



Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls

This report by Professor Sylvia Walby, UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, and Jude Towers at Lancaster University, considers the evidence on cuts in budgets and services to prevent violence against women and girls. It collects together the data as to where the cuts have been falling drawn from around 20 published and previously unpublished sources.

Key Findings

- Substantial reductions in national budgets are leading to cuts in local services to prevent and protect against gender-based violence against women and girls. These cuts in service provision are expected to lead to increases in this violence.
- The effect on local services is both dramatic and uneven across localities.
- Thirty-one percent of the funding to the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector from local authorities was cut between 2010/11 to 2011/12, a reduction from £7.8 million to £5.4 million. (Data obtained using Freedom of Information Act requests by the False Economy project, and analysed by the research team).
- The organisations with smaller budgets from the local authorities had more substantial budget cuts than larger ones: among those with local authority funding of less than £20,000 the average cut was 70% as compared with 29% for those receiving over £100,000, between 2010/11 and 2011/12. (Data obtained using Freedom of Information Act requests by the False Economy project, and analysed by the research team).
- 320 women, just under 9% of those seeking refuge, were turned away by Women's Aid on a typical day in 2011 due to lack of space. (Data from surveys conducted annually by Women's Aid of their affiliated organisations, analysed by the research team).
- The number of Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVA) has been reduced: in 2011 among 8 major IDVA service providers supporting 13,180 clients, 2 faced funding cuts of 100%, 3 cuts of 50%, 3 of 40% and 2 of 25%. (Data from a poll carried out by Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse - CAADA).
- IMKAAN, who run services for women from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, report the closing of two of their six specialist refuges and cuts to local authority funding for two more. (Data from IMKAAN).
- RESPECT services working to reform male perpetrators of domestic violence suffered budget cuts so that between 2010 and 2011 78% of services reduced the number of clients they were able to assist. (Data from RESPECT London).
- Statutory provision, including those police and court services that involve specialised expertise, has also been reduced following funding cuts. This includes cuts in the operating levels of Domestic Abuse Officers, a unit on female genital mutilation and domestic violence courts. (Data from Home Office and Ministry for Justice).

Concluding Points

All agree that the ending of violence against women is an important goal of public policy. The Home Secretary, Theresa May, declares:

'No level of violence against women and girls is acceptable in modern Britain or anywhere else in the world. . . . As women and as a society we have made great strides but we need to do more to ensure that women and future generations are not held back. My ambition is nothing less than ending violence against women and girls.' (Home Office 2011)

However, cutbacks in national budgets have led to reductions in the provision of local services and the loss of specialised expertise, despite the introduction of some new national funding streams.

Services to protect against and to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls are largely provided at local level, where the need is based, but the budgets to fund the services and the nature of the commissioning process are largely set at national level. There are large variations between localities in the cuts to services.

There is serious concern that the reductions in services following from cuts to budgets will lead to an increase in the amount of violence against women and girls.

There is a need for better collection of data so as to ensure changes in service forms and levels and in their effects on levels of violence against women and girls can be effectively monitored and analysed.

The full effect of public sector funding cuts resulting from the Comprehensive Spending Review and other changes in government policy and practice will not be realised immediately; rather the full impact of these changes for the violence against women and girls (VAWG) service sector and for the women and children it supports will take some time to become clear. It is important that the collection of data provided by this report is understood to be only the beginning of the monitoring and analysis needed.

This report was commissioned by Trust for London and Northern Rock Foundation. Data on services was provided by or on: Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA); Children England; Coventry Women's Voices; Eaves; Forced Marriage Unit; False Economy; London Voluntary Service Council (Big Squeeze); End Violence Against Women (EVAW); IMKAAN; National Council for Voluntary Organisations; Rape Crisis; Refuge; Respect; Rights of Women; Women's Aid Federation of England (Women's Aid); Scottish Women's Aid; Welsh Women's Aid; Women's Resource Centre.

This is a summary of the full evaluation report by Jude Towers and Sylvia Walby UNESCO Chair in Gender Research Group Lancaster University. You can download this report from www.trustforlondon.org.uk or www.nr-foundation.org.uk or request copies from the Trust on 020 7606 6145 or Northern Rock Foundation on 0191 284 8412.



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The UNESCO Chair in Gender Research was established at Lancaster University by UNESCO in 2008. The founding Chair holder is Professor Sylvia Walby OBE, who directs a group focused on international policy-relevant research.

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