



BWC Response to Budget EIAs

As the Director of Brighton Women's Centre and the Gender Representative for the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, I am submitting this response to the Brighton and Hove City Council Budget EIAs.

My general comments are followed by a commentary on each EIA for the service area that will have an impact on women and children.

General Comments

Overall the production of EIA's in response to budget cuts is very pleasing to see. The fact that an assessment has been performed on the way in which budget reductions may or may not affect groups with protected characteristics enables a fair and just process for budget setting for next year. I was particularly impressed with the research and consideration given to the impact on Gender with reference to the Child Poverty Action Group, the Fawcett Society and the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

However, there is substantial variation on the calibre of the EIA's with some having been performed very robustly and others very simply. Information regarding when the full EIAs will be performed on service areas and how this will fit in with the timeframe for the 2012/13 budget setting would be useful.

In addition, how will the results of the EIAs result in changes to budget decisions where the impact of budget cuts to one service area is seen to impact on the budget cuts to another service area? In other words, how will the EIAs be considered in a joined up way? Also, lone parents and children living in poverty are considered under 'Any Other Groups' – how will this be assessed as having an impact on Gender as the majority of these groups are disproportionately made up of women?

People

Adult Social care – Day Services

Group – Sex

How will consultation with women occur?

What gender specific activities will be available for women?

Children's Services

Group – Disability

'The intention to shift, wherever appropriate, from Residential to Intensive Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements, from intensive IFA to standard IFA placements and from standard IFA to in-house fostering placements'

How will this fit with reductions in welfare benefits especially where fostering placements are in families headed by single parents – the majority of whom are women – see EIA Fostering and Adoption –Gender – ‘A significant number of foster carers are single women’.

Will this be addressed in the light of Child Poverty Action Group and the Fawcett Society Research that lone parents are more affected by the Government’s changes in taxation and benefits?

Education Welfare Service

No impact shown for Gender because the split between girls and boys accessing the service is more or less equal but will the impact be taken into account in terms of families and the fact that lone parents are disproportionately women?

Sure Start and related Service Areas

Strongly agree with assessment under Age and Gender and the importance of free/low cost provision for women who are living in poverty may potentially like to access training/employment – see EIA for SureStart nurseries under Gender.

SureStart Children’s Centre – changes to designations

Assessment under Other Relevant Groups have an impact under Gender.

Youth Offending Service

LAC – YOS and LAC to work closely with Inspire (Women’s Community Service working with women offenders) to prevent 1st time entrants of CIC and also to reduce risk of reoffending.

Lone Parents – ‘88% have birth parents who have separated (unknown how many are living as single parents)’. This is important data to collect and figures nationally would predict a disproportionate number are single mothers.

Housing Commissioning

Gender - How will this impact on women offenders’ resettlement into the Brighton and Hove community with a minimal housing stock for women. This will potentially lead to an increase in homelessness.

Housing and Social Inclusion

Assessed as no impact under Gender. How many council tenants are single mothers? How many women are living on welfare benefits/low income?

Revenues and Benefits

How will reductions affect the different groups?

Community Safety

What will be the impact on Gender in relation to services for survivors of domestic violence/sexual violence and offenders?

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