

# TERMS OF REFERENCE: INTERIM REVIEW OF FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

## Background

1. On 3 February 2009 Junior Minister Jeffrey Donaldson undertook to bring an interim report to the Executive on funding for women's organisations, in order to secure the best possible return on investment for women and for the communities to which they contribute, across all funding streams. This undertaking was given in the context of the motion as amended and passed, namely:

*"That this Assembly expresses concern about the number of women's organisations that have been unable to secure funding to deliver services for the community; and calls on the Executive to initiate a cross cutting review to ensure (i) that the current mapping of the provision of services is adequate; (ii) the most effective use of resources to address the identified needs of the sector; and (iii) the equitable distribution of those resources."*

## Timescales

2. A nine-month exercise is envisaged, starting in early 2010 and reporting with recommendations to the Executive late 2010.

## Output

3. It is intended that this report will make a significant contribution to future policy development, both in terms of alleviating poverty, disadvantage and social need, and in addressing issues of particular relevance to women.
4. The aim is to provide an interim report for consideration by Ministers on the extent and coverage of government grants to women's groups providing services in their community; the needs they meet; how they support and complement the development and delivery of public policy and services; and future prospects.
5. The review will take account of current and future funding structures, government priorities and competing pressures on reducing budgets.

6. While the focus will be on the role and contribution of community-based women's groups including rural groups, other organisations as well as regional and sub-regional support structures have an important role and will also be examined.
7. The report will take account of financial, policy and academic perspectives.

### **Key Policy Drivers**

8. It is widely accepted that women's groups in the community can have an important role to play in tackling remaining barriers to equality of opportunity, including support for women who are vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion, and encouraging the development of personal ambitions and women's entrepreneurship. Women's groups and organisations have made a wider contribution in encouraging women's active participation in community and public life and politics, and in promoting good relations. While some groups or organisations represent (or are perceived as representing) particular constituencies of interest, there is considerable evidence of co-operation and joint working.
9. Fund-raising has for many groups become a function of survival and a core activity. Many large (and even smaller) groups have multiple funding streams, often project-based, and disjointed funding can result in wasteful staff turnover, loss of skilled staff, and closure of projects.
10. There should be no expectation that government and other public sector funders will be able to maintain or indeed increase the level of funding available. While the interim report is expected to help inform budget considerations, it must be recognised that the context is one of increasing pressure on reducing baselines. The review will consider the need, rationale and results of funding for women's groups, including core funding and funding for particular services (such as childcare). Questions of efficiency and effectiveness must also be addressed.
11. Integrated regulatory and equality impact assessment will be conducted throughout all stages of the review.

### **Interdependencies**

12. In considering the effectiveness of funders' work with women's groups, for example in advancing dynamic Programme for Government priorities, past and current reviews and related work by government departments and other funders will be taken into account.
13. This interim review of funding will inform the mid-term review of the Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016.
14. In respect of childcare, account will be taken of the current work on childcare provision of the Inter-Ministerial Group on Children and Young People.

### **Funders' Roles and Responsibilities**

15. As part of its wider rights and equality remit, OFMDFM has lead policy responsibility for promoting gender equality across government, and for supporting other Departments in addressing the gender inequalities which lead to poverty, particularly acknowledging women's vulnerability to poverty e.g. lone parents, carers, low earners, older women who have inadequate pensions (Gender Equality Strategy, 2006).
16. DSD has wide ranging policy and funding responsibilities, including in relation to implementing programmes reflecting social need, and effective partnership with the voluntary and community sector; and has taken lead responsibility for the participation of women in marginalised and disadvantaged communities, engaging with other Departments that have an interest (Positive Steps, 2005). DARD has an important contribution particularly through its rural development strategy, and many other Departments and public bodies have an interest in the work of women's groups.

### **Project Governance**

17. In compiling the interim report, OFMDFM will work closely with all Departments. DSD will have a particular contribution on account of their unique knowledge of the voluntary and community sector, and their history of effective funding relationships with women's organisations providing support and services to disadvantaged communities.

18. It is proposed that OFMDFM and DSD will jointly chair a cross-departmental Steering Group, supported by a Review Team to undertake the review and report to the Executive.
19. It will be vitally important, at all stages, to engage with key stakeholders across the women's sector and the wider community and voluntary sector, to take account of their unique experience, history, aspirations and views, and to involve a representative range of the organisations providing support and services to disadvantaged communities.
20. The OFMDFM Gender Advisory Panel will have a key role. It is proposed that they will be invited to act in a reference capacity to the Steering Group. Key voluntary and community sector stakeholders will also be invited to comment and advise. Groups and individuals will be encouraged to take part and make their views known.
21. The academic research will use existing research available within the women's sector, to ensure that any research captures the work and voice of grassroots women.
22. Roles and governance arrangements, as well as the project organisation, will reflect this broad involvement.

### **Resources and Budget**

23. To enable the project, funding provision of up to £60,000 will be made available for consultancy, academic research and stakeholder engagement. All other costs will be notional ie undertaken as part of the priority work funded from existing OFMDFM and DSD baselines.
24. Published research and information provided by various sectoral interests will be taken into consideration.

### **Key Activities**

25. While all activities should be proportionate so that the review is delivered on time and to budget, a full examination will include:

- An overview of current and prospective funding streams, and the likely impact of RPA.
- The contribution of women's groups and the needs they address, and the role of women's groups across other jurisdictions..
- Analysis of the rationale, effectiveness and impact of government funding for women's groups taking account of key relevant research, including analysis of capacity and sustainability.
- The continuing basis of need for earmarked funding specifically for women's groups (with reference to Programme for Government priorities),
- Good practice exemplars will be described.
- The potential for sources of funds outside the public sector and for social enterprise will also be considered.
- The future role of women's groups will be considered, in the context of a strategic approach to community development support and the principles (including equality of opportunity, need, and sustainability) which might usefully support such an approach.
- Addressing stakeholder issues: Internal and external stakeholders will be identified and their roles, responsibilities and potential influence on the review scoped and agreed from the outset.
- Managing expectations and embracing change will inevitably be part of this review and its outcomes. It will be important to seek to secure ownership and buy-in, focusing on commonly shared values and visions, and building commitment to action on a shared foundation.
- A report will be provided for consideration by Ministers on the extent and coverage of government grants to women's groups and organisations providing services in their community (referring also to regional and specialist groups); the needs met by these groups; how they support and complement the development and delivery of public policy and services;

potential duplication and overlap; and future prospects, including the possible future infrastructure and shape of the women's sector locally.

- Project management techniques will be applied throughout.
- A communications strategy will be developed with the aim of keeping stakeholders informed of the project's progress.

### **Next Steps**

23. The first meeting of the Steering Group will take place in January 2010.