

SAFER FUTURE COMMUNITIES

Empowering local voluntary & community partnerships



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Introduction

The crime, policing and victim support landscape is changing, which will affect organisations working in the violence against women and girls (VAWG) sector. Funding programmes are changing, as are the structures of decision-making. WRC, as a member of a consortium of other voluntary sector organisations (called Safer Future Communities) are ensuring the wider sector knows about these changes and supporting them to engage with the new structures. WRC wants to ensure that VAWG remains a high priority locally and that organisations working with women are sufficiently funded to continue their work.

The full background and scope of the changes are published in our initial briefing, which can be viewed [here](#). This briefing aims to build upon the previous briefing and discuss the issues relating to the VAWG sector more specifically.

Summary of the changes

- New locally elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will be responsible for local policing priorities and outcomes and to a large extent oversee the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).
- It will be in the PCC's powers to distribute grants to fund community safety initiatives. The Community Safety Fund will be transferred from the CSP to the new PCC. *Existing funding streams to address VAWG will be diverted to this new fund. So the PCC will determine if and how this money gets spent.*
- This fund will no longer be ring fenced.
- PCCs will act as commissioners for all local victim support services.

Changes to the Community Safety Partnerships and the Community Safety Fund

Currently the CSPs sit under the local authority and their remit is to work together to develop and implement strategies to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safe. They can distribute funds to organisations that fulfil this role, through the Community Safety Fund. Many VAWG organisations receive funding through this route and have built up working relationships with the CSPs. The changing landscape means that the VAWG sector will need to:

- Start building new relationships with the PCC and his/her team;
- Lobby for VAWG as a local priority and ensure that this is written into the 5 year Police and Crime Plan that the PCC is charged with writing, and which will then influence where the funding goes;
- Keep abreast of local changes as each PCC will go about their duties in different ways e.g. a PCC in one area may only want to commission organisations to deliver crime prevention services rather than give grants to voluntary organisations working with

survivors of violence. If this is the case, local campaigning and lobbying will need to kick into action, which WRC and Safer Future Communities can offer support with. Hopefully though, we will seek to ensure that positioning ourselves as early influencers will mean this does not happen.

Risks to the VAWG sector

These changes signal a major risk to funding streams because the elected PCC may lack understanding and knowledge of the prevalence, effects and types of services needed for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

As the PCCs will cover a wide area they may only look at one or two service providers for VAWG survivors across their area. We need to be prepared to make the case for specialised VAWG services, particularly the differences between bigger, generic or statutory providers and smaller organisations that meet the needs of particular groups of people e.g. BAMER women. Women's organisations are effective because they provide women-only services, focus on empowerment and involve a high level of self-help and service user involvement. Women's organisations often work at 'grass roots' level with the most marginalised people in society and are usually established because a need is identified where mainstream services are inappropriate or non-existent. The expertise, gendered analysis and models of working practice that have been developed by the women's sector over many years need to be promoted as a distinct characteristic of our work.

Not ring-fencing the new Community Safety Fund for VAWG services is extremely worrying and needs to be challenged.

What can we do to ensure our sustainability? What are the opportunities to engage?

The regional Safer Future Communities events taking place in February and March are an opportunity to voice these concerns and think of ways to work together to ensure the risks to the VAWG sector (and the wider voluntary and community sector) are not realised. They will also be an opportunity to explore the opportunities within the new landscape and discuss how the VAWG sector can capitalise on these, as well as finding out more about the support available through the Safer Future Communities project.

The dates of the upcoming events are: Birmingham 8th February; Leicester 15th February; Gatwick 22nd February; Norwich 29th February; Taunton 7th March; York 15th March; Durham 20th March; Manchester 21st March.

We would urge all VAWG organisations to attend the event closest to you.

To book a place please visit <http://clinks.eventbrite.com>

For further information contact Jessica Mullen, Safer Future Communities project coordinator Jessica.mullen@clinks.org or visit <http://www.clinks.org/services/sfc/sfc-events> to see a provisional agenda for the day.

For women's sector specific issues please contact Rebecca Veazey at Rebecca@wrc.org.uk

Further information

Further information about the transition to Police and Crime Commissioners may be found on the Home Office website at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/>