

Spring Budget 2022 Pre-Budget Briefings

Local government and gender

Local government and gender

A pre-budget briefing from the UK Women's Budget Group – Spring 2022

Key points:¹

- **Women and girls depend disproportionately on local authority services** because they still do most of the unpaid child/care work and therefore rely on local services to support themselves and their families. Women also make up **75% of local government workers**.
- Women's lives – particularly those of BAME and disabled women – have been **seriously affected by funding cuts to local government** since 2010.
- This effect has been exacerbated by social security benefit cuts and Covid-19.
- The **2022-2023 Funding Settlement for Local Government** announced in February 2022 **represents a further 1.8% cut** in the central government grant to councils from 2021-2022 levels, assuming the January 2022 inflation rate. This means a cut in central government funding of between 30-50% across councils since 2015-2016.
- While core spending power will increase by 4.6% in real terms in 2022-2023, this includes an assumed 2% increase in Council Tax, a 1% rise in the Social Care Precept in care-providing local authorities and single-year Government grants, such as the Services Grant.
- Excluding extra funding for social care, 26% of the **increase in local authority core spending power** between 2021/22 and 2024/25 is from grants and **74% from locally raised revenues** such as Council Tax.
- Councils have increasingly **borrowed to invest in commercial activities** to generate income for services. This income declined as a result of Covid-19.
- The Government's '**levelling up**' agenda is **unlikely to be furthered by the 2022-2023 Funding Settlement**, although some councils with high deprivation levels will have increased spending power compared to more affluent ones, having faced higher historic cuts.
- Increased and sustained central government investment is needed to reverse the damage done to local services over the past twelve years. **Many councils are still having to further cut services or use reserves** to compensate for cuts since 2010.
- Government must urgently implement its long-promised Fair Funding Review and **provide sustainable, long-term local government funding at a level which enables councils to meet their statutory duties** and provide the local services which women and local communities rely on. Increased dependence on Council tax will hit the poorest local authorities hardest.

¹ For more information about the impact of cuts to local government services on women see WBG (2019) Triple whammy - the impact of local government cuts on women (<https://bit.ly/3mmy7S2>)

Why is local government important to women?

Services

Local government is responsible for providing or funding many of the services crucial to the daily lives and wellbeing of women and those they care for – children, families and vulnerable adults. These include social care, schools, housing, domestic violence services, transport, youth and leisure services, public health, business support and planning and waste collection. Traditionally councils have also been a key source of funding for voluntary sector projects from which women benefit too.

Many of these services provide care to children and adults in need of support including disabled and elderly people. Women continue to do the majority of unpaid child/care work therefore these services are integral to redistributing unpaid care and ensuring women have equal opportunity to participate in the paid economy.

Employment

Local government is also an important source of women's paid employment, although austerity since 2010 has led to a decline in council jobs across the UK from 2,870,000 to 2,003,000.² In 2021, 75% of 1,326,500 council employees in England were women.³ Women are overrepresented in the public sector making up just under two-thirds of public sector employees in the UK in 2021. 32% of employed women work in the public sector, compared to 16.1% of men.⁴

For all employees, the hourly gender pay gap in the public sector (14.8%) remains lower than in the private sector (17.8%).⁵

Statutory duties

There are over 1300 statutory duties placed upon local government, including the duty to ensure that children are educated, the assessment of social care needs and care commissioning, the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service, the

² ONS (Mar 2022) Public sector employment, UK: December 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3JkQulq>)

³ ONS (Mar 2022) Quarterly Public Sector Employment Survey: Local Government Employment Quarter 3, 2021 (<https://bit.ly/3iaboax>)

⁴ ONS (Feb 2022) EMP13: Employment by industry (<https://bit.ly/3KMeKgK>)

⁵ ONS (Nov 2021) Gender pay gap: PROV PubPriv Table 13.12 (<http://bit.ly/2Wm4Pq6>)

promotion of the welfare of children in need and the requirement to ensure sufficient childcare for working parents or those in education or training. The 2021 Domestic Abuse Act placed a new statutory duty on councils to assess the needs of and commission support for victims of domestic violence and their children.

Other duties include waste collection, monitoring of air quality, maintenance of roads and bridges and reimbursement of travel operators for travel concessions. Councils must also provide 'sufficient sanitary conveniences', ensure safe food and provide facilities for disabled people in their homes.

How is local government organised?

There are 333 councils in England. 181 of them are district councils, with responsibility for waste collection, housing, planning and Council Tax collection. The rest are 'upper tier' authorities – shire county councils, containing shire districts – and 'single tier' London boroughs, metropolitan districts and unitary authorities, which are responsible for social care and education, alongside all other local services. There are around 20,000 elected councillors – only 36% of whom are women and 4% from a Black or ethnic minority background.⁶

How is local government funded?

There are three main sources of local government funding in England:

- 1) Grants from central government, including the Rate Support Grant (RSG)
- 2) Council Tax: Council Tax is a direct tax paid by residents and set by each individual authority. Authorities are able to retain all of the funding raised from council tax in their area to support their budget.
- 3) Business Rates: Business Rates are set by central government, which sets the multiplier. Currently local government collectively retains half of the income from business rates, the other half is paid by councils to central government, which uses the income to fund grants to local authorities.

Some local government funding is *controllable*, that is, authorities have some say over how the funding

⁶ LGIU (2022) Local government facts and figures: England (<https://bit.ly/35VVgYp>)

is used locally. Some other income streams are *non-controllable* and are passed through local authorities to other bodies and individuals such as schools, police and benefits claimants.⁷

The proportions of Business Rate and Council Tax income vary significantly between local authorities, depending on the local Council Tax base, demography and the services provided. In poorer areas and in those where the local economy is weak, income from Council Tax and Business Rates is lower than in richer areas. However, demands for services such as social care and housing are often higher in poorer areas which generate less income from local taxation.

The proportion of revenue expenditure derived from Council Tax alone rose from 40% in 2009-10 to 60.2% in 2022-23, while the central Government grant fell from 48% of councils' income in 2015/2016 to 27.5% in 2022/2023.⁸ In anticipation of a move to universal Business Rate Retention from 2020, some councils have also been pilots for 75% or 100% Business Rate Retention, further reducing central Government support.

Councils also raise funds from trading and investment and sales, fees and charges and may receive other income from transfers and payments from other public bodies including other local authorities. Local authorities may also build up reserves to balance their budgets by providing a resource to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies.⁹ Since 2010 councils have had to draw on unallocated reserves to maintain services, using over £1.75 billion in 2018-19.¹⁰

In recent years local authorities have also increasingly been forced to borrow to invest in commercial activity to generate compensatory income for local services. Real terms investment quadrupled from £0.9 billion in 2010-11 to £3.7 billion in 2017-18.¹¹ Councils in England invested heavily in commercial properties between 2016 and 2020 - over £3bn into office developments, more than £2.3bn into retail property and nearly £1bn on

industrial property between 2016 and 2019 – a 14-fold increase in three years, according to the National Audit Office.¹²

Local authorities faced reductions in non-tax income amounting to a forecast loss of £2.8 billion in 2020-21 due to the pandemic. Authorities reported £2.1 billion losses in their sales, fees and charges, £523 million from commercial investment and £221 million from other income streams. They forecast losses in Council Tax (£1.3 billion) and Business Rates (£1.6 billion) income for 2020-21.¹³

Local government before Covid-19

Since 2010 local authorities have faced cuts to their budgets, having also faced budget reductions through 'efficiency reviews', the Best Value regime and other cuts measures under previous administrations.¹⁴ Cuts have also impacted on important voluntary sector projects for women funded by councils.

In the period 2010/11-2017/18 central government funding for English councils fell by over 49%. Once local income from Council Tax and Business Rates was factored in, this amounted to 28.6% real terms drop in spending power.¹⁵

In the period 2017/18-2018/19 alone Rate Support Grant (RSG) from central government declined by 65% as councils were forced into reliance on retained Business Rates, increased Council Tax, increased charges for services and commercial investments.¹⁶ In 2019-20 councils had 23% - £300 – less to spend per resident than ten years previously. The most deprived councils had suffered 31% funding cuts, compared to 16% in the least deprived councils over the same period.¹⁷ According to the LGA, local services face a funding gap of £7.8 billion by 2025.¹⁸

¹² Guardian (2020) Which English councils rely heavily on commercial investments? (<https://bit.ly/3KNICt3>)

¹³ NAO (2021) Local government finance in the pandemic (<https://bit.ly/3TYyOWx>)

¹⁴ LGIU Local Government Information Unit (2008) Back to front: efficiency of back office functions (<https://bit.ly/2BZbiOR>)

¹⁵ WBG (2018) Triple whammy: the impact of local government cuts on women (<https://bit.ly/33uSbJB>)

¹⁶ MHCLG (2019) Local government finance statistics England No. 29 2019 (<https://bit.ly/33W10j2>); MHCLG (2019) Local authority revenue expenditure and financing 2018-19 provisional outturn, England (<https://bit.ly/3hCQ819>)

¹⁷ IFS (2019) English local government funding: trends and challenges in 2019 and beyond (<https://bit.ly/3hCQ819>)

¹⁸ LGA (2019) Local government funding – moving the conversation on (<https://bit.ly/32ykLKG>)

⁷ National Audit Office (2018) Local authorities (<https://bit.ly/32wZAbW>)

⁸ House of Commons Library 2022: Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/2023 (<https://bit.ly/3iiv5NX>)

⁹ National Audit Office (2018) Local authorities (<https://bit.ly/32wZAbW>)

¹⁰ MHCLG (2019) Local Authority Revenue Expenditure and Financing: 2019-20 Budget, England (<https://bit.ly/32yFaPC>)

¹¹ Ibid

In 2020, a survey of English councils found that 97% were disappointed with Government progress in delivering a sustainable system of local government finance. 97% planned maximum increases in Council Tax permitted without a local ballot, 57% planned to use reserves and 75% to increase borrowing.¹⁹

In 2020 the new Government committed to 'levelling up' regional disparities and the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government is now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Yet the future of local government funding which already looked uncertain and precarious, is still facing a serious crisis.

The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2020-21²⁰ was published in February 2020 – before the impact of Covid-19 was apparent. It resulted in a 0.2% cash increase after inflation for 85% of councils – the first increase since 2011-12. Despite this, the median funding level was still a third lower than 2015-16, with just 75 of 343 councils seeing an increase in actual spending power. The apparent growth in funding was dependent on Council Tax increases, a 2% social care precept and one-off grants for social care and 'winter pressures'.

In 2020 the LGA pointed out that £15 billion had been taken from core funding since 2010 and that no account had been taken of the increased cost of the new National Living Wage – amounting to £220 million for social care workers alone. It further commented that use of precepts to raise social care revenue, would generate uneven amounts across councils and represent a shift in the burden of social care funding to households, rather than general taxation.²¹

The Government's intention to remove RSG and make councils reliant primarily on Business Rates and Council Tax still remains, although the 2022-2023 settlement shows a slight decrease in the proportion of Council Tax in the overall Core Spending Power figure. However, it has been replaced by short-term grants for services and social care, over which there is no future certainty. This short-term approach to local government

funding is not sustainable and will make the Government's 'levelling up' agenda difficult to achieve. It would also mean that vital local services and local council employment will no longer be funded from general taxation at all, unlike the NHS and central government.

The impact of coronavirus

Covid 19 has placed disproportionate care and domestic demands on women – especially working class and BAME women²² - and raised levels of domestic violence, reinforcing women's need for reliable local government services – especially social care, housing, domestic violence services and childcare.²³ At the same time, there has been an increased threat to local government funding and services due to the removal of central government funding, lost income, growing demand and high Covid-related expenditure. Combined with restricted services due to lockdown measures, these are posing new constraints on women's access to support for themselves and their families – as well as local jobs.

Covid-19 has also placed considerable additional demands on local authorities and their budgets as they have provided more social care, personal protective equipment for care and council employees, housing for the homeless and women facing domestic violence and emergency food and support for those facing income loss and enhanced poverty. An additional £1.2 billion was spent on adult social care alone between March and July 2020, while at the same time over £3 billion was lost in Council Tax, Business Rates and sales, fees and charges. Additional funding to private social care, leisure and transport providers has also been required in some areas and councils have also been responsible for distributing funding to local businesses.

According to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)²⁴ total Covid costs to councils by the start of July 2020 amounted to £7.4 billion – the equivalent of 13% of pre-crisis expenditure. Losses related to income derived from council-owned businesses will not be compensated

¹⁹ LGIU (2020) State of local government finance survey 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3CUWMpK>)

²⁰ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020) Final local government finance settlement 2020 to 2021: written statement (<https://bit.ly/3KNLNRv>)

²¹ LGA (2020) Motion relating to Local Government Finance Report (<https://bit.ly/32xcWov>)

²² Women's Budget Group et al (2020) First results from new study examining the impact of COVID-19 on working-class women in the UK published today (<https://bit.ly/3MOLqYV>)

²³ The Guardian (2020) Covid-19 crisis could set women back decades, experts fear (<https://bit.ly/2Fwz6yz>)

²⁴ The Guardian (2020) English councils warn £500m Covid-19 cash injection will not stop cuts (<https://bit.ly/3iBFMTx>)

for at all, adding considerably to councils' increased deficits. According to Moody's Investor Services²⁵, local councils in the UK will be the hardest hit amongst those in the five largest EU economies.

In the light of the Covid-19 crisis, the 2021-22 Funding Settlement announced in February 2021 was of critical importance to councils. It represented a 4.5% - £2.2 billion increase in core spending power. However, just 15% - £0.3 billion - of that was from central Government. The rest was from an assumed combination of 5% Council Tax increases (2%) and social care precepts (3%).

After inflation and population growth, the 2021-22 settlement still represented a 3% per capita funding cut compared to 2015-2016.²⁶ The LGA called it a 'sticking plaster' settlement, calling for urgent action on the Fair Funding Review, Business Rates, social care, post-Brexit and public health funding.

The 2022-2023 Local Government Funding Settlement

The 2022-2023 Local Government Funding Settlement was agreed by the House of Commons on 9 February 2022. It is a one-year settlement and is based on the 2012-2013 system for funding allocation, which urgently needs reform.

While the Core Spending Power (CSP)²⁷ of councils will increase by 4.6% in real terms over 2021-2022, the £16.8 billion of central Government funding from general taxation within it represents an average decrease of 1.8% on the previous year and is 30-50% below 2015-2016 levels.²⁸ The average loss is 38.8%.²⁹ The Settlement also assumes that all councils will raise their Council Tax by 2% - the maximum permitted without a local referendum - while the adult social care precept has been reduced to 1% from 3%.

The proportion of CSP comprised of Council Tax is slightly lower than 2021-2022, but this has been replaced by one-year grants for social care and services. There is an additional £739 million in real

terms from social care grants and £795 in general service grants. Grant funding will be excluded from any transitional protection to any future change to local government funding and therefore maintains the precarity represented by the cuts in central Government funding. Rising inflation throughout the year is likely to impact negatively on council budgets.

The increase in CSP is more varied than in previous year, perhaps reflecting the Government's 'levelling up' agenda. For instance, Middlesbrough's CSP has increased by 6.9%, compared to 2.6% in Richmond-Upon-Thames. Some of the most deprived councils have seen the smallest real terms decrease in central Government funding.³⁰

Cuts in so-called 'Red Wall' urban area budgets have been severe since the onset of austerity in 2010, compared to surrounding, largely rural county councils which nonetheless have also suffered major reductions in CSP. For example, between 2010 and 2021, North Yorkshire faced cuts of 15.6% compared to Bradford's 34.5% and Sheffield's 34%. Lancashire's budget was cut by 22%, while Knowsley, Manchester and Blackburn-with-Darwen faced reductions of over 37%.³¹ Most London boroughs, which contain some of the highest areas of deprivation in England, also faced cuts of over 35%, compared to 11% and 16.4% in surrounding Surrey and Kent.

The 2022-2023 Funding Settlement also fails to adequately tackle what the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) has called the 'national emergency for adult social care' and the ongoing crisis in children's social care. ADASS points out³² that there are over 105,000 vacancies in adult social care advertised on any given day and that over 400,000 people are waiting for a care assessment, for care to begin or for a review of their care plan. They called for an additional £1.5 billion in the Settlement and note that only 2% of the Health and Social Care Levy will be transferred to care-providing councils in 2022-2023. ADASS also points out that three quarters of Directors of Social Services "have partial or no confidence that their budgets will be sufficient to meet statutory duties, including safeguarding and market sustainability".

²⁵ Local Gov (2020) UK council finances 'hardest hit in Europe', claims Moody's (<https://bit.ly/35Abl7H>)

²⁶ IFS (Dec 2020) Assessing England's 2021-22 finance settlement (<https://bit.ly/3CJWgLe>)

²⁷ CSP comprises central government grant, council tax and business rate income, grants, income from sales, fees and charges and all other sources of income available to councils.

²⁸ House of Commons Library (2022) Local government finance settlement 2022-2023 (<https://bit.ly/3tfs6Mv>)

²⁹ National Audit Office (2021) Financial sustainability of local authorities visualisation update (<https://bit.ly/3KPU6fO>)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² ADASS (2022) Provisional local government finance settlement 2022-2023: ADASS Consultation Response (<https://bit.ly/3ifnPOd>)

In its response, the Local Government Association³³ also notes the inadequacy of social care funding, calls for clarity over the future use of the New Homes Bonus and expresses concern over the short-term nature of increased grant funding which will be excluded from the baseline used to establish transitional support in any future change in the funding system. The LGA also notes that no funding or information about funding for public health services is included in the Settlement, while councils face renewed demand for public health support in the wake of Covid-19.

Outsourcing

In addition to cuts, local government has also been the focus of central government policies requiring widespread commissioning and outsourcing of services.³⁴

Almost 14% of GDP – £251.5 billion per year – was spent overall on UK public procurement in 2017 and local authorities account for a large proportion of outsourced public services by value across all sectors.³⁵ Procurement of services and goods accounted for 47% of local government expenditure in 2017-18 and rose by 7% in value between 2010-11 and 2017-18.³⁶

For example, 79% of social care jobs have been outsourced³⁷ – largely to the private sector – while other forms of privatisation such as PFI, shared services and Public-Private Partnerships have resulted in large swathes of local authority workers finding themselves transferred involuntarily out of council employment. Academisation of schools has continued the outsourcing trend.

The impact of Brexit

Local authorities and UK Regions have received significant investment from EU Structural Funds to support business development and employment-related projects, totalling £5.3 billion.³⁸ Added to

³³ LGA (2022) Provisional local government finance settlement 2022/23 (<https://bit.ly/3u5b5nq>)

³⁴ Starting with the Conservatives' Local Government and Planning Act 1980 and Compulsory Competitive Tendering

³⁵ House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (2018) After Carillion: public sector outsourcing and contracting (<https://bit.ly/2KIB7cw>)

³⁶ Institute for Government (2018) Government procurement: the scale and nature of contracting in the UK (<https://bit.ly/2E2BaO2>)

³⁷ Skills for Care (2020) The state of the adult social care workforce in England 2020 (<https://bit.ly/3kwRpTI>)

³⁸ LGA (2019) £5.3bn EU cash countdown: regional aid funding to run out in 18 months (<https://bit.ly/32xGVgg>)

this is indirect EU funding in education, culture, policing and other areas of public life which supports UK communities and individual citizens.

The 2020 Conservative Manifesto pledged to establish a 'United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund' (UKSPF) to replace the EU Structural Funds. To date, there has been no consultation on the UKSPF. Unless local authorities are given certainty over replacement funding, the impact of lost EU funding on local economies and skill development will be very damaging and councils will be placed under even further financial pressure. Furthermore, local authorities containing ports and other trading centres will face new demands for environmental health, trading standards and other related functions. A £10 million grants to port authorities made in November 2020 was welcomed by the LGA, which also warned of many further uncertainties for councils surrounding Brexit.

Changes to public health

Many public health functions and jobs were transferred from the NHS to local authorities in 2012. Since then funding has been continuously reduced and in the wake of Covid, the government has announced the end of Public Health England. It is unclear what impact this will have on local government's public health functions – or the services currently provided, many of which are preventative and targeted at children and young people. No funding announcement on public health was made in the 2021-22 Local Government Funding Settlement.

The impact on women

Women, particularly Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and disabled women have been disproportionately impacted by cuts to local government services and jobs because of their reliance on councils to provide social care and childcare, other services which support children and families and for paid employment.³⁹ (WBG uses the term BAME whilst simultaneously acknowledging its shortcomings. WBG consistently calls for data to be disaggregated by sex/gender *and* specific race/ethnicity groups as well as other indices of disadvantage including disability.)

³⁹ For more information see WBG (2019) Triple whammy: the impact of local government cuts on women (<https://bit.ly/3mmy752>); WBG and The Runnymede Trust (2018) Intersecting inequalities (<https://bit.ly/2PFrb1N>)

This disproportionate impact is in part explained by the failure of central and local government to properly assess the gender and race impact of budgets and cuts: A 2020 study⁴⁰ showed that only 87 local authorities had carried out equality impact assessments or mentioned that they had given due regard to equal opportunities. Unitary authorities, London councils and metropolitan boroughs were more likely to have undertaken equality impact assessments than district and county councils. 47% unitary authorities, 43% London councils, and 39% metropolitan boroughs had complied, compared to 15% of district councils and 18% of county councils.

DHCLG's Equality Statement on the 2021-22 Finance Settlement noted that "68% of stakeholders did not express a view on the equalities impact of this settlement" and concluded that "the government has not identified any compelling evidence that the 2021-22 Settlement will have a 'substantial' equalities impact".⁴¹ This is surprising given the obvious disproportional impact of coronavirus on the elderly and BAME communities and its recognised detrimental impact on women.

Equality Impact Assessments should be the main way of ensuring that public bodies adhere to the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires them to have 'due regard' for the equality of people with 'protected characteristics' (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity). The failure of the Government to assess the impact of coronavirus on women has led to calls for the Equality and Human Rights Commission to investigate this failure.⁴² Drastic reductions in funding, coupled with the impact of Covid, have already had – and will increasingly have – a severe impact on councils' ability to provide services and support to women and children and vulnerable people.⁴³ They also have a negative impact on the ability of other public services and the voluntary sector to function effectively. They are undermining prevention and leading to more crisis interventions by the NHS and

⁴⁰ Adisa, O. and Costello, F. (2020) Equality impact assessments and equality responsiveness of budgets in English local authorities. University of Suffolk

⁴¹ MHCLG (Dec 2020) Provisional local government settlement, England 2021-22 (<https://bit.ly/3q6vpDO>)

⁴² Guardian (14 Feb 2021) EHRC urged to investigate ministers for 'equality failures' in Covid response (<https://bit.ly/3q6vG9O>)

⁴³ National Audit Office (Mar 2018) Financial sustainability of local authorities 2018 (<https://bit.ly/2oQ6wwl>)

other public services, particularly in poorer areas. These are often costlier and less effective in the long term.⁴⁴

Cuts also led to almost 1 million redundancies in councils across the UK between 2010 and 2019, while employment in central government and the NHS rose.⁴⁵ There have also been severe cuts to pay and conditions for local government and school workforces in England since 2010 compared to other public sector groups, including a real-terms decline of 20% in pay and cuts to core conditions in 90% of councils.⁴⁶

The impact of Covid on women's lives – especially BAME women - has been dramatic and has exacerbated the effect of cuts since 2010.⁴⁷ Women – who are also the vast majority of front-line workers tackling Covid - are bearing the brunt of domestic labour, childcare, home schooling and poverty. Pregnancy discrimination has been rife and domestic violence has escalated.^{48 49} Councils will need continuing, increased funding to respond effectively.

The future of local government funding

Funding levels remain way below their 2010 levels and the small increases in the 2022-2023 Settlement are dependent on council tax hikes and social care precepts, rather than increased central government support. In addition, the Government has not yet revealed its plans for the promised review of local government funding through its Fair Funding Review and whether councils will in future be largely reliant on council taxes, business rates and income from sales, fees, charges and investments. This would result in continued cuts to services and jobs, unevenly distributed across the country but overwhelmingly impacting women.

We call on the government to recognise the severe and gendered impacts of cuts to local authority funding since 2010 and undertake meaningful Equality Impact Assessments on any future plans

⁴⁴ The IFS (2019) The health effects of Sure Start (<https://bit.ly/2HqpgHq>)

⁴⁵ ONS (2019) Public sector employment UK (<https://bit.ly/3bYkHaj>)

⁴⁶ UNISON (2019) 2020-21 NJC pay claim for local government workers (<https://bit.ly/3hwdoaT>)

⁴⁷ WBG et al (2020) BAME women and Covid-19 – research evidence (<https://bit.ly/3hvUd12>)

⁴⁸ Maternity Action (2020) COVID 19: new and expectant mothers in the front line (<https://bit.ly/3bZWdgn>)

⁴⁹ Women's Aid (2020) A perfect storm (<https://bit.ly/3c3k6nu>)

for local government funding. We also call for plans to remove central government funding from local authorities to be scrapped. Councils too should carry out EIAs and highlight the impact of cuts on different groups of women. Dramatic reinvestment, not further reduction, is needed to stop these detrimental impacts on the lives of all women and girls, especially BAME, elderly and disabled women.

Recommendations

- Local government funding needs to be urgently restored to a level which enables councils to meet their statutory obligations and also provide the preventive, non-statutory services which are vital to the wellbeing of women, children and those in need of care
 - Equality impact assessments of local government funding levels and proposed cuts should be carried out by central Government *and* local authorities
 - Adequate funding should come from general taxation/central government, at least at the same level as for other public services
 - The long-promised Fair Funding Review should look at the overall resources provided and available to councils, not simply re-distribution of the current 'pot'
 - The distribution of central Government funding should ensure that the most deprived council areas are properly funded to reflect the greater reliance of poorer people and women on local services. Deprivation levels should be included in any future local authority funding formula to ensure genuine 'levelling up'.
- The shift to dependence on Business Rates and Council Tax should be reviewed, while giving councils greater autonomy and powers to generate income
 - Funding to meet all current social care needs should be made available from general taxation, on the same basis as the NHS
 - Cuts to funding of voluntary sector women's services must be reversed at a minimum as part of a review of sustainable funding for the sector to support and protect women survivors/victims of sexual and domestic abuse
 - Decent pay and conditions for local government workers, commensurate with other public sector groups, should be ensured through adequate funding to councils and an end to privatisation as a means of cutting women's incomes.

Written by: Heather Wakefield (Visiting Fellow at University of Greenwich)

UK Women's Budget Group, March 2022

WBG is an independent, voluntary organisation made up of individuals from Academia, NGOs and trade unions. See www.wbg.org.uk

Contact: georgia.sangster@wbg.org.uk

wbg WOMEN'S
BUDGET
GROUP