



RCD Women's News

Issue no: 32, January/February 2009

How can women's organisations use Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements?

Darlene Corry, Policy Officer – Women's Resource Centre (WRC)

Most of us are aware of the increasing devolution of decision making from Westminster to local areas, but what does this actually mean for women's organisations? How can women's organisations use Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs)? Darlene Corry outlines policies and local mechanisms women's organisations need to know about.

Most women's organisations are not engaged in any formal way with their LSP. Research by WRC, Urban Forum and Oxfam (2006)* found that only 1.8% of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) representatives on LSPs were women's organisations – despite making up 7% of the VCS.

As well as lacking capacity to engage formally, some women's organisations have experienced frustrating barriers to participation - the time and energy needed to be part of the LSP mechanism, and lack of understanding of gender inequality and discrimination by LSP partners. However, there are many ways groups can influence local priorities, according to their capacity. And with local elections starting in 2010 across much of the country, next year is the time to make noise and get your voice heard.

LSPs, made up of representatives from local authorities, health, police, local business and the voluntary and community sector, are now the key mechanism for deciding on local priorities, determining where the majority of the local funding will go and delivering the work outlined in the LAAs. LAAs are three-year agreements about the priorities and work of each local area and are made up of a number of National Indicators (NI). They are now the only mechanism that central government uses to monitor local government. Out of a total list of 198 indicators, each local area has to include 17 compulsory indicators (primarily on education) and chooses a further 35 indicators, in consultation with local people and groups.

150 LAAs were signed off for June 2008 - 2011. They are subject to annual reviews called 'refreshers', to monitor progress. While targets can technically change during these refreshers, guidance indicates that this is unlikely. However, in the run-up to local elections, calling attention to urgent issues not included in the targets is definitely worthwhile.

A useful strategy for women's organisations is to clearly outline how their work benefits the local community. Groups can determine how their work and their issues 'fit' across the national indicators and compare this to the NIs chosen within their own LAA. If groups can show how, for example, violence against women (VAW), is a key issue for local women, they can challenge their LSP to include targets on VAW within their LAA (across health, community safety, economic well-being, as well as the few indicators specifically relating to VAW). They can also use these arguments to challenge the Gender Equality Schemes of local bodies such as the local authority and the Primary Care Trust (PCT).

To see some factsheets about how women's organisations can use LAAs, LSPs and other bits of local government policy, go to: www.wrc.org.uk. WRC is also carrying out research into women's organisations' experiences of influencing local priorities. To participate and find out more please visit: www.wrc.org.uk/actionresearch

- See research at: www.wrc.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/w/womenlsp.pdf

Funding news

Rosa – the UK fund for women and girls

Rosa have recently launched their first ever grants programme. They are awarding £25,000 in total to fund work that will help women and girls in the UK view themselves more positively and with less self-criticism. Applicants will be asked to answer the key question: How can you support women and girls to develop a positive body image?

For more information see:

www.rosauk.org/grants/default.aspx

Application deadline: **9 March 2009**

New Refugee Council publications

The Vulnerable Women's Project Good Practice Guide: Assisting Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women affected by Rape or Sexual Violence

This guide discusses the Refugee Council's approach to best practice in caring for women who have been subject to sexual violence, including rape. The guide has been written to assist staff in RCOs, refugee agencies and other welfare and advice organisations that provide services to refugee and asylum seeking women. The guide is intended as a tool for staff in rape crisis centres and health service settings who encounter refugee and asylum seeking women who have been raped or exposed to sexual violence.

Vulnerable women literature review Refugee and asylum seeking women affected by rape or sexual violence: a literature review [February 2009]

This literature review summarises the learning from the Refugee Council Vulnerable Women's Project and situates it within the wider context of what is known about rape and sexual violence.

To download copies of the guide and report see:
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy

If you would like to submit an article to *RCO Women's News* about your RCO's work, or would like to write about a topical issue, please email:
development@refugeecouncil.org.uk

Training

Ashiana network training - Advanced Domestic Violence (1 Day)

30 March 2009

This session is aimed at developing a more advanced knowledge of domestic violence. It is recommended that participants have a basic understanding of domestic violence before attending this course. The session will cover:

- An overview of basic domestic violence
 - Domestic violence and children (incorporating the Domestic violence guidelines)
 - Crime and Disorder Act
 - Non-Molestation and Occupancy Orders
 - Risk assessments
- Supporting women with multiple needs

For more information email info@ashiana.org.uk or call **020 8539 0427**

Developing effective partnerships – Women's Resource Centre

18 March 2009, 9.30am – 4pm

Partnerships are one way women's organisations struggling to secure larger amounts of funding may be able to survive. This course looks at different aspects of partnership working that you need to consider to make an informed decision about going into partnership and ensuring it benefits your work.

The course will look at:

- Different types of partnership arrangements
- Key issues to consider when deciding whether to go into partnership
- Practical tools you can use to create meaningful partnerships

New report

Relocation, Relocation – the impact of internal relocation on women asylum seekers

This report by Asylum Aid discusses the legal application of internal relocation and questions the appropriateness of this principle for women asylum seekers who have experienced gender based persecution.

To download a copy of the report see:

www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/publications/89/Relocation_Relocation_research_report.pdf