

# VOICES FROM LOCKDOWN:

A chance for change

INTERIM FINDINGS REPORT  
AUGUST 2020



With thanks to



The Pilgrim Trust

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We currently face a fork in the road for our progress as a nation. COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities and the gap is widening on a daily basis. **But there is still time to act to prevent this situation worsening.**

Vital organisations supporting some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls face a perfect storm as lockdown eases, there is a risk of thousands of the most marginalised women and girls being left without support. With emergency funding ending and a surge in demand for their services, many organisations supporting women and girls are worried about how they will meet demand in the coming months.

The first three months of lockdown created more challenges in the lives of women and girls already experiencing multiple and intersecting disadvantages and made it more difficult for them to get help. Our research tells us that the scale of the problem is likely to be hugely underestimated and the organisations we spoke to expect a surge in demand as restrictions ease. Hidden and increasing demand, unsustainable funding and the stress facing staff working in these conditions means the future of a whole sector providing vital services hangs in the balance. **But there is still a chance to prevent that.**

The 'new normal' has meant doing things differently and our research highlights that this sector, those delivering services to the women and girls most in need, has stepped

## WOMEN AND GIRLS FACING MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGE

Women and girls facing multiple disadvantage experience a combination of complex and overlapping problems including homelessness, violence and abuse, substance misuse, mental ill health, poverty and contact with the criminal justice system.

For many women and girls, their experiences of disadvantage are often underpinned by a history of extensive violence and abuse. Women are ten times as likely as men to have experienced physical and sexual abuse during their lives, with one in 20 women affected. Of this group of women, more than half have a common mental health condition, one in three have attempted suicide, nearly half are in the lowest income bracket, a quarter have been homeless and a third have an alcohol problem.

up to the challenge – innovated, created and made sure they are at the heart of sustaining their communities.

In the next phase of our response to this crisis, the women's voluntary and community sector must play a key role as part of the UK's COVID-19 recovery strategy, drawing on the remarkable resilience, adaptability and innovation of these organisations.

# 1. THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND LOCKDOWN

## Key findings

Vital organisations supporting some of the most disadvantaged women and girls face a perfect storm as lockdown eases, leaving thousands at risk and without support

### 1.1 Increase in demand and complexity

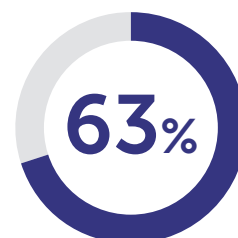
The evidence from the research highlights two concerning trends; firstly, that more women and girls are in need of support; and secondly, that their needs are increasingly more complex and urgent.

As lockdown eases, these findings point to a perfect storm, where hidden and increasing demand, an increase in women and girls facing the most complex problems, and unsustainable funding combine. This is likely to be particularly concentrated for the quarter of organisations who did not think they could ride out this difficult time. **The risk of losing these grassroots, specialist, community organisations is sizeable**, with the thousands of women who rely on these organisations and are likely to need them even more in future, at risk of being left without support.

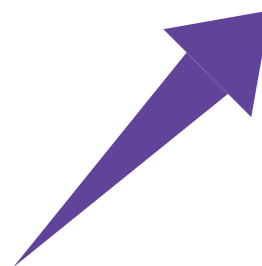
All organisations that had seen an increase in need were women-focused, many providing support programmes to children as well.

A third of these were young people's organisations, most focused on girls and young women.

### Demand



In the survey of organisations supporting women and girls facing multiple disadvantage, **63 per cent** stated that the demand for their services had increased.

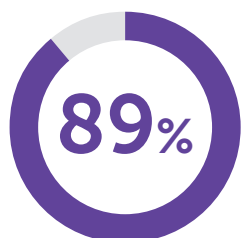


Small organisations supporting less than 100 women per month prior to lockdown were most likely to have seen the **greatest increase in demand**.



By far the largest group of organisations that had seen an increase in demand were **those that provide support to women and girls experiencing domestic abuse**.

## Multiple and complex needs



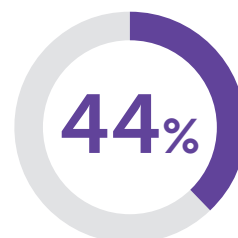
**89 per cent of organisations** reported that the needs of the women they support have increased.

Where organisations commented on the impact of COVID-19 on the levels of support needed, of the 89 per cent who responded, 36 per cent named an increase in mental health needs and 26 per cent stated domestic abuse as a reason behind an increase of needs, this figure included online abuse. Even organisations that had not seen an increase in referral numbers had, instead, seen women with more complex needs, exacerbated by domestic abuse, isolation, anxiety and poverty.

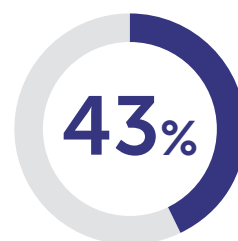


Women and girls being referred to services during lockdown have had higher levels of need, with **more urgent and complex cases**.

## Meeting the needs of women and girls



**44 per cent** of services reduced, closed or suspended service provision.



**43 per cent of services** during lockdown increased frequency or range of service provision, or both.

Most of the organisations that closed or suspended some of their services fell into one or more of the following categories:

- Housing
- Mental health support
- Services for women in the criminal justice system
- Those supporting women experiencing domestic abuse

**A quarter of respondents said they were not confident that they will be able to meet future demand for their services. Those respondents were most likely to be small organisations**, supporting less than 25 women per month, with an income of less than £50,000.

These organisations represent **vital services supporting some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls**. Organisations supporting refugee women and girls, working with children and young people, delivering specialist mental health support and providing domestic abuse support reported the lowest levels of confidence that they will be able to respond to an increased demand.

## 1.2 Spotlights on those at risk

### Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls

Limitations on women and girls' freedom have increased their vulnerability to violence and abuse, cutting them off from the people and places they would normally turn to for help. Our respondents highlighted the fact that necessary measures in lockdown, such as staying at home and having little contact outside your household, had increased violence and abuse in the home, economic abuse, coercion and control and homophobia from family members for some women and girls. Stalking was also highlighted as something that had been enabled by the conditions of lockdown.

Our survey highlighted that domestic abuse organisations were amongst those most likely to have reported an increase in demand for their support. These organisations have responded by providing women and girls with increased opportunities to access support programmes during lockdown.

### Girls and young women

The closure of schools, some forms of alternative education and youth centres has meant girls and young women have been increasingly at risk as the professionals that normally ensure their wellbeing are no longer able to support them. One known risk is that some girls will be trapped at home in abusive families or relationships. Girls and young women have been at increased risk of all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation and exposed to risks such as criminal activities being carried out by family members in the same home.

The suspension of the assessment duties in the Care Act has left many girls normally considered in need of care and support in high-risk situations. Further concerns raised with Agenda about girls' safety and wellbeing during lockdown include: an 'increased intensity' in cases of so-called honour-based abuse; an increase in referrals of girls at risk of child sexual exploitation; and girls who have been reported missing, do so for longer periods of time than before lockdown.

Serious case reviews make clear that overlooking the needs of girls in these types of situations has previously led to devastating consequences.



## **Mental health**

Both service providers and the women interviewed highlighted the severe impact of lockdown on women and girls' mental health, particularly increased isolation, loneliness, stress, anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

Concerns have been raised in particular about girls and young women and Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic (BAME) women as groups at high risk of poor mental health. The day-to-day activities used by women to improve their mental health, for example walking, socialising or attending peer support groups, have often been lost. This, combined with the sadly inevitable trauma and grief caused by the pandemic and the barriers women and girls have faced to accessing support, have led organisations to predict a dramatic surge in demand for mental health support as lockdown eases.

## **Poverty, destitution and homelessness**

The economic impacts of the pandemic have compounded pre-existing inequalities, with women, particularly young women, already more at risk of destitution than men and young men. Respondents reported significant challenges for the women they work with in accessing food and essentials, and food banks were not able to meet the increased demand. Services report refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women as those hardest hit by increased poverty.

## **Women involved in prostitution and sex work**

Several services reported that destitution is driving some women in to 'survival sex'. They noted cases of women who sold sex in the past and have now felt forced to return to selling sex and others becoming involved for the first time. A decline in the number of 'clients' and closure of indoor establishments have led to a steep reduction in the income of women involved in sex work, putting them at risk of poverty and destitution. In areas without sufficient support in place, women involved in selling sex, particularly women involved in street sex work, have faced potential homelessness, problematic substance use and poverty as a result of the lockdown.

## 2. HIDDEN NEED AND BARRIERS TO SUPPORT

New barriers have emerged during lockdown, they include:

- **the closure and suspension of support organisations;**
- **moving programme delivery online and;**
- **women not wanting to 'be a burden' on services**

**These barriers are likely to have concealed hidden demand and led to an underestimation of the true impact the lockdown has had on the most vulnerable women and girls.**

Closure of the spaces where women access support has led to an under-reporting of need. **Evidence indicates that, as lockdown eases, there will be a surge in demand for support services.**

Wider research conducted by Agenda has shown the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has had on the already scarce number of specialist services led 'by and for' the communities they serve, such as Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic women and girls. Such organisations are tailored to meet the specific needs of their communities. Without them, **the most vulnerable women and girls face further marginalisation.**

Findings from the survey showed that not all women and girls have access to technology, felt comfortable or had enough confidence to use telephone or internet-based support. Women and girls living with perpetrators of violence and abuse and those living in overcrowded housing often did not have

access to a private and safe space to be in contact with organisations providing lifeline support.

### Hidden demand

These new barriers, compounding those already facing women and girls with multiple disadvantage, are likely to have concealed real levels of demand and need for services during lockdown.

Across most interviews, services highlighted a common concern that referrals since the start of lockdown do not give an accurate picture of the real levels of need and a prediction that this will lead to an increase in need in the autumn, as lockdown eases. Women often access services within school and working hours – away from their children and/or the perpetrators of abuse they live with. With schools being closed and women being locked down with perpetrators, they have lost vital opportunities to access support.

**"[the service] expects to see an increase in women seeking support around mental health issues and [...] feel many [women] are currently just getting on with things, and when children return to school they may then have time to consider the impact of what they have been through during lockdown"**

### 3. CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING SUPPORT TO THE MOST VULNERABLE WOMEN AND GIRLS

The survey and in-depth interviews highlighted the various challenges women's voluntary and community sector organisations have faced in delivering services during the pandemic.

#### **Safeguarding**

Many organisations expressed their concern that remote working and reduced programme delivery during lockdown had presented significant safeguarding concerns for women and girls at risk.

#### **Multiagency working**

Some organisations also reported that women and girls have been put at further risk by a breakdown in multi-agency working, as

well as poor communication from central and local government about changes in policy and direction during the crisis. Some respondents did, however, report better collaboration with statutory services, commissioners and partners in the sector during this period.

#### **Impact on staff**

Increased demand, reduced capacity and managing experiences of vicarious trauma whilst working from home has had a negative impact on some members of staff working in women's specialist organisations. Insights from the survey show that professionals are concerned that staff are overstretched and are not receiving the normal support or supervision.



## 4. FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

During the first months of lockdown, services supporting women and girls facing multiple disadvantage reported a drop in income. 33 per cent identified funding as the biggest challenge facing their service in three months' time.

Nearly half, 46 per cent, of organisations reported that their financial position during the lockdown had worsened. Of those organisations that saw their financial position worsen, 30 per cent were small providers, supporting less than 25 women a month, with an income of less than £50,000.

### Accessing emergency funding

Access to emergency funding for organisations in our study has been varied. Respondants were more likely to apply for, and be successful, in bids for emergency funding from trusts and foundations, compared with applications to central and local government funding. Smaller organisations earning less than £100,000 were least likely to have accessed any emergency funding from government, trusts and foundations or other forms of emergency funding.

By far the main barrier to accessing funding was a lack of capacity to write bids. This barrier was particularly widespread in organisations with an income of less than £50,000. Services that reported having furloughed staff in particular were not able to allocate adequate resources to fundraising. In the survey, many services reported that the emergency public funding process had been disorganised and had short deadlines, making accessing the funds difficult. Small organisations were particularly affected.

There were two further challenges that organisations experienced in terms of crisis funding: the short-term nature of funding and lack of core costs funding. Organisations saw three- or six-months crisis funding as unsustainable and resource intensive. Given that most crisis funding did not cover core costs, this was seen as a sticking plaster rather than a sustainable solution to help meet demand.

46%

of organisations reported that their financial position had worsened during the lockdown

## 5. INNOVATIONS AND POSITIVE LEARNINGS

Despite the challenges of lockdown, many of the changes to service delivery have been positive. Organisations in the women's voluntary and community sector adapted quickly and creatively to continue to meet the needs of the women and girls they support. Nearly half of organisations, 44 per cent, moved some services online and almost a third, 29 per cent, increased the range of support programmes they offered in the first months of lockdown.

Equally, women and girls have shown their incredible adaptability and willingness to embrace new ways of engaging with support programmes. For some women and girls, lockdown has created a window of opportunity to access support and make positive changes in their life.

29%

of organisations increased the range of support programmes they offered in the first months of lockdown

### Collaboration within the sector

A key trend that emerged from the survey and interviews was increased collaborative working within the sector. The majority of organisations we heard from saw an increase in multi-agency working with other voluntary organisations and some with local statutory agencies. This positive experience was not uniform, however, and some found that collaboration had reduced, particularly with criminal justice agencies and hospitals.

### New and improved ways to include and listen to small and rural organisations

Organisations felt that the increased accessibility created by moving professional and sector meetings online had facilitated information-sharing and built a more inclusive community within the women's voluntary and community sector. Online working meant that organisations, particularly those that are small and based remotely, were able to join area-wide or national meetings, something that had not previously been possible due to travel time and costs.

Respondents said this has raised the profile and increased awareness of their work, helped to build new referral pathways and opened up conversations with government and commissioning bodies.

Looking forward, organisations in the women's voluntary and community were motivated to continue these new ways of working and build on the collaborative approaches that had developed during lockdown.

## Digital innovation and accessibility

The importance of face to face work and emotionally and psychologically safe environments remains an essential element of support in the women's voluntary and community sector. The sector is moving into new ways of working and learning to utilise technology to improve value for money and reach.

Before lockdown, some organisations had been planning to introduce digital support services, which lockdown and emergency funding gave them impetus to kick-start. For example, some organisations introduced live chat online that has been widely taken up. Others, particularly those supporting young women, increased their presence on social media, used Instagram video sharing to share positive content, and enabled young women to create peer support opportunities to talk about the issues they are most concerned about. Moving services online, and expanding the range and frequency of support programmes, has required immense creativity around how to continue to engage women and girls in a meaningful way.

Online support programmes were reported to be more accessible for women with childcare responsibilities. The added layer of flexibility that digital and phone support provides makes it easier for women with children to access. These changes have also helped staff and the women and girls taking up the support to improve their digital skills.

These positive outcomes led 80 per cent of organisations to report that they anticipated retaining changes after lockdown eased. Of this group, 91 per cent anticipate these changes will include offering a blend of face-to-face and online services and giving staff more flexibility to work remotely in future.

## A 'window of opportunity' for the women and girls sector

For some women and girls, the disruption to their routine caused by lockdown has presented an opportunity to engage with support programmes. For example, an organisation supporting women involved in street-based sex work, suggested that some women are saying "this is an amazing opportunity; because I can't work, I'm going to get out."

One professional reflected that some of the women and girls they work with are actually thriving and feel for the first time they are not having to "jump through the hoops" of statutory services, especially probation and social services.

"This is an  
amazing  
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woman involved in  
street-based sex work

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lockdown has particularly affected women and girls, with domestic violence rates soaring and mental health getting worse. At the same time it has become more difficult for them to get help.

For those from minoritised groups, including Black, Asian and Minoritised ethnic, LGBTQ and disabled women and girls, additional discrimination, inequality and barriers to appropriate support add layer upon layer of challenges.

Lockdown has been hard on everyone. The pandemic exposed inequalities that already existed in society and failings within the systems intended to act as a safety net and protect the most vulnerable. It has resulted in conditions that have worsened the mental health, wellbeing, support networks and economic conditions of many. And for women and girls already living with abuse and trauma and facing hardship and poor mental health, those problems have been magnified.

**Vital organisations supporting some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged women and girls face an uncertain future in terms of their funding and a shared concern about the sheer volume of predicted need that will emerge as lockdown eases.**

The impact on staff working in the sector has also been considerable. Many professionals are women themselves who have been managing their own caring responsibilities alongside supporting women and girls in some of the most challenging situations.

Yet these highly specialist organisations are agile, responsive and adaptable. Many are small, embedded in the communities they serve, and as such know the best solutions to the problems facing those they work with.

The women's voluntary and community sector, which has so much knowledge and expertise, has stepped up to the challenge and has a vital role to play in the wake of this crisis. To rebuild communities and the economy post lockdown, this sector needs to truly flourish and be at the centre of the rebuilding. These organisations must be respected, valued and invested in so that the women and girls they support are able to move on with their lives and fulfil their potential.

We welcome the government's plan to rebuild communities and the economy in its COVID-19 recovery strategy. **An effective and meaningful post-COVID-19 recovery will be local and services supporting women and girls should be at the heart of that.**

Agenda are calling for the following ambitions to be at the core of all further crisis planning and recovery decision making.

## Four core ambitions for recovery:

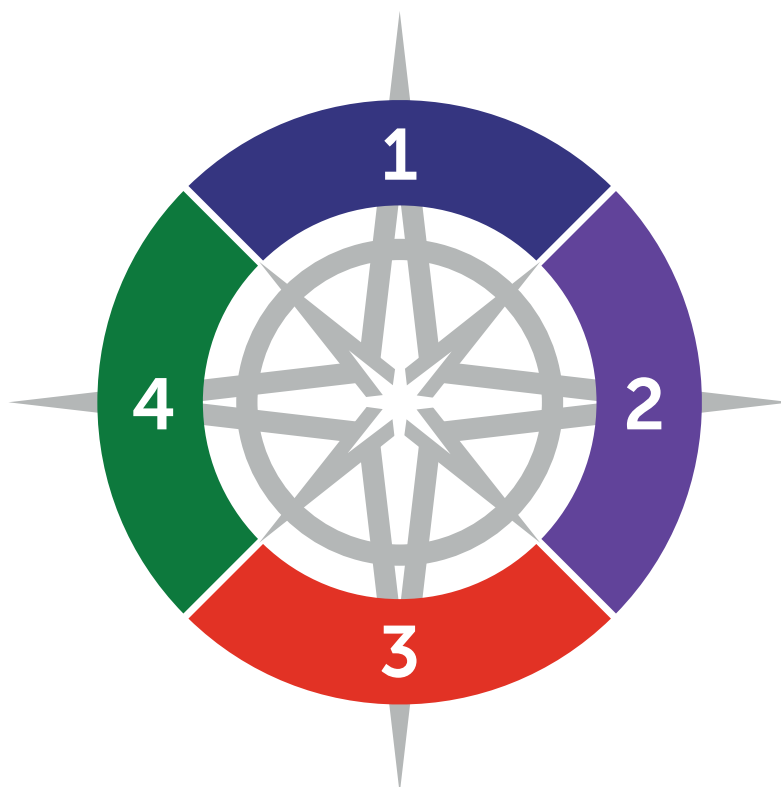
What policy makers, commissioners and funders can do to effectively rebuild their communities after lockdown

### Ensuring equality, insight and transparency:

How policy makers achieve effective commissioning and funding decisions

### Valuing expertise and growing innovation:

Harnessing the full potential of the women's voluntary and community sector



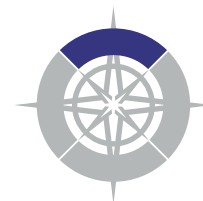
### Building respect, dignity and participation:

Learning from the crisis and removing the barriers to support services for women and girls

### Empowering local responses and driving collaboration:

What government, funders and commissioners need to do to rebuild communities

# 1



## Ensuring equality, insight and transparency:

How policy makers achieve effective commissioning and funding decisions

The hidden impacts of COVID-19 on the most marginalised women and girls are yet to be fully understood. As well as rebuilding, policy makers and funders will need to plan ahead for any future crisis. To ensure effective responses and to accurately anticipate the long-term impact and future needs of women and girls facing the greatest vulnerabilities four key areas need to be addressed.

### a. Funding and strategic priorities:

Central government must make a public commitment to address the social challenges facing women and girls caused by the crisis, further funding needs to be available beyond the current impending 'cliff edge'. This should be joined-up across government departments to enable women's specialist services, which can tackle a range of problems holistically, to access funding without having to compete for multiple complex pots. This will help government to address key strategic priorities, including diverting women away from the criminal justice system and reducing reoffending, tackling domestic abuse, ending rough sleeping and homelessness, reducing loneliness and improving mental health.

**b. Voice of women and girls:** The impact of the crisis on women and girls facing multiple disadvantage must be taken account of as part of the central government strategic response. It is

essential that planning and rebuilding at the highest level of government involves evidence from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Victims' Commissioner and the Children's Commissioner, as well as from front-line specialist services, infrastructure and advocacy organisations, and women with lived experience.

**c. Mental health:** In light of the serious and escalating mental health problems facing women, and in particular young women, as a result of the crisis, a national women and girls mental health strategy and funding pot must be urgently prioritised. This should be led by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), with the full involvement of the Department for Education. This should incorporate both the role of adult and child and adolescent mental health services and recognise the critical role women and girls' services play in improving mental health and wellbeing. The strategy requires the full involvement of all DHSC arms-length bodies and should direct local areas to develop their own strategies and delivery plans to improve the mental health of women and girls.

**d. Data collection:** There needs to be a clear message and requirement, set out at a senior level in government, for data about the impact of COVID-19 to be disaggregated across all protected characteristics, in particular age, race and ethnicity. This should be directed

to all local and national government, arms-length bodies and researchers, to ensure public policy and funding priorities are made with an understanding of the differential and intersecting impact of the crisis. This data must be made publically available and accessibly presented, to allow voluntary sector organisations and advocacy groups to analyse it. Analysis must include data on

gender and violence and abuse, those in and being released from custody and detention, homelessness, unemployment, benefits claims, mental health problems, self-harm and suicide rates. This is an opportunity to identify those women with protected characteristics who fall through the nets of current services and to innovatively design swift and effective responses.

## 2

### **Building respect, dignity and participation:**

Learning from the crisis and removing the barriers to support services for women and girls.



Respect and dignity should be at the heart of public services' relationships with women and girls, trusting them as agents of positive change in their own lives, removing barriers to life-saving support and actively engaging them as equal decision-making partners.

**a. Resetting relationships with public services:** Innovative and effective changes created by the pandemic should be retained. These will enable public services to reset the relationship between their services and the women and girls who need them, basing their principles on trust, support and empowerment. There must be a pause on all benefit sanctions and conditionality which will only serve to further the disadvantages women face. Directions should be given to public service staff, such as in Job Centres and probation, to ensure they continue to actively reach out to women facing disadvantages and ensure they have the resources and support they need.

**b. Do not leave migrant and refugee women to struggle in poverty:**

To ensure respect and dignity for all women, national government must end No Recourse to Public Funds conditions, provide financial support directly to women to prevent them from destitution and communicate clearly what help is available to ensure asylum-seeking migrant women can access life-saving support. Funding should be ring-fenced for specialist organisations supporting migrant and refugee women and wider women's services must be adequately funded to provide specialist support to ensure no woman is ever turned away because of language barriers or the additional needs she may have.

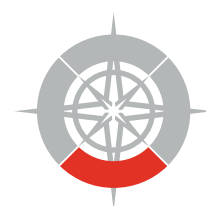
**c. Prioritising women and girls' participation and co-production:**

Despite the challenging circumstances brought about by the crisis, we must not lose progress on the steps already taken towards involving women and girls in decision-making and generating

solutions to the challenges they face. Co-production work of this kind should be prioritised by government and other funding bodies to ensure it is built into new programmes and services. Voluntary sector infrastructure bodies, membership

organisations and think tanks should lead on collating and sharing learning and good practice from the innovation and creativity demonstrated by the women's voluntary and community sector through this time.

# 3



## **Empowering local responses and driving collaboration:**

What government, funders and commissioners need to do to rebuild communities.

The UK's post lockdown recovery and rebuilding strategy will be local and, if strategies are going to be effective, collaborative. Recovery strategies need to place the most marginalised women and girls, and the organisations supporting them, as equal partners in all national and community responses to reduce the burden on already stretched wider public services..

**a. Supporting local responses and rebuilding:** Funders and commissioners must take into account the reduced capacity of small local organisations to deliver services and apply for future funding during the crisis and adjust their targets and timelines accordingly. They should extend contracts that end in 2020 or the beginning of 2021, to give organisations dealing with capacity shortages much-needed "breathing space" to prepare bids. All short to medium term decisions around commissioning processes must ensure women's services are not disadvantaged by such changes.

**b. Economic inclusion:** Specialist voluntary sector women's and girls' services should be included as part of driving forward

plans to ensure economic prosperity and to level up regional opportunities beyond the crisis. This should be included in the Treasury's 'Plan for jobs', as well as regional plans delivered through local authorities and businesses to improve access and opportunities for skills and employment. These organisations are ideally placed to support women and girls into work and skills development opportunities, and should receive targeted funding to develop partnerships with employers and education and training providers to do so. This should have a particular focus on early intervention and supporting young women aged 16-24 to reduce the risk of long-term unemployment and future poverty.

**c. Give the women's voluntary and community sector an equal seat at the table:** The value of local voluntary women's sector leadership, intelligence and partnerships must be empowered and supported. Local authorities and statutory bodies should give the women and girls voluntary and community sector, and the infrastructure and advocacy organisations supporting them, an equal seat at local and national decision making

tables. These arrangements should be inclusive of smaller, non-commissioned organisations, and those delivering 'by and for' the communities they serve. This must be encouraged by central government and an expectation of equal partnerships of this kind should be

built into funding and commissioning arrangements. Learning from positive working relationships that have been built through this time should be shared and embedded by government's arms length bodies and voluntary sector infrastructure and membership organisations.

# 4

## Valuing expertise and growing innovation:

Harnessing the full potential of the women's voluntary and community sector.



The adaptability of specialist women and girls' services and the ongoing contribution they make to their communities should be valued and maximised as part of rebuilding communities.

### a. Valuing the women and girls sector:

Organisations supporting women and girls facing multiple disadvantage should be valued by local and national commissioners and funders for both effectively responding to ongoing social challenges in tried and tested ways, as well as constantly evolving to meet the adapting needs of those they work with. To take advantage of the learning developed through this crisis and embed positive changes, the sector needs investment to sustain and grow this innovation. Such investment requires flexible funding goals that are learning focused, allowing for creativity, success and the occasional failure along the way.

**b. Long term core funding:** While crisis funding has been impactful and filled immediate need, it has not been accessible to all organisations and has not addressed a looming longer-term funding

challenge for the sector. The next stage in government funding must include a ring-fenced fund for specialist 'by and for' services that support women and girls from minoritised communities. It also needs a clear understanding of how smaller, local organisations can access that funding.

**c. Digital innovation:** Following the remarkable transition many organisations have made to providing online services during lockdown, funders and tech companies should consider how they could support the future of digital. We want to start a dialogue with the corporate sector about how small community organisations can work in partnership with them, ensuring their tech, knowledge and innovation benefits women and girls at risk. Funders should review their processes to enable organisations to apply for capital costs like equipment, where they are not currently able to support this type of cost. Welcome initial donations of digital equipment at the start of lockdown from businesses should transition to longer-term sustainable plans to ensure a growth in safe digital access and inclusion of women and girls.