



Future role and scope of London Boroughs Grants Scheme

2 August 2010

Introduction

London Councils (LC) is currently reassessing its funding priorities for its Grants Scheme. An initial consultation was completed in January 2010, but with a new Grants Committee in place after the May local elections, the future of the scheme remains uncertain. **Nothing has been decided yet, and the next round of consultation is still ahead of us, but we need to be prepared for all scenarios.**

It is certain that there will be a fundamental change in the London Boroughs Grants Scheme.

At the Grants Committee Meeting on 14 July, a paper was presented to the meeting that proposed 'repatriating' over 60% of the budget to boroughs, leaving a small regional and a small sub-regional pot.

The paper also proposed 3 groups of current services:

- A – services only reasonably commissionable regionally
- B – services only reasonably commissionable sub-regionally
- C – services local in nature but may be better commissioned sub-regionally

Grants committee made a recommendation to Leaders that the review of the future role and scope of the London Boroughs Grants Scheme go ahead.

Because London Councils funding is contingent on two grounds – performance and available resources - and because local authorities are expecting not only cuts but a poor financial settlement from central government when it is announced on October 20th, they have decided that **no funding can be guaranteed beyond March 31st 2011**. London Councils will be writing to all groups to inform them of this.

The 'repatriation' of funds to individual Local Authorities, to be spent locally, would have far-reaching consequences for the future of LC's regional funding programme.

In light of this, **we should not assume that any current London Councils commissions are guaranteed post 31 March 2011**. This is worst case scenario, and there are other possible outcomes, but to minimise the risk to our organisations we should be making contingency plans.

It is likely that the decision as to the future of the Grants Scheme will be made by the start of December 2010

Next steps

WRC and VSF have always campaigned for, at a minimum, the maintenance of the current LC Grants Scheme budget for London's Violence Against Women (VAW) sector, as well as London's wider voluntary and community sector.

However, in light of the possible 'repatriation' of funds to Local Authorities, WRC and VSF call on London Councils to:

- **Conduct an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)** before any and each decision is made (relating to all 7 protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010)
- **Provide a sound rationale** for all decisions relating to any cuts or changes in the way that services are commissioned
- **Maintain a regional pot of money** to fund services which are regional in nature. Decisions about which services should be funded regionally must be determined by a full, thorough and transparent consultation with London's VCS
- **Ensure that any money 'repatriated' to Local Authorities is ring fenced** to be spent on the voluntary and community sector to deliver services on a local basis and these services are to be determined by a full, thorough and transparent consultation with London's VCS
- **Not to end current commissions in March 2011 if cuts are imminent**, but instead give plenty of time (ideally until the end of the current commission) to give organisations facing cuts time to make contingency plans.

In addition, regarding funding of VAW services, we call on London Councils to:

- **Protect LC's unique and substantial budget for the violence against women sector** (around 12% of its total budget) and ensure that this budget is maintained at a regional level
- **Consult fully, thoroughly and transparently with London's women sector** before any change in the current VAW grants programme. It must be demonstrated that any changes will have no detrimental effect on any of London's women (i.e. through EIAs)
- **Guarantee that any 'repatriated' money would be ring fenced** to fund locally the same violence against women services that London Councils currently funds regionally and that no specialist services would be lost

If you would like to comment on any of the above, please see contact details at the end of this document.

Consultation

The consultation on the future of the Grants Scheme will open in August (probably on 16 August) and is likely to finish at the end of October. You will be able to respond online throughout this period, as well as at a number of events in September.

It is of paramount importance that the sector has a strong and united voice and is essential that as many organisations as possible respond.

It is not yet clear what the focus of the consultation will be, but we believe it is likely to be centred around evidencing the need of funding services regionally/cross-borough, rather than locally. It will ask our views on the idea of 'repatriation' itself, on the groupings of services into 'A' 'B' and 'C' and on how London Councils might end current commissions and begin a new system.

WRC and VSF are already collecting information on these key issues through our surveys (see below) and we will use this information to shape our responses to the consultation.

What can you do now?

- Respond to WRC's survey (if you are currently funded by London Councils) - <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8NNWLRP>
- Respond to VSF's survey (if you are not currently funded by London Councils) - http://www.smart-survey.co.uk/v.asp?i=22193fdiog&dm_i=6I7,4X4T,O94A8,FAKO,1
- Contact us with your concerns – ellen@wrc.org.uk or tim@lvsc.org.uk
- Contact us with evidence of the impact of your work - ellen@wrc.org.uk or tim@lvsc.org.uk
- Contact us with reasons, supported by evidence, why your work must be commissioned regionally or cross-borough - ellen@wrc.org.uk or tim@lvsc.org.uk
- If your work is best delivered locally, tell us - ellen@wrc.org.uk or tim@lvsc.org.uk
- Contact Grants and Leaders' committee with your concerns ([lists on the VSF website](#))

How can WRC help?

If you have concerns and would like to discuss these with someone at WRC, please do get in touch with any of the following members of staff:

Ellen Storrar: Development Officer, ellen@wrc.org.uk, 020 7324 3047

Rebecca Veazey: Policy Officer, rebecca@wrc.org.uk, 020 7324 3046

Karen Moore: Acting Head of Policy, karen@wrc.org.uk, 020 7324 3033

We are currently developing information and resources to help you cope in these uncertain times and if the worse happens in terms of a funding cut, including signposting to organisations that can help, ways of engaging with decision makers and templates and tools to help you fight your corner.

We hope to have this information available by the end of next week if at all possible and this will be disseminated as soon as it is available.

We would like to reiterate that nothing has yet been decided by London Councils. Please do not hesitate to let us know how best to support you at this time.

In solidarity,
WRC

www.wrc.org.uk

www.lvsc.org.uk/vsf