2015 entitled to the carer’s allowance because of this change.²⁵⁵

- **Cuts to Legal Aid** – In 2013 the Ministry of Justice introduced major changes to Legal Aid for England and Wales.²⁵⁶ All Legal Aid for welfare benefits will be cut. This will include issues like appealing against decisions to deny Employment 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,²⁵⁷ so any reductions in services to tackle domestic violence services will particularly affect them (See chapter on violence against women for more detail).

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 has 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 2011 census.

- 58% of carers are female and 42% are male. The ratio of female to male carers is higher in carers of working age; that ratio levels out after retirement age.²⁵⁸
- 11% of women in Bristol provide unpaid care.²⁵⁹

- At the last census 23,078 female carers in Bristol were providing unpaid care to another adult compared to 16,891 male carers.²⁶⁰
- 5,473 female carers were providing care for more than 50 hours a week and 2,986 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.²⁶¹
- In August 2010 there were 2,740 women in Bristol receiving Carers Allowance compared to 900 men.²⁶² By 2014 this number increased to 3,320 women and 1,100 men receiving Carers Allowance (increase of 21% and 22% respectively).²⁶³

Carers are already experiencing poverty and physical and mental health problems as a result of their caring responsibilities. A national study by Carers UK²⁶⁴ has shown that:

- Half of working age carers live in a household where no-one is in paid work.
- Almost 1 in 3 (30%) carers had seen a drop of £20,000 or more a year in their household income as a result of caring.
- 70% of carers were over £10,000 worse off as a result of reduced earnings.
- 54% are in debt as a result of caring and 74% struggle to pay essential bills.
- 53% of carers believed that worrying about finances had affected their health. This increases to 71% if the carer is disabled themselves.
- People caring for 50 hours a week or more are twice as likely to be in poor health as those not caring.

- 92% said that caring has had a negative impact on their mental health, including stress and depression.

Case Study

Rossana from (Horfield, Bristol) is the carer for her brother with mental health issues (Cotham, Bristol). About three years ago he was discharged from the mental health services to be looked after by his GP, and into her care. She felt the discharge was due to the desire to save money. Last summer, several attempts were made by Rossana to contact the mental health services and the GP to let them know his condition had deteriorated. The system was slow to respond due to the fact Bristol has only one psychiatrist for the whole of the primary care and her brother was not considered an urgent case. As a result of this combined with the slack response from the crisis team, Rossana's brother jumped out of a window and although -miraculously- he did not severely injure himself, he could have potentially died. He was in a police cell for 10 hours and in a psychiatric ward for 4 months, where he was sectioned for most of this time.

She was unable to work during this time as she was his main carer and needed to visit and support him, and she was treated for depression aggravated by the stress. Her return to work was very difficult and she has been struggling with concentration and focus due to worry about her brother and his future health.

Rossana attends siblings Rethink meetings for carers of people with mental health issues -which is extremely helpful- and the participants of the group are almost all women. This highlights that the caring responsibilities are mainly carried out by women who save the government a lot of money but who are not often listened to.

Carers 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 £102) can currently claim carers' allowance of £61.35 a week.

Healthwatch Special Inquiry into Hospital discharge found participants in their survey would like post-discharge support to be well-connected and more thorough. There were concerns raised about arrangements around medication post-discharge, as well as a sense that once someone has been discharged, support tails off too quickly.²⁶⁵

Carers UK 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 no one else who could care for their friend or relative.²⁶⁶

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 to earn money through caring who would previously have been unable to do so. But these changes may also have negative impacts – e.g. less organisational support for carers and less knowledge about how to perform their roles.

7.1.4 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

Significant savings are required in the costs of healthcare services in Bristol that will affect patients, staff and any voluntary organisations which currently rely on healthcare funding. There are also fundamental changes to the way health services are delivered.

7.2.2 What Has Changed?

Overall each year Bristol spends over £200.9m on Health and Social Care, of which £47.3million is funding from income (government grants, fees and charges). The balance of £153.6million is funded by Bristol City Council.

- Bristol Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for commissioning services. The CCG is responsible for commissioning a range of local health

services, and are required to deliver the savings set out in the NHS Operating Framework 2011.

- Public Health became the responsibility of Local Authorities in 2013.
- Bristol Community Health Services became a Social Enterprise in 2011. In addition to a 4.5% efficiency requirement, it now needs to make additional savings because, as a Social Enterprise, it is not able to recover VAT.
- Personal Health Budget introduced. Since April 2014 anyone eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare has the right to ask, from October anyone has the right to obtain one.²⁶⁷

7.2.3 Who is Affected by these Changes?

Staffing

- The majority of staff working in the health service nationally and in Bristol are women. For example, 77% of staff at North Bristol NHS Trust are women.²⁶⁸

Mental Health

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 mental health.

- Cuts in mental health services may particularly impact on women. Depression is more common in women and women are twice as likely to experience anxiety as men.²⁶⁹
- The total number of people accessing NHS specialist mental health services has decreased from 9,026 to 7,630 since 2009.²⁷⁰

- In 2010 in Bristol 4,927 women were in contact with NHS specialist mental health services compared to 4,648 men. The latest figures show 3,699 women compared to 3,623 men accessed mental health support from the NHS. It is unclear whether there are less people needing support or less people accessing the support available.
- 1,704 women aged 65 and over used the services compared to 952 men aged 65 and over.²⁷¹
- 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.²⁷² Without the support they need due to limited numbers of health visitors women in Bristol may be more susceptible to mental health issues.

“On occasion some of our service users are admitted into psychiatric hospital. Because of the pressure on beds they are often discharged when they are still unwell. We then have to support these women as well as managing how their poor mental health impacts on the other women they are sharing with.”

Nextlink

7.2.4 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 climate.²⁷³

In 2011 the Bristol Partnership selected tackling child poverty as one of its two key priorities. However, in 2013 when the 20:20 plan was developed the issue of child poverty had been altered into ‘reducing health and wealth inequality’ (not specific to children) and ‘higher aspirations of young people and families’.²⁷⁴

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

In 2001 in Bristol around 52.5 girls were getting pregnant before their 18th birthday out of every 1,000 girls in Bristol, which placed Bristol 65 out of 346 Local Authority areas. In 2012 the numbers significantly dropped to 28.5 pregnancies for every 1,000 girls aged 15-17 and Bristol now ranks 143 out of 346.²⁷⁵

Nationally the rates have reduced by 10% so Bristol has done more to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy. The reduction has been driven by co-ordinated work funded by Bristol City Council and NHS Bristol including initiatives to support the delivery of sex and relationship education in schools. Services such as Brook 4YP sexual health clinics in secondary schools and programmes are thought to have improved teenage resilience to pressure, raising aspirations, recognising unhealthy relationships and giving young people confidence to access health services.

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 has a disproportionate impact on women, who are normally the primary carers for children.

Cuts to childcare services in Bristol also impact disproportionately on women, as will other cuts to Children’s Centres’ services. It may affect their ability to find and keep employment, particularly for lone parents.

Children’s Centres are funded by the DfE through the Council, formerly through the Sure Start Grant, but from April 2013 this funding stream was consolidated into the Council’s general grant. Bristol was allocated £3.5m for eligible 2 year olds (£5.03 per child per hour) in 2013/14. Bristol has also been awarded £1.5m in ‘development funding’ to create the additional 1500 places needed when the offer increases to 40% of disadvantaged 2 year olds from September 2014.²⁷⁶

7.3.2 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 areas should be monitored:

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

7.4 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.

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 carers 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 only being eligible for the lower rate care component which means she loses £28.85. Aamina also loses her carers 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 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 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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8. Legal Advice Services

8.1 Overview

Legal advice services in Bristol have been affected by cuts to civil legal aid funding and changes to the way in which advice is provided.²⁷⁷ East Bristol Advice Services, Immigration Advisory Services and the Central Eastern European Advice Services were closed in 2010-11. Key services such as Refugee Action have also been cut by other funders. The cumulative effect is a great decrease in the level of expert advice available. These cuts 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.

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.

8.2 What Has Changed?

Legal Aid

In April 2013 changes to legal aid came into force under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and

Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012 which altered:

- 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 was cut. This will include issues like appealing against decisions to deny Employment Support Allowance or to reduce or suspend benefit payments or tax credits.
- **Education** - All legal aid was cut. This will cover issues like appeals against exclusions or admissions, bullying, special educational needs or disability discrimination.
- **Employment** - All legal aid funding was cut except for cases of discrimination or a contravention of the Equality Act 2010.
- **Family law** - All legal aid was 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 is no longer available for issues such as protection against harassment by landlords. It only funds advice on homelessness or serious disrepair threatening health, or for people facing eviction.
- **Immigration** - Legal aid only covers 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 remains available for partners fleeing violent relationships where they are reliant on their partner's status.
- **Medical negligence** - Legal aid was 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 impact legal advice services in Bristol

- The Home Office cut 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.

There are three stages for legal aid applications, each applicant must:

- Prove that their claim belongs in a category of law that is eligible for funding.
- pass a "merits" test by demonstrating that their case is serious.
- Pass a "means" test assessing their income and capital (less than £2,657 gross monthly income).

Bristol City Council provided a grant to Avon and Bristol Law Centre to open a one-stop service in March to help local people who are victims of discrimination. Other local authorities have cut back funding for advice services and the move has been welcomed by advice agencies in Bristol.²⁷⁸ However, since all the changes have been made to Legal Aid it will cost an individual around £1200 to make a discrimination claim and a further £1800 to make an appeal. Many of those who win their case may not actually receive the money in full, and will then have to take the case to court to gain payment.²⁷⁹

8.3 The Impact in Bristol

8.3.1 Less Capacity to Provide Legal Advice

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 who 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 sign post 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

Most advice in Bristol is funded by a ring-fenced programme worth £752,678 annually.²⁸⁰ The reduction in support for Legal Aid has been estimated to impact at a minimum £540,000 in lost funding to advice services annually in Bristol from April 2013.²⁸¹

Funding advice agencies are now finding it impossible to meet demand in welfare benefits, housing, employment and immigration and are at capacity for debt.²⁸²

8.3.2 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 WRAMSA the changes to welfare benefits are likely to lead to an increase in demand for legal advice in welfare cases. During 2011/12 there was a substantive increase in the demand for advice services, up by 100% in some instances.²⁸³ The numbers of people asking for support with managing debt, welfare changes and employment issues are not expected to decrease as the situation has only become more complicated and impacts of multiple austerity cuts become apparent.

“Our advisers 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 incomplete or incorrect advice by local authority or DWP staff, or wrongly sanctioned for failure to actively seek work (see the case study in the Incomes and Poverty chapter for an example). 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 is Affected by these 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.²⁸⁴

More women than men apply for civil legal aid – for example 62.2% of applications for civil legal aid were made by women.²⁸⁵ 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).²⁸⁶

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.

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.²⁸⁷
- The cuts will also disproportionately impact 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).²⁸⁸ 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.²⁸⁹
- The proposal to withdraw legal aid from clinical negligence cases will also disproportionately impact on sick and disabled clients with 30 per cent of cases currently being brought by people from this group.²⁹⁰

“Due to the recent legal aid cuts, we have found it difficult to help our clients who face problems involving any legal matters especially immigration, family law and employment. There are no longer any agencies offering free immigration advice so it has been hard to identify suitable sources of help.”

Bristol and Avon Chinese Women’s Group.

Legal Aid and Domestic Violence

Women in violent relationships are particularly vulnerable to the removal of legal aid. Although legal aid will still be available for domestic violence and related family law cases, the individual has to provide 'trigger evidence' proving that they are a victim of abuse. The Law Society has raised an issue with this approach: "we have major concerns as to whether clients will be practically able to get this evidence for themselves (even if it exists in their case) and as to how quickly the bodies processing these requests will turn them around."²⁹¹

This 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. The CEO of Women's Aid said "We believe there are still further reforms that need to be made – including accepting evidence from any domestic violence support service. We know that the regulations are being kept under review and we will continue working with the Ministry of Justice to make sure they ensure all women survivors of domestic violence are able to access legal aid if they need this."²⁹²

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.²⁹³

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'.²⁹⁴

8.5 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 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.

8.6 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

Potential Impact of the Cuts This is a fictitious scenario.⁽¹⁾

Sylvia is a refugee and has a physical disability that inhibits her from leaving the house very often. She is a single parent with a son aged 8.

Sylvia finds it hard to get around, and struggles with public transport. She cannot work or receive benefits because she has no immigration status. She came to the UK legally and used legal aid to apply for status but her application was refused. She is unable to appeal because legal aid is no longer available for immigration cases not involving detention or asylum.⁽²⁾

Her son was born in this country so she should be able to reside here permanently. Although the court accepted the man she says is the father is British, they asked her to prove his paternity. The court told her she can do this in three ways: by providing a DNA test, which costs £252 or if the father agrees to pay child maintenance – but he is not responding to her requests. She could also obtain an order for a declaration of paternity from the family courts; but there is no legal aid available for family law either.

Her solicitor has very limited availability and Sylvia cannot easily get to the office to see her. She has a distressed child at school who needs lots of support which is impacting her mental health.

Since the children were born in the UK he is entitled to child maintenance and local authority housing but Sylvia cannot get any additional money and is unsure of her family's future.

1) This scenario is adapted from a case study in The Guardian <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2014/sep/25/-sp-legal-aid-forgotten-pillar-welfare-state-special-report-impact-cuts>

2) Legal Aid only covers cases where someone is detained or seeking asylum. It will no longer cover issues such as applying for citizenship or extending visas.

277 In this chapter, we concentrate on legal advice services

278 Law Gazette, 2013, 'Law centres: living on the edge' [online] Available at: <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/analysis/features/law-centres-living-on-the-edge/71033.fullarticle> (Accessed 2 October 2014)

279 Bristol Women's Voice, 2014, 'Tackling Discrimination – Women's Rights in the Workplace' [online] Available at <http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/2014/09/24/tackling-discrimination-womens-rights-in-the-workplace/> (Accessed 2 October 2014)

280 Avon and Bristol Law Centre, Bristol Citizens Advice Bureau, Bristol Debt Advice Centre, North Bristol Advice Centre, South Bristol Advice Services, St Pauls Advice Centre are commissioned by Bristol City Council and NHS Bristol under the ring-fenced programme.

Bristol City Council, 2012, 'The State and Future of Advice in Bristol' [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/community_and_safety/community_development/Bristol%20Advice%20Agencies%20The%20State%20and%20Futu_0.pdf (Accessed 2 October 2014)

281 Ibid

282 Ibid

283 Ibid

284 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>

285 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

286 Ministry of Justice, November 2010 [online] at p.46 Above (n.4)

287 "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>

288 Ministry of Justice, November 2010. Legal Aid Reform: Scope Changes. Above (n.9) at p.11 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>

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

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

291 The Law Society March 2013 Legal aid changes: key information and advice [online] Available at <http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/advice/articles/legal-aid-changes-key-information-and-advice/> [Accessed 21 May 2014]

292 Family Law Week 'Women's charities welcome new legal aid evidence criteria for domestic violence survivors' [online] Available at <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed128677> (Accessed 29 Aug 2014)

293 Two-thirds of cases in the family court now feature somebody representing themselves. The Guardian, 2014, "Women will die' as legal aid becomes more difficult for victims of domestic abuse to get" [online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/sep/10/women-die-legal-aid-rules-domestic-violence-victims> (Accessed 2 October 2014)

294 Amnesty International, 2004. [online] at p.15 It's in our hands. Stop violence against women. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ACT77/001/2004> (Accessed 2 October 2014)

9. Women's Voluntary and Community Organisations

9.1 Overview

Many voluntary and community sector organisations in Bristol have seen cuts in funding in the last three years. Women's organisations appear to be particularly vulnerable to cuts.

This section examines the impact of the spending cuts on voluntary sector and community organisations providing services to women in Bristol. We do not examine the women's organisations that do not provide direct services to women. Bristol has a number of such women's organisations including Bristol Fawcett, Bristol Women's Voice and Bristol Women's Commission. The Women's Resource Centre found women's organisations are particularly vulnerable in

Women's Services in Bristol

Women's organisations provide a great variety of services that support women, their families and wider community, from internet training for women returning to work to refuge accommodation for women fleeing a violent partner.

The services provided by women's voluntary and community organisations in Bristol include: rape counselling and support (SARSAS), 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, Dhek Bhal, Bristol & Avon Chinese Women's Group), Refugee Women of Bristol, and care and support to women who are involved in street-based sex work (One25).

times of austerity, due to the limited number of available income sources for women's organisations. Research in 2011 found that 95% of women's organisations faced funding cuts or a funding crisis in 2011/12 and 25% said that further cuts would result in closure.²⁹⁵

9.2 What Has Changed?

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 estimated in 2011 that charities would lose up to £4.5bn due to public spending cuts.²⁹⁶
- Charities already lost £1.3 billion in income between 2010/11 and 2011/2012, revealing that the government cut spending to charities faster than in any other sector.²⁹⁷
- VAT has also been raised – considerably increasing the voluntary sector's cost base – and transitional relief on Gift Aid has been ended.²⁹⁸
- Funding to the voluntary and community sector services (VCS) was planned to reduce by £60,000 for financial year 2014-15, and 10% of the VCS budget within Health and Social Care was to be deferred to years 2015/2016. Following consultation, it was decided to review each service to ensure resources are targeted appropriately. Savings as a result of this review were deferred to 2015/2016 in order to carry out this review in a realistic timescale.²⁹⁹
- There is a drop in charitable donations from individuals.³⁰⁰

- 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, VOSCUR³⁰¹

Some voluntary organisations have praised the Council for avoiding the ‘slash and burn’ approach of Councils in 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 finding 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.³⁰² Women’s charitable organisations are more financially vulnerable and less likely to survive than other, similar service charities.³⁰³ Equality and Human Rights Commission research has shown concern from women’s organisations that continued applications to commission funding is limiting the services that are on offer. Rather than defining the services for their service users, women’s organisations are required to respond to the commissioner’s view of what the service should be.

Not surprisingly the funding cuts are expected to lead to a similar decrease in the organisations’ capacity to deliver services to women. Women’s voluntary organisations argue that there is little or no spare capacity to make savings without cutting services. Nextlink said,

“The demand on our services has increased as other services are cut. We are working with women with an increasing range of complex needs; due to the budget cuts we increasingly have to advertise posts at a lower salary level which means we are unable to attract and secure experienced support staff to manage and respond to these needs.

A number of our services are being tendered so forward planning is virtually impossible.”

Refugee Women of Bristol support women with challenges around language, childcare and transport. They often have low levels of education or low skill levels, and have issues with unemployment and health inequalities. The charity has struggled with a shift from 3 year funding to a shorter one year basis, and the move from grant to commissioning. RWOB also cite increased competition for funds, managing sustainable funds as issues, as well as negative stereotypes.³⁰⁴

Case Study 1: 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 and education.

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. In 2013/14 their funding was made up of 69% voluntary grants and commissioned income, 22% voluntary donations and 8% fundraising events. They expect commissioned income to increase during 2014/15 either through direct contracts or sub-contracting arrangements. They hope that by 2016 One25 will receive grant funding through Bristol City Council. Currently they are reliant on voluntary grants.

One25 currently receives funding from Bristol City Council for 2 posts. They have been informed that Bristol City Council will provide a direct award for one of these posts as part of the Bristol domestic and sexual abuse commissioning from 2015 - 2020. This role is currently exceeding all targets set by the council. CEO Gill Nowland said “Getting women into rehabilitation and off the streets saves money in health care, social work, the prison system and policing. We are currently receiving funding to trial an Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Adviser. The funding is for one year only. In addition we have a sub contract arrangement with St Mungo’s to provide specific support to women residing in high support women’s hostels in Bristol. We will be sub-contracting with St Mungo’s from April 2015 - 2020 to deliver the Assertive Engagement Service for the new Bristol Community Mental Health Services.”

Between May’13 and April’14 One25 worked with 285 different women. 169 of these women were street sex working. Numbers of women street sex working have remained consistent (171 women in 2012/13) over the last two years. They supported 45 women to exit street sex work for a minimum of 6 months however they continually engage new women on the streets or women returning to street sex work after a period of time off the streets. Women find themselves trapped in street sex work mostly through life controlling addictions, poor mental health, homelessness, and relationship breakdown which may involve domestic and or sexual abuse.

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.

One25 is reliant on volunteers to continue the service. The Outreach and Drop In service work has around 100 volunteers, and in addition there are around 8 office staff who deal with the charity management, admin and fundraising.

One25 continue to feel uncertain 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 2: BACWG

The local council and NHS decided not to renew funding for our art projects – Oriental Pearl and Golden Canary – which helped to break down isolation, improve the quality of life, self-esteem and confidence of the most vulnerable in the Chinese community – especially the elderly, those with memory loss and dementia and their carers – by providing a daytime opportunity to participate in creative art sessions and gentle exercises.

Since the introduction of the Personalisation agenda, there has been a significant impact on the provision of our services, especially our care support service. As a result of the change from block funding to spot purchase, some of our existing clients were deemed as not eligible for support from us. As this was one of the major sources of income for the group, this has been a cause of great concern for everyone associated with it.

Due to cuts in funding, we have had to prioritise our services to members in geographical areas where we have been specifically funded. Whilst we have tried to accommodate those who do not live in our specified areas, there will be certain circumstances where members of the Chinese community have been left isolated and hidden from the remaining VCS services in their area, either due to language or cultural barriers.

*Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group*³⁰⁵

Bristol Women's Voice commissioned research into women's organisations in Bristol in autumn 2014. They found:

- **Smaller organisations struggled with the commissioning process**
“Reduced funding means hours have been cut; very difficult to get core funding to support admin/management/training costs. Changes in funding requirements mean we have to rethink how we collate information and this is very time consuming – we don't have the infrastructure to do this to the satisfaction of commissioners and therefore get edged out by bigger organisations with more capacity.”
- **Commissioning new services sometimes meant expanding scope of services** – “they have increased the value but added a lot more service delivery expectations.”
- **The demand for services is greater** now due to reductions and higher thresholds for public services (especially mental health), and expanding areas of geographical coverage. **SARSAS said “Demand for our services has increased by 400% from 2 years ago for the helpline, and by 200% for the 1-1 specialist support services”.**

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 levels of peer support.

- integrated 'one-stop-shop' service.
- a needs-based approach.
- reaching 'hard to reach' women.³⁰⁵

9.4.1 The Importance of Women-Only Space

Women only space is particularly important to some women in Bristol. An Equality and Human Rights research document noted the reasons women attend such areas include feelings of safety and security, building confidence and trust, peer support and the ability to talk more openly.³⁰⁷

Platform 51 in Bristol focussed on delivering women only spaces 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.”³⁰⁸

Platform 51 had to close many of their face to face services across the country in April 2014, including the Bristol centre. Some centres, such as Doncaster, or Wolverhampton were transferred to a new charity, but Bristol, London and West Kent have now closed.

“I tried to approach other organisations asking for funding but it was a slow process and we could not get an agreement in time to rescue the centre. I also approached other non-profits in Bristol offering a merger, but because of lack of funding for the other organisations they couldn't agree to such long term investment”

Cezara Nanu

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.

“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 in 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

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

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.³¹⁰ 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.³¹¹

“Most of our clients are new migrants who are originally from mainland China with low language skills. They have to work extra hard as they fear they would lose their jobs. A lot of them have young children in their family and the mothers are forced to stay at home looking after their children. As the only source of income is from the husband’s jobs, they need help with claiming benefits to top up their income and relieve their financial hardship. They are financially dependent on the husbands and are more likely to suffer from social isolation and to tolerate any form of domestic abuse/violence. In order to save housing costs, they live in overcrowded accommodation (e.g. two adults and two children living in a small bedroom) and there is no quality of life.”

Bristol and Avon Chinese Women’s Group

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.³¹²

Ethnic minority women’s organisations were already an under-funded sector before the introduction of austerity measures.³¹³ In some ways, small and grassroots women’s organisations will have been 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.³¹⁴ 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 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.

295 Women's Resource Centre [online] Available at <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Surviving-the-Crisis-pdf-3-for-website.pdf> (Accessed 1 July 2014)

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

297 The Information Daily.com [online] Available at: <http://www.theinformationdaily.com/2014/04/04/charities-lose-13-billion-in-one-year-of-government-spending-cuts> (Accessed 1 July 2014)

298 NCVO – [online] Available at: <http://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/funding> (Accessed 1 July 2014)

299 Bristol City Council, 2013, 'Equality Impact Assessment Form R-PP-015 Savings from Voluntary and Community Sector budget' – [online] Available at: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/R-PP-015%20VCS%20Savings.pdf (Accessed 1 July 2014)

300 In addition the proportion of people donating to charitable causes in a typical month has decreased over the last year, from 58% to 55%. NCVO, 2012. 'UK Giving 2012' [online] Available at <http://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/giving-and-philanthropy/what-research-tells-us?highlight=WyJjaGFyaXRhYm91Z2l2aW5nliwiY2hhcmI0YWJsZSBnaXZpbmciXQ==> [Accessed 1 July 2014]

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

302 Women's Resource Centre, 2007. The impact of public spending cuts on women's voluntary and community organisations in London [online] <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/whywomenonly.pdf>

[Accessed 2 October 2014]

303 WRC, 2010. Assessing the Financial Vulnerability of Charities Serving Women. Available online at <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/London-report-FINAL-for-website.pdf> [Accessed 3 October 2014]

304 Refugee Council, [online] Available at: <http://refugeecouncil.typepad.com/files/ref-women-of-bristol---overview.pdf> (Accessed 4 October 2014)

305 Information through interview with Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group.

306 Women's Resource Centre, 2007. Why women-only?: The value and benefit of by women, for women services. [online] <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/whywomenonly.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2014]

307 Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012, Research Report 86, 'The impact of changes in commissioning and funding women-only services' [online] Available at: http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/research/rr86_final.pdf (Accessed 5 September 2014)

308 Cezara Nanu, Platform 51 in an interview in 2011.

309 Interview with Cezara Nanu, former director of Platform 51, 2014

310 Fawcett Society, 2009. Poverty Pathways: Ethnic Minority Women's Livelihoods. Available online at http://www.womens.cusu.cam.ac.uk/campaigns/bem/fawcett_ethnicminoritywomen.pdf [Accessed 5 September 2014]

311 Ibid.

312 Oxfam, 2011. Hidden Voices: Including Ethnic Minority Women in Policy-Making. Available at <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/hidden-voices-including-ethnic-minority-women-in-policy-making-127935> [Accessed 3 October 2014]

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

314 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 2014]

10. Transport

10.1 Overview

In deciding whether and where to make future cuts in transport spending, Bristol's Mayor and 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.

Women have less access to private cars,³¹⁵ and often need access to work, childcare, schools and health as women are often in a caring role, juggling work and family commitments.

“The commercial bus system is too expensive and fails to go to the places women need to go, particularly directly; multiple journeys to access facilities for those they care for as well as work in variable local settings make public transport access to reasonable quality work unviable for many women.”

*Bristol Women's Voice (part of the consultation on Community Transport in 2013)*³¹⁶

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.

The Joint Local Transport Plan for the West of England 2011-2026 notes it will be important to 'recognise the needs of women in planning transport infrastructure and services', but the document fails to highlight what these might be, or how they will be addressed.³¹⁷

10.2 What has Changed?

Bristol has marginally improved its car dependency ratings. In 2011 the city was ranked 13th out of 19 cities for car dependency³¹⁸ which improved to 16 out of 26 cities in 2012. However, Bristol was rated 18th of 19 for quality and uptake of local transport which was still very low at 23 out of 26 cities.³¹⁹

The report notes only 13% of residents use public transport for commuting, but it's possible bus usage will increase due to reduced fares.³²⁰ Bus fares have been reduced to £1.50 per trip within central Bristol, and £2.50 for the outer zone which has greatly reduced the cost for some travellers.

The accessibility of Bristol was rated top of the dashboard based on primary schools being better accessed by walking than public transport across the city. This is perhaps because the transport is not frequent, accessible or linked up across the city. 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).

Bristol City Council has protected a constant level of spending on supported bus services over the last two years, and did not reduce

services in 2013. Since 2011 there were 4% overall cuts to supported bus budgets.³²¹ The Department for Transport awarded Bristol £7.9m for 2014/15.³²²

A recent proposal to cut the number 20 bus from Westbury-on-Trym was reversed due to public protests. Bus users protested that without the service they had no access at the weekend to important destinations such as the Bristol Royal Infirmary, the Oncology Centre and other key destinations in the city centre.³²³

10.2.1 Public Transport

Most of the bus services in Bristol are run commercially. However, Bristol City Council subsidise 81 routes that are socially necessary but not commercially viable.³²⁴ After the Budget consultation the council decided to go ahead with a £350k saving against local bus subsidies in 2015/16 as it was felt this would not pose any substantial risk to bus services. This means funding for the supported bus services would reduce by 33% by withdrawing contracts for 'commercial add-ons', predominantly evening and Sunday journeys that supplement the commercial network.³²⁵

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.³²⁶

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.

There has been growing dissatisfaction with the reliability, quality and frequency of the

local transport. In a survey, only 48% 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 were among some of the key areas where Bristol scored lower than the national average.³²⁷

10.2.2 Community Transport

Community transport provides a vital link for people at risk of social isolation and a preventative service to reduce the risk of people moving towards a critical or substantial need for health and social care services. It enables access to other preventative services (like lunch clubs), helps to maintain support networks, helps people to stay physically active and improve their physical and mental well-being. In 2012 76% of Community Transport users were women.

As part of the budget consultation in Bristol suggestions were made to remove activities such as group vehicle hire, trips to medical appointments and transport for clients of day care services from the council's community transport budget. This cut to the budget was postponed following the consultation.

The availability of free or cheap transport on a "demand" system would make a big difference to women's access to work, education, childcare, care for other dependents and healthcare.

10.2.3 Fuel Prices

Bristol residents have a reliance on cars, but not everyone has access to a car. In 2012 82% of men lived in a household with a car nationally, compared with 78% of women.³²⁸ Data from Bristol suggests 29.8% of households (men and women) do not have a car.³²⁹

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.³³⁰

Single women gain the least from the changes to fuel escalator and reduction in fuel duty announced last year. Single women parents and female lone pensioners received the smallest benefit under these changes.³³¹ When added to the cumulative impact of the other changes (e.g. cuts to benefits, unemployment) this has 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 Chouhry, Awaz Utoah

10.2.4 Cycling

In addition to the Cycling city award, in 2013 Bristol won £7.7 million of government funding to improve cycle routes across the city and surrounding area. The city will also benefit from an additional £3.3 million of funding from West of England Local Enterprise Partnership members, creating an £11 million fund for projects around the region.³³²

Whilst improvements have been made to cycling in Bristol as part of the Cycling England award, cycling is most prevalent among men.³³³ There are large groups of women for whom cycling is not possible (for

example women with a baby or more than one child, disabled women) or times when cycling would not work (e.g. shopping).

10.3 Who is Affected by these Changes?

Women use buses more than men so changes in these areas will have a disproportionate effect on women.³³⁴ 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.³³⁵

Bristol Community Transport is used by more women (79%) than men (21%) so any changes to this service will affect women more. This may be in part because men are less willing to make use of community transport for some of its most significant uses (shopping and social activities) and may also indicate that older women are less likely to have access to a car.³³⁶

Women are more likely to work part-time.³³⁷ Cuts in public transport outside peak hours may be particularly difficult for women working shift patterns who may not be able to get to or from work.

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. The Joint Transport Plan 3 found, "There is a strong link between poor access (to areas of employment) and deprivation."³³⁸

“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. They will often be isolated from the rest of Bristol and reduction in public transport and travel subsidies will make certain poorer communities even more isolated and provide a barrier to the inhabitants trying to seek work/training in other parts of the City.”

Shelter

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.³³⁹

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 cars,³⁴⁰ 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.

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 or 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 a barrier to getting a job.³⁴¹
- Nationally 31% of people without a car have difficulties travelling to their local hospital, compared to 17% of people with a car.³⁴²
- 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.³⁴³
- 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.³⁴⁴
- 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 BME communities.

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 women’s safety and vulnerability to violence whilst travelling or waiting for buses. This is not only from strangers, but also from people women

“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)³⁴⁵

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 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.
- Undertake a gender budget analysis of proposed spending cuts.

The following metrics should also be monitored:

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

10.5 A Scenario to Demonstrate Potential Cumulative Impacts

**Potential Impact of the Cuts
This is a fictitious scenario.**

Rachel lives in Brislington 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 £56 a month.

After class the bus does not arrive on time so she is late returning to pick up her son. Her childcare costs increase and she feels very stressed knowing that she will be late. With 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.

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317 West of England Partnership, 2011, 'West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 3 2011 – 2026', Available at: <http://www.travelplus.org.uk/media/205985/jltp3%20march%202011.pdf> (Accessed 4 October 2014)

318 2010 Car Dependency Scorecard [online] Available at: http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/car-dependency-scorecard_1.pdf [Accessed 31 August 2011]

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321 Campaign for Better Transport [online] Available at: <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses/bus-cuts> [Accessed 28 March 2014]

322 Covers integrated transport and maintenance, slight increase from £6.6m in 2013/14. 'West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 3 Delivery Plan 2012/13 - 2014/15', [online] Available at: <http://www.travelplus.org.uk/media/245864/jltp3%20delivery%20plan%20final%20march%202012.pdf> (Accessed 4 October 2014)

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

325 Bristol city council, 2013, 'Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form R-PL- 028 - Reduce Local Bus Service (Subsidy)' [online] Available at http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/R-PL-028%20-%20BusServices700k.pw%20v3_0.pdf (Accessed 4 October 2014)

326 Daily Mail [online] Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1353160/Budget-cuts-leave-parts-UK-NQ-public-transport.html> [Accessed August 29 2011]

327 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]

328 Department for Transport inclusion checklist [online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243957/nts2012-01.pdf [Accessed 4 October 2014]

329 Bristol city council, 2013, 'Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form R-PL- 028 - Reduce Local Bus Service (Subsidy)', [online] Available at http://www.bristol.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council_and_democracy/R-PL-028%20-%20BusServices700k.pw%20v3_0.pdf (Accessed 4 October 2014)

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339 Department of Health's Women's Mental Health Strategy (2003) [online] Available at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Mentalhealth/DH_4002408 (Accessed 4 October 2014)

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343 Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion, 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]

344 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]

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11. Conclusions and Action Required

11.1 Overview

The impacts of the cuts in public spending on women in Bristol have been catalogued in each of the 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 more likely to be in paid work than the national average. Women in Bristol as throughout the country are paid significantly less than men. 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 Local Housing Allowance. Caps on housing benefit rates are likely to result in women having to make up a shortfall in rent out of some 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. Accessibility of ESOL classes are a concern, especially availability of free supporting childcare arrangements (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 are 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 are 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

are 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 are having 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 are bearing 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 a 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, Clinical Commissioning Groups 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. Additionally, Bristol is a signatory to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

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 each other 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 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'.³⁴⁵

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."³⁴⁶

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.

The approach of the Courts to assessing equality duties of public authorities also supports this. A series of cases in relation to the equalities duties under previous equalities legislation made it clear that, whatever their specific duties, public bodies' general duties to pay 'due regard' to promoting equality between different groups entails undertaking a process that looks very much like a good impact assessment process when they undertake budget-cutting measures – including consultation, evidence-gathering and analysis of impacts. Similar principles have now been confirmed with regard to the new s.149 duty under the Equalities Act.

We reviewed a great deal of EIA practice in our research for this report and mostly found it to be of varying 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.

11.4.2 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”.³⁴⁷ 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.³⁴⁸

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 are suffering an 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.³⁴⁹ Meanwhile women’s representation in public life and in decision making roles is far from equal, and we have recently seen progress stall. In Bristol only 21 out of 70, or 30%, of councillors are female, and this is below the national average.³⁵⁰ 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.³⁵¹

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 commend the efforts made by many officers and decision makers since the publication of our last report in 2011. In Bristol we can be particularly proud of the city’s approach to protecting Children’s Centres and Violence Against Women Services in comparison to how these vital services have fared in other parts of the country. Yet there is still so far to go — and inequalities are widening.

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.

346 *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>*

347 *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>*

348 *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*

349 *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 <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>*

350 *Bristol Fawcett (2012). ‘The Right Man for Bristol? Report into gender and representation in Bristol’. www.bristolfawcett.org.uk/Documents/CountingWomenIn/TheRightManForBristol.pdf [online] Accessed 23 October 2014.*

351 *Bristol City Council website [online] <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/council-and-democracy/women-councillors>*

352 *22 % of MPs are women and the number of women MPs has increased by only 4 per cent since 1997. Counting Women In website [online] Available at: <http://www.countingwomenin.org/index.php/counting-women-in-the-problem/>*

