

**Women's Budget Group Response to
Equal Opportunities Consultation:**

**Public Sector Duty to Promote Gender Equality
Code of Practice for Great Britain**

May 2006

About The Women's Budget Group

The Women's Budget Group (WBG) is an independent organisation bringing together individuals from academia, non-governmental organisations and trades unions to promote gender equality through appropriate economic policy. In all of our work we ask the question 'where are resources going, and what is their impact on gender equality?'.

The WBG is co-chaired by Adele Baumgardt, Kate Bellamy, and Alifia Chakera.

If you would like more information about the work of the WBG, or to join the group and contribute to our work, please contact the Project Officer, Erin Leigh, or visit our website.

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Introduction

The Women's Budget Group (WBG) is pleased to contribute a response to the Equal Opportunities Commission's consultation on the forthcoming public sector duty to promote gender equality.

The WBG is an independent organisation bringing together individuals from academia, trades unions and non-governmental organisations to promote gender equality through economic policy. We promote gender equality through developing analysis on the gender impact of social and economic policy, and work closely with UK policy makers to ensure that government policy takes account of gender issues. In all our work, we ask the question: 'Where do resources go, and what impact does resource allocation have on gender equality?'

The WBG welcomes the introduction of the public sector duty to promote gender equality and supports the measures outlined in the code of practice which will assist public sector bodies in fulfilling their obligations under the code. We support the government's aims to introduce gender analysis into all aspects of policy making, to ensure that policy meets the different needs of women and men and promotes equality between them.

Gender budgeting: a key gender mainstreaming tool

The WBG recommends, however, that the Code of Practice includes greater emphasis on gender budgeting to analyse whether adequate resources are being made available to ensure equality between women and men. Given that all public bodies hold resources to transform policy into practice, a gendered analysis of budgetary decisions is a key tool that can be used to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed across the work of a public body – a central aim of the duty.

Taking a gender budgeting approach to policy analysis can be used to ensure that public money is raised and spent in ways which promote gender equality. Gender budgeting does not offer a separate budget for women – it is a way of examining existing and prospective policy to ensure it meets the different needs of women and men. The technique seeks to expose assumptions of "gender neutrality" within economic policy, and aims to raise awareness of the different ways policies will impact on women due to their different social and economic position.

This is still a relatively new concept, and gender budgeting techniques are still evolving. Key elements have been identified however – any forms of raising or spending public money must be analysed from a gender perspective, and the different implications for women and men can then be exposed, providing policy makers with information on how they can alter their policies to promote gender equality.

The findings of a pilot project, based in HM Treasury in collaboration with the WBG, demonstrated the value of introducing a gender analysis into two areas of expenditure. The Gender Analysis of Expenditure Project illustrated how

gender budgeting techniques might be at all stages of the policy making process.ⁱ

“Gender analysis which is used appropriately to inform policy design and implementation will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government policy, with real benefits both on the ground (for example recipients of public services) and in terms of meeting government targets.”ⁱⁱ

Gender budgeting in practice

Analysis of the government’s different New Deal programmes illustrates how policy which is gender blind results in inequalities between women and men in terms of participation and expenditure.

The way in which eligibility for the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) and the New Deal for the Long Term Unemployed (NDLTU) is determined indirectly acts to exclude women from joining these programmes. Participation is conditional on a period of registered unemployment – yet women, especially those in couples, are less likely to sign on as unemployed for long periods, and the assumptions built into the policy effectively exclude many women from participating.

Analysis of the resources allocated to the different New Deal programmes also reveals inequality in the distribution of resources between women and men. The cost per job of for the New Deal for Lone Parents, which is aimed primarily at women, is £244, compared to an average cost of £2,047 across all the New Deal programmes, and a cost of £3,377 for those on the New Deal 25 Plusⁱⁱⁱ.

Applying gender budgeting to the code of practice:

The WBG believe that gender budgeting will be particularly useful to bodies at the three key stages of achieving the duty. That is – deciding which areas should be scrutinised from a gender perspective (screening); conducting analysis to determine how a policy or programme can promote gender equality, including through exposing implicit discriminatory practices; and finally supporting bodies to monitor and assess how well they have achieved advances to secure gender equality. We explore these three key stages in further depth below:

1) Screening

Gender budgeting would provide a useful tool for public bodies seeking to determine which policies should be subjected to a full gender impact assessment. Analysis of the levels of resources allocated to different policies would provide some measure of whether policies are hindering or helping the drive towards gender equality. A budget is the financial expression of a government’s commitment to any particular policy, and it is vital to see how all policies are resourced reveal whether apparently gender neutral policies are having different effects on women.

2) Gender Impact Analysis

The WBG supports the specific duty that public bodies will have to conduct a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) during the process of policy development, to determine what impact new policies will have on meeting the general gender duty. Gender impact analyses should be an important part of the process when departments determine their priorities for action. We urge in particular for explicit inclusion of a gender impact assessment of resource allocation, that is, a gender budget analysis to ensure that policies which could help promote gender equality are backed up by adequate resources, and those which do not promote equality are exposed. Moreover, departments and other public bodies should conduct retrospective analysis on policy already in place to assess to extent to which it promotes gender equality. This will highlight where existing patterns of service provision are indirectly discriminating against women and men and indicate areas which policy needs to be changed to ensure that men and women are treated equally in the future.

3) Monitoring

Gender budgeting will also be a useful tool for public bodies to monitor the delivery of their gender equality schemes and compliance with the gender duty. Monitoring outcomes through a gender lens will enable policy makers to determine whether women and men's needs' are being met by existing policy, and tracking progress of shifts in resource allocation to determine to what extent they are achieving the desired goal of gender equality enshrined in the duty and individual schemes. We are concerned that schemes will be developed, but that concomitant resources to put them in place will be missing. A policy can only be put into practice if resources are secured to do so, and gender budget analysis will be a vital tool to highlight whether policies can be effective.

Gender disaggregated data:

Successfully fulfilling each of the above key stages in meeting the duty will be difficult, however, without data disaggregated by gender being made available. This data is needed to inform policy makers of the possible impact of proposed policy changes on women and men. Where this is not available however, it is vital that the government consults with academia, trades unions and women's organisations to explore what the likely results of any policy change would be on gender equality.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated above, gender budgeting is a critical tool for mainstreaming gender equality across public bodies' work. Financial resources underpin the functioning of all bodies, and have the capacity to either support or hinder equality in the way they are distributed. Given the cross-cutting nature of resource allocation, we believe that inclusion gender budgeting in the Code of Practice is essential to achieving the duty, and will support public bodies to conceptualise, implement, and track their commitments and progress.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ HMT, DTI (2004) *Gender Analysis of Expenditure Project: Final Report*. Available online at: http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/gender_analysis.pdf

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hansard, 21st November 2005, Column 1674W