

Life-Changing and Life-Saving

Funding for the women's sector

Key Facts Summary

Local specialist women's organisations provide life-changing services including employment training, psychological and legal support, confidence building, and emergency help for victims of domestic and sexual violence and their children.

The vast majority of women support women-only services; research shows many victims would not have accessed support spaces if they had not been restricted to women.¹

The Women's Resource Centre has calculated that the social value generated by women's services is five to 11 times greater than the amount of money invested in them.²

Yet funding for women's organisations does not currently reflect the social value they generate nor the money they save the state. Funding for women's organisations has been negatively affected by:

- Austerity measures since 2010, which have reduced funding available for women's organisations. At the same time cuts to statutory services and social security cuts and changes have increased the demand on the voluntary sector.
- The move away from local and national grants to competitively tendered-for contracts to deliver services.
- The short-term nature of many contracts and grants.
- Lack of funding to cover core costs and the demand from funders for 'innovative' projects.
- The push for mixed-sex services.

Brexit may offer some opportunities to the women's sector, namely in more advantageous VAT rules for charities and a simplified funding pot. However, these are far from guaranteed and unlikely to outweigh the negative impacts, including withdrawal of EU funds and risks associated with an economic recession.

Funders should:

- Recognise the importance of specialist women's organisations.
- Provide core funding for delivery of fundamental services and organisational costs.
- Develop longer-term funding streams of at least three to five years to ensure proper training and retention of staff and smooth and high-standard service delivery.

1. EHRC (2012) The impact of changes in commissioning and funding on women-only services (<http://bit.ly/2MP2qOp>)

2. WRC (2011) Hidden Value: Demonstrating the extraordinary impact of women's voluntary and community organisations (<http://bit.ly/2mhfQZ8>) p6

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