



The Gender Impact of the Cuts
A TUC cuts briefing
November 2011

“The Government is obliged by equality legislation to assess whether its policies will have an impact on gender equality”

The gender impact of the cuts – a year on

In November 2010 the TUC produced a briefing titled “The gender impact of the cuts”. The briefing outlined the impact that cuts to jobs, services and welfare would have on women. At the time of writing many of the cuts were yet to take effect. However, even at that early stage it was already apparent that the government’s deficit reduction strategy would disproportionately disadvantage women and families, particularly those on low incomes.

In the twelve months since the first briefing was written many of the cuts that were anticipated have now happened and further cuts and reforms have been announced. This briefing aims to revisit and update the 2010 “Gender impact of the cuts briefing” and to give an overview of the ways in which women in both the public and private sectors have been affected by the public sector cuts, as workers, as benefits claimants and as service users.

A year ago the GMB reported that almost 50,000 job cuts have already been announced in 43 councils¹. In October 2011 the GMB reported that 101,094 jobs have been lost in local authorities in England since the general election in 2010². The CIPD has forecast that public sector job losses will reach 610,000³. Services - from libraries, to after school clubs, to women’s refuges - have been closing at an alarming rate. The pace of the cuts has been alarmingly fast and relentless.

This briefing aims to provide some useful facts and statistics to support trade unions’ campaigns against the cuts.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Public authorities are obliged under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to equality in all that they do. This means they have to take a properly informed, rational view of the likely impact on equality of a policy or decision and

¹ www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/10000_more_job_cuts.aspx

² http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/other_news/101094_jobs_lost_english_coun.aspx

³ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/workaudit1011>



consider whether or not any possible negative impact can be eliminated or mitigated.

While there is no longer a specific legal requirement for public authorities to carry out formal Equality Impact Assessments, an EIA is often recommended as the best method for ensuring that a public authority has due regard to equality and for demonstrating that it has.

There have been a number of successful legal challenges to decisions to make cuts to public services or stop funding for voluntary and community sector organisations because public authorities have failed to comply with equality duties (e.g. Ealing council's decision to stop funding Southall Black Sisters, London Councils' decision to stop funding various VCS organisations, Birmingham City Council's decisions to limit social care provision and stop funding specialist advice agencies). Public sector unions also use the duty to have due regard to equality in negotiations with public authorities and seek to hold them to account when making spending and staffing decisions that might impact on equality.

The TUC organised a seminar in the summer of 2011 on using the Equality Duty to challenge cuts. The seminar led to a TUC toolkit which describes what having due regard to equality means in practice, highlighting some of the principles that have emerged from past legal challenges. It also includes checklists for trade unions to help them hold public bodies to account and a model letter to be sent to public bodies who are not intending to carry out a formal EIA of a decision or policy that will impact on equality^[1].

We are likely to see more instances of the equality duty being used to question the legitimacy and fairness of public authorities' actions, not all of which will succeed (e.g. the recent CPAG challenge of housing benefit reform and the Brent Libraries challenge – although this is being appealed).

The Fawcett Society launched a high profile but unsuccessful legal challenge to the Emergency Budget in June 2010 on the grounds that HM Treasury failed to conduct an assessment of the impact on gender equality of its measures. Perhaps as a result of this high profile challenge, in November 2010, the Equality and Human Rights Commission launched a formal assessment of the extent to which the Treasury met its obligation to consider the impact on protected groups of decisions contained in the Comprehensive Spending Review that followed. The assessment is being conducted under powers granted to the Commission under section 31 of the Equality Act 2006.

Over the course of the last year, the EHRC has received representations from external organisations (including the TUC) and has received more than 100

^[1] TUC Equality Duty Toolkit <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20159-f0.cfm>



documents in written evidence from HM Treasury. The EHRC also heard oral evidence from HM Treasury and other government departments. The findings of the investigation are due to be published in December 2011 so that it is available in the lead up to the 2012 Budget and any recommendations the Commission makes to the Treasury can be acted on.

Benefits and tax credits

In 2010 the Government announced £18bn of cuts to social security and welfare. Many of these cuts and changes – which disproportionately affect women, particularly single mothers and older women - have now taken effect. Others are due to be implemented over the next three years.

An analysis of the June 2010 budget by the House of Commons Library found that that women will pay for roughly 72 per cent of the net cost of the changes in taxes, benefits and tax credits set out in the budget. The Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 ushered in further cuts and welfare reforms which have shifted yet more of the burden onto women and families.

Specific cuts that are affecting families with children include:

- the abolition of the Health in Pregnancy Grant, a universal payment of £190 for pregnant women who are 25 weeks pregnant and have received health advice from a medical professional
- a three-year freeze in the value of Child Benefit, in addition to the withdrawal of Child Benefit from women living in a household where one adult is a higher rate taxpayer
- the abolition of the Baby Element of Tax Credits (worth a maximum of £545 to eligible families) and a reversal of previous Government's commitment to introduce a Toddler Tax Credit (worth a maximum of £208 for eligible families)
- a cut in the proportion of childcare costs that are covered for families eligible for Working Tax Credit, from 80 per cent of costs to 70 per cent of costs
- a three-year freeze in the value of Working Tax Credit
- significant cuts to Housing Benefit, which the Department for Work and Pension's own assessment has indicated will hit families the hardest
- a cap on the total amount of out of work benefit that a family will be entitled to, which will mean that large families experience greater losses

Although the government has announced above inflation increases in Child Tax Credit, many families will still be significantly worse off as a result of wider welfare cuts.

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“Many families will still be significantly worse off as a result of wider welfare cuts”



The table below outlines the cuts that have been announced since the June budget and the October Comprehensive Spending Review that are specifically detrimental to women and families.

Cuts relating specifically to women and families	Who this affects	What this will cost
Requiring lone parents with young children to look for work	All unemployed lone parents who have children aged 5–7	Lone parents will be moved from Income Support to Jobseeker’s Allowance, which will require them to actively seek work or face benefit sanctions. Those who remain out of work for 12 months and are receiving help with housing costs will, as a result of wider changes, also face a cut in their Housing Benefit.
Abolition of the Health in Pregnancy Grant	All pregnant women reaching the 25th week of pregnancy	The grant is a universal payment of £190 intended to support mothers with additional costs in the period before childbirth. It will be completely cut from January 2011.
Cut in Sure Start Maternity Grant	Low income mothers reaching the 29th week of pregnancy	The grant is worth £500 to low income women who are expecting a baby. From 2011/12 it will only be payable for a mother’s first child.
Child Benefit freeze and cuts	Child Benefit payments will be frozen for all families for three years from April 2011. Families where one adult member of the household is a higher rate taxpayer will not be entitled to Child Benefit from January 2013.	Freezing Child Benefit will mean that its real terms value falls for millions of households across the UK, and withdrawing it from households with a higher rate taxpayer will mean mothers in these homes are left with lower and less secure incomes.
Abolition of Child Trust Fund	All families with young children	The Child Trust Fund currently provides parents with a voucher worth up to £500 for them to invest on behalf of their newborn children, with an additional payment being made at age 7. The entire scheme will be phased out from 2011.
Tax Credit taper steepened	All working households receiving Tax Credits	The way that Tax Credits are calculated is changing, so that for every £1,000 earned over £6,420 an extra £20 will be lost from a households’ Tax Credit award.



Tax Credit income threshold reduced	All households receiving Tax Credits and earning between £40,000 and £50,000	From April 2011 the Family Element of Tax Credits will start to be withdrawn as earnings reach £40,000 rather than £50,000.
Tax Credit Family Element withdrawn immediately	Any household currently only receiving the Family Element of Tax Credits	From April 2012 the Family Element of Tax Credits will be withdrawn immediately after the rest of the Tax Credit award tapers off, and will cease to be made to a second income threshold.
Tax Credits Baby Element abolished	Any household with a child aged 0–12 months in receipt of Tax Credits	From April 2011 the Baby Element of Tax Credits (worth a maximum of £545 to lower income households) will be abolished.
Tax Credits Toddler Element will not be introduced	Any household with a child aged one or two	In April 2012 the Toddler Element of Tax Credits (which was to have been worth a maximum of £208 to lower income households) will not be introduced.
Tax Credits income disregard for falls in income	Any household in receipt of Tax Credits whose income falls during the year	From April 2012 if household income falls during the year the first £2,500 of the income reduction will not be taken into account when the new Tax Credit award is calculated. This means that households who face income falls will also face an effective cut in their annual Tax Credit entitlement.
Tax Credit income disregards reduced	Any household in receipt of Tax Credits whose income rises compared to the previous year	From April 2013 the amount of income disregarded for Tax Credit purposes when household incomes rise will be reduced to £5,000. This means that families whose incomes rise above this amount will be at a high risk of Tax Credit overpayments.
Tax Credits backdating	Any household making a new or changed Tax Credit claim	From April 2012 Tax Credit awards will only be backdated to one month prior to the claim (currently the backdating period is three months).
Childcare element of Working Tax Credit cut	Any household receiving the Childcare element of Working Tax Credit	The percentage of childcare costs that can be covered by Tax Credits will fall from 80 per cent to 70 per cent. This will mean significant cuts in income for working households.

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“Research commissioned by the TUC shows that female lone parents will lose 18.5 per cent of their net income”

Both working and non-working families will lose from these cuts. Many of the welfare changes will reduce work incentives for those in low-paid jobs. For example, changes that require couples to work for 24 hours between them before they qualify for Working Tax Credit will mean that those who cannot increase their



hours may find that they can no longer afford to work. This is the opposite to the government's stated intention of getting more people off benefits and into work.

As Ruth Lister, professor of Social Policy at Loughborough University and member of the Women's Budget Group, explained in a blog for the TUC, "*although lower income women will benefit from the increase in child tax credits, the eligibility test for means-tested financial support for children cannot take account of where income is not shared fairly within families and hence of any hidden poverty within families. In contrast, child benefit provides mothers directly with a secure source of income, which particularly important if they do not have an independent wage.*"⁴

Amongst those hardest hit by the CSR will be lone parents. Ninety per cent of lone parents are women⁵. Research commissioned by the TUC shows that female lone parents will lose 18.5 per cent of their net income (-£3,121 in cash terms, from an average net income of £16,868). Female single pensioners are set to lose 11.7 per cent of their net income (-£1,326 from an average net income of £11,341).

Teenage mothers are also set to lose because of proposed changes to the Care to Learn grant. Care to Learn provides non-means-tested support for childcare and travel costs for parents up to the age of 20 to help them continue in education and training and enter employment. The government is currently consulting on possible changes to Care to Learn including making it means-tested, reducing the amount paid toward childcare costs, making the scheme discretionary for colleges to administer or reducing the age at which it can be claimed to 18.

Universal Credit

While the proposals for Universal Credit were broadly welcomed by the TUC and in some regards represent an improvement on the current system, there are nonetheless concerns about some aspects of the proposals.

At present the government has not provided enough information for us to assess precisely how families' incomes will change as the Universal Credit is introduced (for example, childcare cost entitlements under the Universal Credit are not determined and the extent to which support with mortgage interest will be available to families in work is unclear).

However, we do know that while the amount of income earned before benefits are withdrawn will increase, and while the rate at which some benefits are tapered will fall, the total maximum award for many working families will also fall (as a

⁴ www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/2010/07/did-the-budget-pass-the-fairness-test-from-the-perspective-of-women-and-families/

⁵ www.gingerbread.org.uk



result of Working Tax Credit being abolished and no equivalent payment being introduced). This means that there are likely to be many losers as the Universal Credit is brought in, particularly among those earning at or slightly above median household incomes (around £23,500) and those working 16 or 30 hours (where additional Working Tax Credit payments would current become available). We also know that families working more than 16 hours are likely to lose further childcare entitlements as a result of the Universal Credit. In relation to childcare costs the White Paper states that *"the aim would be to allocate some of the current support to those working fewer than 16 hours"*.

A recent report by Gingerbread and the Resolution Foundation found that the changes to childcare ushered in with the CSR, combined with the changes proposed under Universal Credit, will act as strong disincentives to work for parents working more than a few hours a week.

The report found that *"While the situation will vary according to the circumstances of each family, in some cases it will trap families below the poverty line, by making them lose 83p of every additional pound earned if they work more than 7 hours a week, rising to 94p in the pound if they work more than 24 hours."*⁶

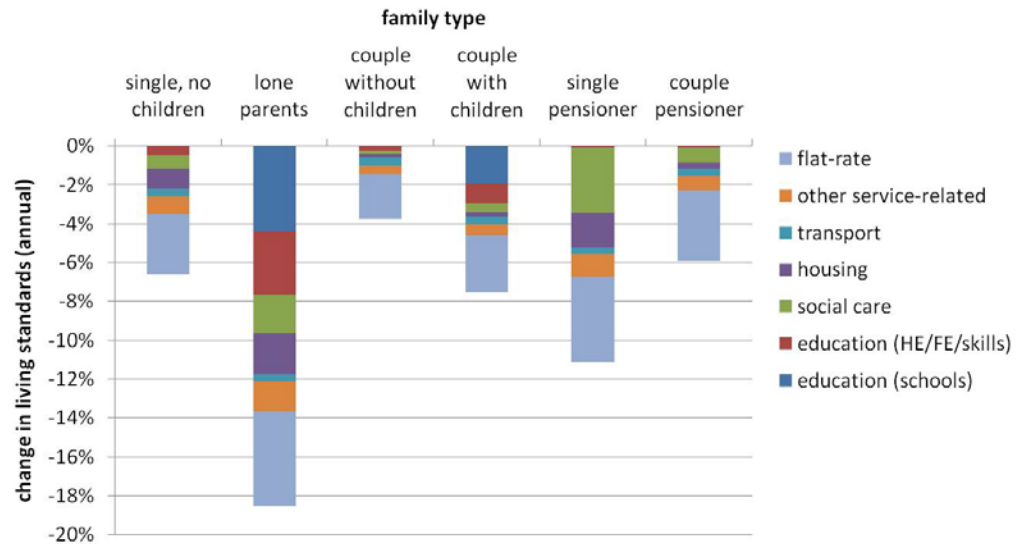
Another worrying aspect of the Universal Credit for women is that the payment will be made to one person within the household (apart from Child Benefit). In a two-parent family, the man is more likely to receive benefits related to work such as Jobseekers Allowance, whereas the mother is more likely to receive Child Tax Credits as well as Child Benefit. If the man becomes the "main applicant", the mother may well lose out. Research has shown that money going into a family via the mother is more likely to be spent on the children than money going into a family via the father⁷.

⁶ <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/uploads/media/28/7219.pdf>

⁷ Goode, J, Callender, C, and Lister, R, 1998 *Purse or Wallet? Gender inequalities and income distribution within families on benefit*, Policy Studies Institute



Effects of spending cuts by family type as percentage of net income, all services⁸:



The research by Howard Reed and the Women’s Budget Group⁹ shows clearly that women are hit hardest by the cuts.

Lone parents and single pensioners are hit hardest by cuts to public services. Over ninety per cent of lone parents and the majority of single pensioners are women. Lone parents are affected more by cuts to further and higher education as well as cuts in housing and social care than couple parents.

Female pensioners lose more than male single pensioners. Among households without children, single women are harder hit than single men or couples with no children. This is largely due to the fact that single women use more social care services than men and are more likely to be in further or higher education.

Housing

Even discounting benefits and tax credits related to children, women still pay £3.6bn (66 per cent) of the net cost of the changes in taxes, benefits and tax credits set out in the 2010 budget compared to men paying £1.9bn (34 per cent) because women are disproportionately affected by housing benefit cuts and the switch to CPI uprating for public sector pensions.

⁸ Howard Reed http://wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports.htm

⁹ http://wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports.htm



Single women are the main recipients of housing benefit. Between 2005 and 2008, 53 per cent of housing benefit claimants were women, compared with 22 per cent of couples and 25 per cent of men¹⁰. As the Women's Budget Group has pointed out "*Caps on Housing Benefit, increased rents for social housing and cuts in expenditure on social housing will impact disproportionately on women, particularly lone parents and those with larger families, many of whom are from minority ethnic backgrounds*"¹¹

As well as cuts to the Local Housing Allowance, there have also been significant cuts to the Supporting People budget which provides funding for projects with homeless people (among others).

The £500 cap on benefits – which will be implemented in 2013 – includes housing benefits.

Single women make up 46% of LHA claimants, compared to 30% who are single men and 20% who are couples. Nearly half (47%) of those affected will have children, of which 32% will be lone parents¹².

Public sector pay freezes and job cuts

Not only will women be worse off as a result of benefit cuts, but women are also likely to be the biggest losers when it comes to public sector pay freezes and job cuts. The main reason for this is the fact that women make up 65 per cent of the public sector workforce. Just under 40 per cent of women's jobs nationally are in the public sector, compared to around 15 per cent of men's jobs. Women's employment in the public sector is strikingly high in some regions. In Merseyside almost 50 per cent (47.7 per cent) of the total female working population are employed in the NHS, schools and caring services.

With at least 500,000 public sector jobs to be axed as a result of the government's spending review, it is likely that at least 325,000 of those losing their jobs will be women. The Office for Budget Responsibility's original forecast for public sector job losses was 610,000. This was revised down to 410,000 in November 2010. In October 2011 the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) predicted that, at the rate of job losses seen over the course of 2011, the total tally of job losses was likely to be closer to the original OBR estimate of 610,000. The CIPD report went so far as to say that all public sector job cuts should be halted:

¹⁰ www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/housing-benefit-and-council-tax-benefit.pdf

¹¹ wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports.htm

¹² www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/lha-eia-nov10.pdf



*"Public sector job cuts in this context would be a false economy – exacerbating weakness in the labour market, adding to unemployment and in turn hindering rather than helping the task of fiscal deficit reduction. A more sensible course would be to delay all further public sector job cuts to the end of this Parliament and, if necessary, into the next."*¹³

In local authorities women make up 68 per cent of the workforce. Predictably, the high proportion of women working in local authorities has meant that a high proportion of women are losing their jobs in local authorities.

According to analysis of Office for National Statistics data undertaken by the GMB union, in the period from the first quarter of 2010 to the second quarter of 2011, the drop in the number of women employed by all council in England and Wales accounted for 66.4% of the total drop in employment in councils.

In the South East of England, the drop in the number of women employed by councils accounted for 75.8% of the total drop in employment over the same period.

Furthermore, the GMB found 19 councils where the drop in the number of women employed account for 100% of the total drop in the numbers employed in these councils. These are North Warwickshire, Lichfield, Powys, Stroud, Canterbury, East Hampshire, Spelthorne, Wealden, Oxford, Pendle, Allerdale, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harlow, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, High Peak, Cotswold, West Somerset, Tonbridge and Malling and South Ribble.

It is not just local government that is seeing extensive job losses. In spite of David Cameron's pre-election claim that he would "cut the deficit, not the NHS", the False Economy website and the Royal College of Nursing have discovered that some 50,000 NHS jobs are set to be cut between 2010 and 2015¹⁴

A survey by the National Association of Head Teachers¹⁵ and the Times Educational Supplement found that up to 12,000 teaching jobs could be lost in 2011 alone due to budget cuts.

Women's unemployment

The gendered effect of these job losses can clearly be seen in the unemployment figures. Women's unemployment is at a 23 year high (1.07million in September 2011). The women's claimant count – the number of women claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) – has been rising steeply and in October 2011 stood at 527,000.

¹³ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/workaudit1011>

¹⁴ <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/more-than-50k-nhs-job-losses>

¹⁵ <http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/comment/key-topics/funding/funding-challenge/>



This represented a 22.5% increase on the previous year. While the male claimant count for the same period stood at over a million, it is rising less rapidly (a 3.1% increase on the year) than the female claimant count.

The labour market statistics for September 2011 revealed that:

- The number of women claiming Job Seeker's Allowance is at its highest level since 1996.
- Women now make up 33.9% of JSA claimants – the highest proportion since the data series began in 1983.
- The number of women made redundant increased 72.3% on the previous quarter.
- 295,000 women have been unemployed for over 12 months, the highest level since Sep – Nov 1994
- 120,000 women have been unemployed for over 24 months, the highest since 1996.
- 701,000 women in involuntary part-time work are the highest figures since 1992.
- There are 1,347,000 women who are economically inactive who said they wanted jobs, an increase of 49,000 – the largest increase since 1992.

In addition to the effect of the cuts and job losses on women's employment, the number of women claiming JSA has also increased partly as a result in changes to the out of work benefits system for lone parents. Since November 2008 single parents with children over a certain age have been required to seek work. The age of the youngest child has been steadily decreasing year on year – from twelve in 2008, to seven in 2010, and to five later this year.

Pay Freeze

For those women who have not lost their jobs and remain working in the public sector, the impact of the public sector pay freeze and cuts to hours will be compounded by the fact that women already tend to work fewer hours and for lower wages than men.

According to UNISON, in 2009 around 1 million public sector employees – the vast majority of them women – were paid less than £7 an hour, accounting for a quarter of all such employees in the UK as a whole. In local government the lowest rates start at £12,145 a year in England and Wales, equivalent to £6.31 an hour



for the 37-hour standard working week common to councils. The lowest rate in the NHS is £6.79 an hour¹⁶.

While the government maintains that the effects of the public sector pay freeze will be mitigated by an exemption for those paid less than £21,000, in reality this is no more than a token gesture.

More women will be affected by the pay freeze than men. Women represent 58 per cent overall of those earning more than the pay freeze threshold, and 73 per cent¹⁷ of those earning more than the pay freeze threshold in those sectors that the government has claimed are protected from cuts (e.g. frontline health and education professionals).

Furthermore, for a public sector employee earning £20,000, the £250 flat rate increase only represents a 0.125 per cent increase. At a time of high inflation and when VAT is at 20 per cent, a 0.125 per cent pay rise for low income workers will represent a decrease in real terms.

The threshold of £21,000 relates to full time equivalent. So, for example, a public sector employee whose full time equivalent salary is £22,000 but who works part time, would not receive the £250 flat rate increase.

It is also worth noting that there is no compulsion on employers to actually give employees the £250 flat rate increase. In local government, the employers decided not to award the increase, meaning that in most local authorities pay has been frozen even for the lowest-paid.

Two tier code

The two-tier code for local government, which ensures that new employees delivering contracted-out services alongside transferred staff benefit from broadly comparable pay, terms and conditions, was abolished in March 2011¹⁸. Given that women make up a large proportion of the workforce in many of these services – such as cleaning and catering – this is likely to impact negatively upon women workers delivering public services.

Gender Pay Gap

The widespread public sector job cuts are likely to increase the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap in the private sector is nearly twice that in the public sector.

¹⁶ Figures from the Unison submission to the Hutton review on Fair Pay
www.unison.org.uk/bargaining/index.asp

¹⁷ Women's Budget Group

¹⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/newsroom/openpublicservices>



“Cutting back on high quality, subsidised childcare will inevitably have the effect of keeping women out of the workplace”

The decrease in women working in the public sector is likely to lead to an increase in the overall gender pay gap.

Women as service users

In the context of 27 per cent cuts to local government funding by 2014–15, a wide range of services that benefit women and families will inevitably be cut or scaled back.

Women are more likely than men to use many services including social care, libraries, education (further education and higher education), early years care services, sexual/reproductive health services, and healthcare services in general.

Sure Start

Although the Sure Start budget has been protected in cash terms, this in fact means a reduction in real terms due to inflation. According to the Day Care Trust and the Financial Times, this translates as a 9 per cent cut in real terms over the four-year period.

Furthermore, the ring-fencing of Sure Start grants will end in 2011/12, which means that many local authorities may choose not to prioritise expenditure on childcare services.

In 2010 the government announced that there would no longer be a requirement to offer full day care facilities at Sure Start children’s centres in the most deprived areas of the country. The government also announced that it would be removing the requirement for Sure Start Children’s Centres to hire someone with both Qualified Teacher and Early Years Professional status and that it would abolish the Children’s Workforce Development Council. Cutting back on high quality, subsidised childcare will inevitably have the effect of keeping women out of the workplace.

Freedom of Information requests by shadow children’s minister Sharon Hodgson MP revealed that 47 Sure Start centres in England had already closed in 2011 or were earmarked for closure due to funding cuts¹⁹ The research also found 80 per cent of those who responded to the FOI request have cut funding in the past year and a further ninety per cent are planning to do so in 2012.

Transport

Reductions to bus subsidies and increases in rail travel costs will have a disproportionate effect on women as women are more reliant on public transport – particularly buses – than men. As a result of budget cuts, more than 70 per cent of local authorities have decided to reduce funding for supported bus services.

¹⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-15334635>



Women are more likely to rely on public transport than men. Only 63% of women have a driving licence compared to 81% of men²⁰. Women over 70 made only a fifth of their trips as car drivers, while men over 70 made more than half their trips as car drivers.

Violence Against Women services

Many campaign groups and voluntary organisations that work on women's rights fear for the future of services used by women. Services from women's refuges, rape and domestic violence support services, abortion and sexual health services, and other services that many women depend upon may all be under threat. A survey carried out in early 2011 by Women's Aid found that more than half of women's Aid domestic violence services across the country did not know if they would be able to remain fully open after March due to funding cuts²¹.

False Economy research in August 2011 into cuts to the voluntary sector – based on Freedom of Information requests to 353 local authorities – found that 63 domestic violence and sexual abuse services had lost nearly £2.5 million, with 8 losing 100% of their funding²².

Legal Aid

The government is proposing extensive reforms of the legal aid system which would mean that legal aid will no longer be available in cases involving welfare, education, debt, family law (except in cases of domestic violence), and will be limited in cases of immigration and housing. People on benefits will no longer be automatically entitled to legal aid.

Women are more likely than men to be affected by legal aid reform as 62.2% of applications for civil legal aid were made by women²³.

The reforms may have dire consequences for victims of domestic violence. The definition of domestic violence in the Bill does not include psychological abuse. In addition, the proposed criteria for eligibility for family legal aid involve onerous levels of evidence of reporting to justice agencies or criminal justice action against the perpetrator. According to Women's Aid "most survivors do not tell justice or

²⁰ www2.dft.gov.uk/pgr/inclusion/women/public-transport-and-women/checklist.pdf

²¹ <http://www.channel4.com/news/half-of-domestic-violence-services-could-lose-funding>

²² <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/exclusive-more-than-2000-charities-and-community-groups-face-cuts>

²³ Legal Services Commission, Equalities Annual Report 2005/6, published June 2007. In 2005/2006 62.2% of 154,153 applications for civil representation in family matters were made by women (and 37.8% by men).



statutory agencies about the domestic violence they are experiencing and most 999 calls result in no further action against the perpetrator”.

According to Stephen Cobb QC, Chairman of the Family Law Bar Association, said:

"If the Government pushes through its proposed cuts to legal aid, the future for family justice looks bleak. This is not a matter of lawyers bemoaning further fee cuts: we have the support of a number of voluntary organisations representing women, children and victims of domestic abuse. These reforms will result in 54,000 fewer people represented in the family courts annually, affecting 68,000 children at the centre of traumatic family breakdown."²⁴

In addition to legal aid cuts, women’s access to justice will also be curtailed by cuts to the EHRC grants programmes (which have provided funding for law centres, Citizens Advice offices and others to do discrimination advice and casework), cuts to Citizens Advice debt counselling services, and cuts to Home Office advice services for newly arrived asylum seekers by more than 60 per cent from March 2011. Many local authorities are also cutting the funding to legal and other advisory services.

Health

In spite of government pledges to protect the NHS, the reality is that many services are being reduced or axed as the NHS is asked to deliver £20bn in ‘efficiency savings’ alongside the tightest financial settlement in many years. At the same time, the government has embarked upon a massive, destabilising and controversial reorganisation of the NHS.

While healthcare affects everyone, there are some specific services which particularly affect women. Many maternity wards have been forced to close. The Royal College of Midwives has been campaigning for 5000 more midwives to be recruited and trained to deal with a chronic shortage of midwives on NHS maternity wards. False Economy used Freedom of Information requests to uncover 50,000 NHS jobs to be cut.

In addition to staff and service reductions and ward closures, the pressures on NHS budgets may well lead to family planning services being reduced, which will have consequences for women's choices and wellbeing.

²⁴ <http://www.familylawweek.co.uk/site.aspx?i=ed86242>



Even if services are not cut altogether, certain treatments which particularly benefit young women at risk of unwanted pregnancy (for example, the contraceptive implant) may be deemed too expensive or there may be reductions in services (such as only opening for one day a week), severely curtailing women's access to services.

The impact of the government's NHS reforms will also affect women as service users. The focus on competition and introducing a fully fledged market into the NHS will lead to postcode lotteries, growing waiting lists and private companies 'cherry-picking' the simpler and more profitable services, leaving an overstretched NHS to pick up the more complex work. The Health and Social Care Bill prioritises competition rather than the collaboration needed to share best practice and innovation.

Unpaid work and the Big Society

Much has been made of the government's notion of a Big Society which will step in to provide some of the services which will inevitably be lost or reduced as a result of the attacks on the public sector and the welfare system.

According to Carers UK, 6 million people in the UK do unpaid care work. Over a lifetime, 7 out of 10 women will be carers²⁵. Carers UK warns that with local authorities receiving an overall reduction in revenue from central Government of 26 per cent "There is a real risk that care and support services will still see deep cuts, unless local authorities prioritise care. Unless they do so, the dignity and independence of older and disabled people will be undermined and more families will be forced out of work and pushed to breaking point to care for them."

Women are more likely than men to plug the gaps caused by reduced funding for care, by becoming informal, unpaid, voluntary carers. Women are also more likely than men to find themselves caught between caring for young children and elderly or infirm relatives.

Women are also more likely to work as paid volunteers in the charity sector. However, with funding for charities and voluntary organisations being squeezed hard (the NCVO website has been collecting data from charities on funding cuts that they have already experienced and has published the results in a spreadsheet: Crowdsourcing the Cuts²⁶) it seems improbable that the voluntary sector will have the capacity or the resources to fill the gaps left by cuts to public services. It is highly likely that the Big Society will in fact mean increasing numbers of women working as unpaid volunteers and carers.

²⁵ <http://www.carersuk.org>

²⁶ <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/cuts>



Pensions

The state pension age for women was due to rise gradually from 60 to 65 by 2020. In 2011, the coalition government announced that it would rise more rapidly, reaching 65 by November 2018 and 66 by April 2020, bringing it in line with men. Under this proposal, by 2020 the state pension age would have been 66 for both women and men.

This was six years earlier than planned, which did not leave the thousands of women affected with enough time to plan for their financial futures.

Following campaigns by Age UK and many trade unions, the coalition government agreed to cap the extra time anyone will have to wait for their state pension to 18 months, thus delaying the second rise in the pension age for men and women from April to October 2020.

Women are already at a disadvantage with regard to state pensions and are more likely to face pensioner poverty than men.

As well as changes to state pensions, women face cuts to their work-based pensions. For instance, public service pensions will be uprated according to the CPI measure of inflation rather than RPI, significantly reducing their value to members over time as CPI tends to be lower than RPI. Many private sector schemes are expected to follow suit.

In the public sector the government has indicated their intention to save £2.8bn per year by 2014-5 by increasing employee contributions to public service pensions.

This increase is in effect an extra tax on public service workers, as the money won't go into improving the schemes, but into the deficit they did nothing to cause.

The government is also looking to reform the public service pension schemes by increasing normal pension ages and changing the design of the schemes, in line with the recommendations of Lord Hutton's report.

Unison has said that more than 3.7 million women could be affected by plans to make them pay more, work longer and receive less pension.

Although the government has indicated that there will be some protection for low paid workers – those earning less than £15,000 (full time equivalent) will not face contribution increases – this means that part time workers (who are predominantly women) stand to lose out. A public sector employee whose full time equivalent salary is greater than £15,000 but who works part time and has take home earnings less than £15,000 will still face increased the full contribution increase.

“There is no reason to believe that the private sector will create enough jobs to offset the drastic job cuts faced by the public sector”



For example, a part-time nurse who earns a FTE salary of £22,000 a year, but might take home half that sum a year, could see her pension contribution almost double.

Women will be disproportionately disadvantaged by this loophole as 84 per cent of part-time public sector workers are women.

No evidence that casualties of public sector cuts will find jobs in the private sector

The coalition government has been optimistic about the private sector's ability to generate new jobs which will offset public sector job losses. There is no reason to believe that the private sector will create enough jobs to offset the drastic job cuts faced by the public sector. There simply is not any evidence to support the government's optimistic expectation that the private sector will keep the jobs market afloat.

In fact, all the evidence points to a reduction in private sector jobs over coming months. The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development have predicted job losses across both public and private sector of 1.6 million jobs by 2016.

Public sector workers who face a pay freeze, have been made redundant or are living in fear of losing their job will have less to spend in their local shops and businesses. As businesses lose profits and people lose jobs, they pay less tax. And cuts will hit the 38p in every £1 of public spending which currently goes to the private sector through buying services and supplies.²⁷

According to the TUC's analysis, even if the next decade sees private sector jobs grow at a faster rate than they did before the recession, it will take over a decade for the jobs lost during the recession, and the public sector job losses that are to come, to be replaced.

There is a fairer alternative

We have been bombarded with the message that we must accept this bitter medicine because it is for our own good and there is simply no alternative. But there are alternatives.

The TUC believes that a fairer and more economically sound approach to bringing down the deficit would be to focus on taxes rather than cuts. While cuts are likely to impact on those on middle and low incomes, taxes can be raised in a way that does not disadvantage the poorest in society and has a less gendered impact. The

²⁷ www.touchstoneblog.org.uk/2010/09/private-sector-will-be-hit-by-cuts/



TUC estimates that £25bn is lost to tax avoidance by wealthy individuals and companies each year.

It is crucial that we question not just the depth of the cuts but also the timetable for the cuts. There is no clear logic to the government's plan to eliminate the deficit by 2014/15. The TUC would like to see decisions on deficit reduction being made on a year-by-year basis.

Trampling on women and low income families is not the way to clamber out of the deficit.



“The unfairness of the government’s attacks on the public sector has been widely recognised, not just by the trade union movement, but by much of the national press”

Summary

We have seen how the government’s attacks on the public sector is having a disproportionate and disastrous effect on women in three main ways:

- More women will lose their jobs simply due to the fact that significantly more women than men are employed in the public sector.
- Women are more reliant on the services that the public sector provides and therefore stand to lose more from cuts to services.
- Women are more likely to depend on the welfare system and will be hit hard by cuts to benefits.

The unfairness of the government’s attacks on the public sector has been widely recognised, not just by the trade union movement, but by much of the national press, the NGO and charity sector, community groups, religious organisations, many academics, and a range of think tanks.

On an almost daily basis, the government announces new policies that will have a negative impact upon women. The abolition of the Women’s National Commission, cut backs and a review of the functions of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and cuts to legal aid are just a few examples of recent government announcements, before and since the CSR, which will have a direct, negative effect on women.

Further sources of information on women and the cuts

The TUC has produced a series of briefings and toolkits around the equality impact of the cuts. *The Equality Duty toolkit* is aimed at trade union negotiators to help them understand the new public sector equality duty and how they can use it. <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20159-f0.cfm>.

The TUC *Women and Cuts Toolkit* builds on the work of Coventry Women’s Voices and provides a wealth of information on what cuts are happening, how they affect women, and how individuals or unions can hold public authorities to account www.tuc.org.uk/womenandcutstoolkit.

Blogs relating to the cuts, welfare reform and equality can be found on the TUC’s Touchstone blog website www.touchstoneblog.org.uk

www.falseeconomy.org.uk is a campaign website where trade unionists and other users can write about their own experience of the cuts and post details of demonstrations, individual union campaigns, and regional campaigns and activities.

Many unions have produced factsheets, briefings, and resources on the cuts and the impact on vulnerable groups. Please check individual union websites for further information.

