



Conference Report

Strengthening the Women's Sector in the North East

Durham Marriott Hotel (Royal County)
23rd March 2010

This conference was supported by:



My Afghani Heroine

My heroine, the woman who escaped war, power, greed
The woman whose husband was kidnapped and later killed
She's left with a broken heart, a broken home.
Four years on, a refugee today, living in the North East of
England and somehow she is able to receive communication of
this North East Women's conference and there she is, telling her
story.

Her story is not that of, anger, loss and tragedy of a war. The
greed of men with political power who are responsible for
stealing her family, her home, her land, but actually today it's of
her passion, to bring women together, for her she places
importance of women's space, 'SistersTogether' is the birth of
this.

I am sat watching her carefully, admiring her, wondering what
her experiences have been like, but amazed by her energy and
passion for wanting women of all herstories to have a space. With
her candy pink lipstick, lavender shade eye shadow and her
beautifully embroidered shawl placed elegantly on her head, she
tells me about her success of being awarded several thousands of
pounds from the Big Lottery and a thousand or so from a local
funder to help her simply create a space to bring women
together. Her success, which I know many women here in England
did not take part in, is celebrating International Women's Day.
She believes in International Women's Day, she believes in the
strength of Women, she believes in Freedom. She made me
believe that much more than I ever did before. The woman who
escaped the war in Afghanistan. My heroine.

Ms. Jaya Gajparia

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1. Introduction

This is a report of a strategic fundraising conference hosted by NEWomen's Network in March 2010. The conference was the result of collaboration between NEWomen's Network, Women's Resource Centre and the National Equalities Partnership. The aims of the event were as follows:

- a) To promote the value of the women's sector in the North East
- b) To share our experience and expertise to explore how best to sustain women's community voluntary organisations

The objectives of the event were as follows:

- Share knowledge and information about women's inequality in the North East
- Promote the role of the women's sector in challenging and changing women's inequality
- Connect with national debates about commissioning and explore the impacts upon the women's sector
- Identify links between the investment priorities of funding bodies and the purposes and objectives of women's organisations
- Provide practical peer-led workshops for women's groups and organisations

National Equality Partnership commissioned Michelle Golding to make a film of the conference -

<http://www.michellegolding.co.uk/#!/preview/4539894507>

The conference programme is in appendix 1.

The primary audience for the conference was women's voluntary and community organisations and groups across the North East funders. Commissioners and voluntary sector support agencies were also invited.

- 70% (45) of the delegates were from women's organisations and groups in the North East
- 30% (20) delegates were from public sector agencies, support agencies, funding agencies or other agencies

The delegates list is in appendix 3.

2. Background and Context

NEWomen's Network's purpose is to strengthen the women's sector and to ensure the survival of women's organisations and groups. We intend to achieve this by:

- Building a sustainable women's sector through collaboration and partnership between women's organisations

- Promoting and enhancing the role of the women's sector organisations and groups in delivering economic regeneration and tackling the root causes of women's economic disadvantage in the North East
- Developing a feminist culture within the women's sector by putting into action alternative and different ways of thinking, being and doing
- Educating widely to promote gender equality and ensuring that the women's sector is equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to ensure it's survival
- Campaigning for decision makers and funding bodies to acknowledge the systematic disadvantage women face because of gendered inequality and to recognise the essential services and expertise the women's sector provides

Women's voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in the North East provide free, and often life saving, services to women from all walks of life and lobby for better laws to end discrimination against women; but many of these women's sector organisations are in danger of being closed down. The national "why women?" campaign is speaking up for women's organisations, which do great work for women and society as a whole, but are under threat from lack of funding.

There are over 200 women's VCOs across the North East registered on NEWomen's Network database. In a recent survey conducted by NEWomen's Network, women's organisations in the North East said that they were responding to a broad range of issues including health issues, violence against women, gender equality, education and training and economic disadvantage. Women's sector organisations approach women's issues in a holistic way, by seeking to empower women individually and collectively to identify their own solutions and by carrying out research and campaigning to improve the position of women in society and the economy and ultimately to eliminate gendered inequality. Research conducted by the Women's Resource Centre in 2009¹ found that the North East had the lowest number of women's VCOs of all the English regions and they were most likely to be facing closure. Our own survey later in the same year found that 42% of women's VCOs had lost funding in the last 12 months and were providing fewer services and spaces for women (see survey findings in appendix 2).

3. Presentations

The following presentations were delivered:

Women's inequality in the North East and the response of the women's sector - Sue Robson, [NEWomen's Network](#)

NEWomen's Network are calling for policy and decision makers and funding bodies in the North East to put women back on the agenda by:

¹ From Not just bread, but roses, too: Funding to the women's voluntary and community sector in England 2004-07, Women's Resource Centre (2009)

- acknowledging the systematic disadvantage women face because of gendered inequality
- publicly recognising the essential services and expertise the women's sector provides

The sustainability of the women's sector and overview of Social Return on Investment - Tania Pouwhare, [Women's Resource Centre](#)

Want to demonstrate the economic, social and environmental impacts of your work to funders, commissioners, policy makers and your supporters? With competition for resources increasing, we want to make sure that women's organisations are able to make the best possible case when seeking funds. WRC are working with 5 women's organisations in London for this unique capacity-building and research pilot project on using Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to evaluate and communicate the economic, social and environmental impacts of women's organisations and the work they do.

Intelligent Commissioning - Pauline Kimantas, National Association of Community and Voluntary Action ([NAVCA](#))

Public bodies achieve their objectives through a variety of routes, either by carrying out activities directly or by dealing with outside parties. In broad terms this process can be described as 'commissioning'. The term covers the entire cycle of assessing the needs of people in a local area, designing services and then securing them. Good commissioning practice encompasses working in partnership with statutory, voluntary and private sector partners, service providers, service users and local communities to ensure a broad understanding and proper consideration of the full range of possible delivery options.

The full presentations can be found at www.newwomens.net. Biographies of speakers and workshop leaders are in appendix 4.

4. Discussions

The presentations were followed by group discussions and the key points were fed back from each of eight tables. The types of issues discussed were as follows, in order of frequency:

- Understanding and influencing local decisions and commissioners
- Understanding and influencing funding bodies
- The value and importance of the women's sector in the North East and better evidencing of this
- Capacity building, support and infra-structure needed
- Further learning needed
- Improving collaboration between women's organisation
- Pressures (due to lack of time and resources)

Summaries follow of the clusters of issues discussed:

Understanding and influencing local decisions and commissioners

- Top down financing- learning how to engage in and influence commissioning processes
- Trust- understanding the importance of building strong single relationships with commissioners and exploring the possibility of using networks as a conduit for representing smaller organisations and providing voices to funders
- The NE local authorities are unique in providing a lot of services themselves, women's organisations need to prepare themselves for future reassessment of priorities and potential outsourcing of more work to voluntary sector.
- Recognising the importance of addressing women's organisations under-representation in LSPs etc. and understanding the need to get involved in local government and the practical limitations associated with it
- Women's preferences not understood
- Still have to justify 'Women's only'
- Offer our services in helping meet targets
- Too much distance between grassroots Women's organizations and commissioner are need to campaign - Onerous burden to "prove" worth/value
- New services don't utilize existing services in areas - don't see the value and expertise of women's organizations or women's preferences.
- Need to raise the understanding of the equalities issues within procurement and contracting
- Services being standardized - no weight given to women's, BME etc.
- Not being delivered to a standard group of people
- Not proactive. Build capacity both sides - each needs to take a step towards each other.
- Difference 'divide and rule' similarities with private sector who can be doing something good in community. 3rd sector organisations who are trading
- They are not expert yet so need to be challenged.
- Not popular at moment. Given poor support themselves.
- Commissioners may work in one small area, but we may need to look at a bigger picture
- Little time for them to talk with small groups
- More about paper trails than building relationships with groups to fund
- North East - real local community support but now that help needs to be formalized, regulated and formalized
- Public sector needs to understand ethos of VCS - structuring staff, setting up management committees etc. (then no sustainability)
- Commissioners need to understand social enterprise - are they always not for profit? Or social investment?
- Complexity of procurement/commissioning means there may be a move to large contracts
- Conscious choices business planning!
- Partnerships - always happened but now for different reasons and more structured and formal

- Help in place for partnerships (fear of being taken over)
- Procurement processes - takes a lot of time, cash flow from getting tender to getting money
- If you try to get help from local authority, end up more confused, differences in advice

Understanding and influencing funding bodies

- Understanding how important it is to communicate with the NE funder's forum
- Understanding the importance of knowing local funding opportunities, e.g. new money available for VAW work
- Charitable funders are already funding women's organisations but they may be taken for granted. Their focus seems to be on the VAW sector and other issues are being lost, subsequently other organisations need to fight harder for funding. It is important that we put forward the stats (highlighted by Sue and Tania) to inform funders of the gaps. It is also essential that women's organisations (or support organisations) identify local networks of funders that we need to target.
- Need to gain access to funding in order to undertake a specific community group. (1st stop on the ladder)
- Who you know matters - need good contacts in funding bodies, relationship building etc
- If funders have any doubts, should come and look at the organisation, e.g. Big Lottery Fund
- More info about why/how decisions are made
- Very brief explanations (or nothing) feedback from rejected funding applications

The value and importance of the women's sector in the North East and better evidencing of this

- The importance of women's organisation in tackling gender inequality
- The role of networks in integrating communities and cultures, sharing skills and good practice
- Hidden talent, resource in the community - offer support skill and resource
- Inspire motivate grass roots - Women's groups not recognised.
- Organic chain of support - important not to break the links and don't underestimate the strength and importance of these links.
- Social Return on Investment (SROI) - learning about this tool and discovering support and potential funding from community foundations on this topic
- Use statistics available more
- Social return from resources
- Noting the wider levels of inequality in the NE and the lack of research and information in this area
- Not enough success stories shared. Culture of VCS - celebrate it
- Develop and spread good practice
- Set up groups need to get charity understand what they want to do
- What is social purpose etc.?
- Small groups - can 'promote' democracy and involvement

- Need to share good practice/achieves blow trumpet develop strategy around this
- Success stories good examples showing good practice
- Case studies
- Marketing
- Information up to date collecting statistics

Capacity building, support and infra-structure needed

- Immigration status can prevent women from taking ESOL classes or receiving the education and training they need. Members from our table thought that the second-tier could be able to help with issues of childcare to enable women to access services.
- Need structural support.
- Support the supporters - where do the seeds come from?
- How do we build capacity? i.e. get people involved and supported and coming forward
- Mentoring/supporting
- Respect and value advocacy when/where Organisations can't be "present"
- Those organizations that should/could support women's organizations
- NEWN funding reducing, but needs of organisation growing
- Councils wish to support service providers, may not support infra structures such as NEWN.
- CVS organisations may not have capacity themselves need to work together too.
- Support agencies should generate money themselves from the people they help. People often not used to paying - may value more.
- Go to other organisation for advice/support groups becoming more protective about what they know
- Supporting women managing their new orgs money/finances manage
- In the northeast lobbying but learning how to lobby (e.g. David Milliband)

Further learning needed

- The group thought maybe we could learn from examples of good practice e.g. Calderdale Women's Centre (engagement in local decision making)
- Issues surrounding access, e.g. learning about the barriers to women participating in services provided by women's organisations
- Training and education for us all re commissioning etc
- What are the opportunities? Do we know?
- Language used is a barrier - jargon
- Language (puts people off e.g. 'procurement') jargon, barrier, information is power - Need somewhere to go for help to decipher
- Mixed messages - involve the community but jargon etc puts people off from doing this - Plain English campaign
- Don't be frightened of asking questions (politically correct)
- Important to be objective when identifying 'learning'

- Share 'failure' - learn! 'reflective practice'
- Some organisations closed) - should share info and skills it help all - 'forced' through funding
- Replicating good/bad practice/ particular situations may not work personal approaches and responses Influence.

Improving collaboration between women's organisation

- Finding out about the support available between different women's organisations
- Stronger together and understanding the power of a unified voice
- The importance of networking
- Communicate better, make more fuss when organisations close
- More power together - share strengths
- Increased competition - Collaborations for different reasons
- Collaboration/trust/openness identify common goods/aims/needs/strengths/share costs/reduce overheads
- More on collaboration and partnerships

Pressures (due to lack of time and resources)

- Do we have the resources to do things we should even though we see their importance?
- Because we don't have the staff only time to glance at things which are now essential.
- Need to donate time to issues which means day to day needs may be neglected
- To prevent closure, must address long term issues
- Takes lots of time to apply for money - may find waste of time.
- Increasing needs but diminishing money
- VCS becoming fragment because of competition and groups closing
- BAME sector - has diminished - key funding streams came to an end
- Trying to do job and get money at the same time

Other issues raised in discussion

- More male support for workers for domestic violence misrepresentation of gender equality
- Improvements over 20 years - but still groups losing funding e.g. BME
- Providing services to women's? - is not discrimination - we have gone back 20 years.
- Can undermine individuals and other people on journey if take too much 'credit' for turning people over around
- You don't 'own' clients/completion - climate - i.e. personalisation agenda discourages collaboration
- If you become specific in what you deliver some women may not fit into a limited definition
- Can count person more than once (WNF) if you pass them to other organisation encourages organisations to work together for public benefit

5. Workshops

Challenging funding decisions by public bodies - The workshop will give a brief introduction to the Compact, what it is, what its basic principles are and how it can be used both before and after something goes wrong. Real life case studies were used to illustrate how the Compact has been used to resolve disputes. The workshop also looked at basic Public Law principles including the Gender Equality Duty, and how to use these when challenging funding decision. It will give advice about how and when to challenge, and where to go for advice and support. Presented and facilitated by Ingela Andersson, Compact Advocacy Project.

Successful collaboration between support agencies and women's VCOs - presented and facilitated by Jaya Gajparia, National Equality Partnership

Developing effective partnerships: A Feminist response to competition and commissioning - presented and facilitated by Vivienne Hayes, Chief Executive, Women's Resource Centre

Generating income from Social enterprise

- *What is social enterprise?*
- *Are you already operating in a socially enterprising way?*
- *What are you already doing - share ideas and develop social enterprise ideas*
- *What does this mean to the organisation - book keeping, charging for service delivery, change of philosophy, change of management, banking, and working out how any profits are used. Long term plans.*

The workshop was totally interactive with participants contributing and learning from each other and ideas. Presented and facilitated by: Lesley Kirton - YWCA England and Wales

Generating income from social enterprise

- What is social enterprise?
- The social enterprise journey - the 'what?' and the 'why?'
- If this is a new direction for your organisation, do you think your organisation has what it takes?
- Could your organisation increase or maximise its income by using existing resources e.g. your building, equipment, staff and services?
- Research matters - what's out there? How will yours be different?
- Risk assessment - will '*commercialisation*' benefit your organisation or will it distract you from your original mission?
- Is your Management Committee or Board geared up for this?
- What options are there?
- Who will be involved? Who can help?
- Sources of funding and assistance
- Consolidate or collaborate?
- Your next steps - What? How? Who? When?

Lola Ibadon, Social Enterprise Advisor, The Enterprise Team

(Local Enterprise Growth Initiative - LEGI), Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Success in securing grants from Charitable Trusts

A panel discussion looking strategically about how to develop relationships with funders and identifying top tips for successful fundraising from charitable trusts, presented and facilitated by:

- Cullagh Warnock - Northern Rock Foundation
- Derry Nugent - Community Foundation
- Patricia Lowes - The Big Lottery Fund

Intelligent Commissioning - This workshop provided an opportunity to find out more about good commissioning, how to challenge bad practice and useful resources. It was based on national and local perspectives and experiences. Presented and facilitated by Pauline Kimantas - Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit Manager NAVCA

Making independent money by setting up a for-profit enterprise

With the economic downturn making it harder to secure funds from the government and charitable trusts, WRC has started looking at how it can generate its own independent income. This practical workshop looked at how WRC has set up a for-profit research and evaluation consultancy business and share learnings. Presented and facilitated by Tania Pouwhare, Head of Policy, Women's Resources Centre

Successful Tendering to secure contracts and services - Understanding the culture of tendering, Understanding strategy context, Working together, Hold your nerve.....Presented and facilitated by Julia Lyford, Fourth Action and Northumberland Community Development Network

6. Evaluation of event

There were 65 delegates at the event and 59% (38) of these completed and returned evaluation forms.

1. Please indicate the figure that best describes your satisfaction with the following (1 is low satisfaction and 3 is high satisfaction)	1	2	3	Rating average
Pre- event information	0	13	22	2.6
Clarity of this information	0	13	22	2.6
Organisation of the event	0	7	28	2.8
Amount of notice given	0	9	26	2.7
Location	0	9	26	2.7
Venue	0	8	27	2.8
Food and refreshments	1	5	29	2.8
Accessibility of venue	0	11	24	2.7
Accessibility of event itself	0	11	24	2.7

2. How far do you think the conference met its key purposes?	Not at all	Partly	Fully
To promote the value of the women's sector in the North East		7.9%	92.1%
To share our experience and expertise to explore how best to sustain women's community voluntary organisations		15.8%	84.2%

3. How far do you think the conference met its objectives?	Not at all	Partly	Fully
Share knowledge and information about women's inequality in the North East		26.3%	73.7%
Promote the role of the women's sector in challenging and changing women's inequality		40.5%	59.5%
Connect with national debates about commissioning and explore the impacts upon the women's sector		35.1%	64.9%
Identify links between the investment priorities of funding bodies and the purposes and objectives of women's organisations	2.6%	47.4%	50.0%
Provide practical peer-led workshops for women's groups and organisations		23.7%	76.3%

4. Please rate the following in relation to their relevance and usefulness to your organisation or group, 1 low and 3 being high	1	2	3	Rating average
<i>Women's inequality in the North East and the response of the women's sector - NEWomen's Network</i>	0	6	28	2.8
<i>The sustainability of the women's sector and overview of Social Return on Investment - Women's Resource Centre</i>	1	3	29	2.9
<i>Intelligent Commissioning - National Association of Community and Voluntary Action (NAVCA)</i>	0	10	23	2.7
Table discussions	0	9	25	2.7

Final plenary session				
	0	7	18	2.7

6. Please rate the workshops you attended in relation to their relevance and usefulness to your organisation or group, 1 low and 3 being high	1	2	3	Rating average
Challenging funding decisions by public bodies	0	3	7	2.7
Successful collaboration between support agencies and women's voluntary and community organisations	0	4	13	2.8
Successful collaboration and partnerships between women's organisation and groups	0	2	8	2.8
Generating income from social enterprise	0	2	1	2.3
Success in securing grants from Charitable Trusts	0	4	9	2.7
Intelligent Commissioning	0	3	10	2.8
Making independent money by setting up a for-profit enterprise	0	4	2	2.3
Successful tendering to secure contracts to deliver services	0	3	2	2.4

Other comments about the conference:

- Great day, great for networking too
- Fab - more please.
- Brilliant
- Thank you
- It was an educational experience that cannot be described by any words - simply brilliant
- Lots of information on organisations that one doesn't know they exist
- It's a good way of sharing and integrating cultural and traditional and to unit to tackle issues as one
- It was really interesting
- These kind of meeting conference being my first time to attend I collected lots of information and meet many important and women who can help a community to succeed
- It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity and thank you very much and I hope you all the success you deserve.
- The organising was great and met lovely people with diverse experience
- Very well organised conference Very informative and lots of learning Thanks
- Very useful to meet grassroots groups! Lots of learning Thanks for inviting me!

- *Very informative, useful networking and information about funding and Intelligent Commissioning*
- *Great to see the diversity of women in organisations across the North East working to sustain the women's sector - Thank you*
- *Wonderful*
- *It is very nice and good*
- *The conference was great use in building links and exchanging information*
- *The fact that some bits were not high value was due to our organisations needs, not shortcomings in the event*
- *Excellent event - well done*
- *Well done*
- *Wonderfully diverse - very refreshing extremely relevant*
- *Thought provoking and pertinent*
- *Great to get 'like-minded' women together*
- *Enjoyed the wide range of women's organisations represented*
- *It was very good networking experience of meeting people from a wide sector*
- *The information from workshops was useful in terms of taking it back to our organisations*
- *I have ticked partly on some comments as there was not enough time to cover these areas fully on the day. Very impressed by the day and the responses of all*
- *Loved it - very affirming!*
- *It was just great, well organised and attended and a high level of contribution and debate, the diversity was strong.*
- *It was great to have the opportunity to meet and hear from women involved in women's organisations and networks and to hear the strength of the call for public services to understand the value of the sector as suppliers in the widest possible way. The Social Return on Investment model aligns closely with some of the work the Commission is doing to gain a better understanding of how the value and impact can be evaluated against a much broader range of social and economic benefits.*
- *Having two workshops in the room was distracting and made it difficult to concentrate*

The following comments came by email and text after the event:

- *I could not stop talking about the event and how enlightening it was. Thank you and well done! - Funlola Shobo, Community Restore, Middlesbrough*
- *Thanks. It was an excellent day - Paula, Durham County Council*
- *Many thanks for an informative and fun day yesterday, I know these events take a lot of organising, so once again many thanks - Eva Women's Aid*

- *Just wanted to say well done to you and the other organisers for putting together an important and really well organised event - Kate Mukungu, Tyneside Women's Health*
- *Thank you for a lovely day and all your hard work - Shamshad*
- *I just want to say that it was a great day! Extremely interesting and engaging with a wonderful array of women, great presentations, exceptional insight into difficult issues - A real learning experience, and expertly organised. Plus super friendly atmosphere, both at the conference and from the hotel staff - Karen Constantine, Head of National Equality Partnership*
- *What a successful event - thanks and well done to you and the network - Vivienne Hayes, Chief Executive, Women's Resource Centre*
- *Yesterday brill - thanks - Sue Donague, Sunderland MIND*
- *Congratulations on a successful conference. We really enjoyed and found it useful - Shruti Jain, Chair of Sangini*
- *Thank you for a very informative and enjoyable day x - Kathy Lloyd, Tees Valley Women's Centre*
- *Congratulations again... yesterday's event was great - Rebecca Veazey, Women's Resource Centre*
- *It was lovely to meet you and other interesting people. It was a wonderful event for strengthening women's confidence in the northeast and your event is very important for keeping us informed of the new ideas and new development. Thank-you - Wen Cai, Sunshine Project*
- *I'm pleased that people enjoyed it as much as I did. It was one of the most useful conferences I've been to this last financial year. It was really informative but not stuffy, and I learnt a load of new facts and figures to spout off to people. It's just nice to go into a conference and instantly feel comfortable. The workshops were great, and again the feeling of camaraderie, support and 'in the same boat' attitude meant that we could really get down to it, and be open about our issues. People were genuinely helpful about trying to work around issues. I met a load of people I hadn't seen in years which was fantastic. Venue and food was great as well. You did fantastic! - Justine King, BECON*

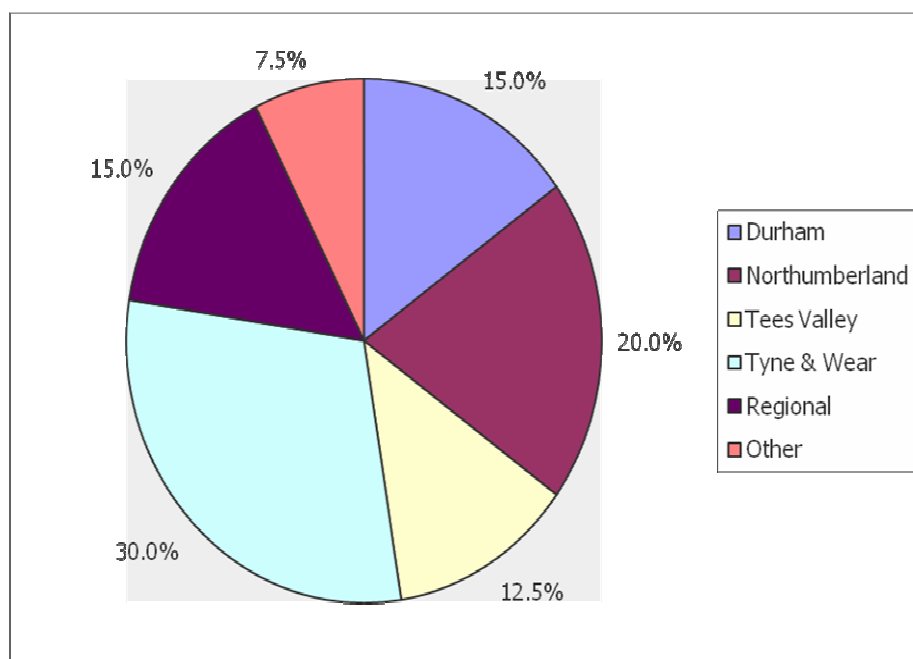
Appendix 1: Conference Programme

Programme

9.30 am	Arrival and coffee Participatory evaluation exercise
10.00 am	Welcome and Introduction Umme Imam, Angelou Centre
10.10 am	<i>Women's inequality in the North East and the response of the women's sector</i> Sue Robson, NEWomen's Network
10.25am	<i>The sustainability of the women's sector and overview of Social Return on Investment</i> Tania Pouwhare, Women's Resource Centre
10.40am	<i>Intelligent Commissioning</i> - Pauline Kimantas, National Association of Community and Voluntary Action (NAVCA)
10.55am	Questions for clarification
11.15am	Coffee Break
11.35 am	Table discussions What is the significance of what you have heard/ learnt this morning? <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ For women's voluntary organisations▪ For support agencies▪ For commissioners
12.05pm	Feedback from discussions
12.45pm	LUNCH
1.00pm	Workshops
2.15pm	Break
2.30pm	Workshops
3.45pm	Plenary
4.15pm	Participatory evaluation exercise
4.30pm	Close

Appendix 2: 'Health of the Women's Sector Survey (Nov 2009)

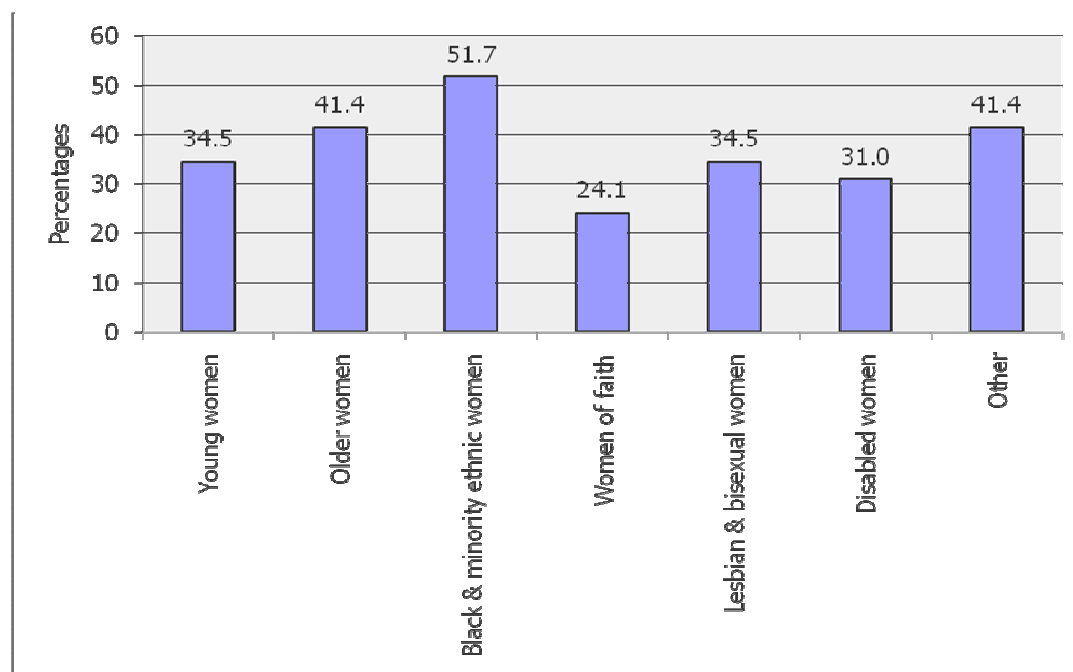
1. Where is your women's group/organisation located?



Other

- International but based in the North East
- International
- Also setting up women's Interfaith groups regionally
- Peterlee

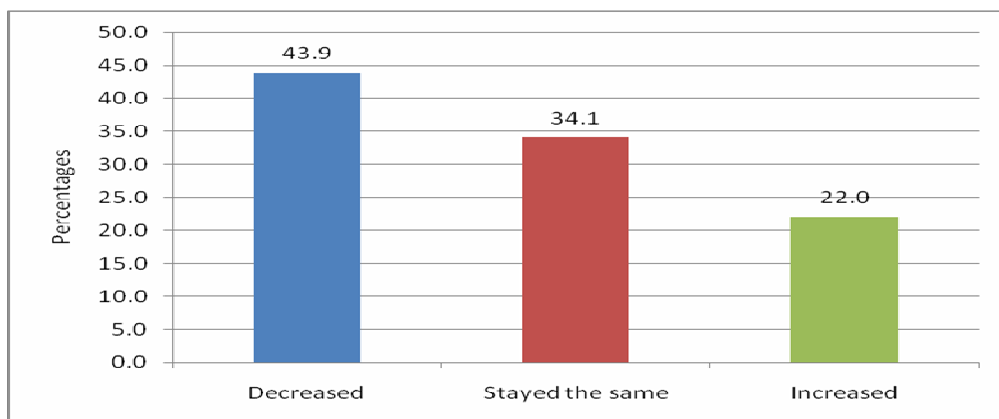
2. Is your organisation specifically for particular groups of women?

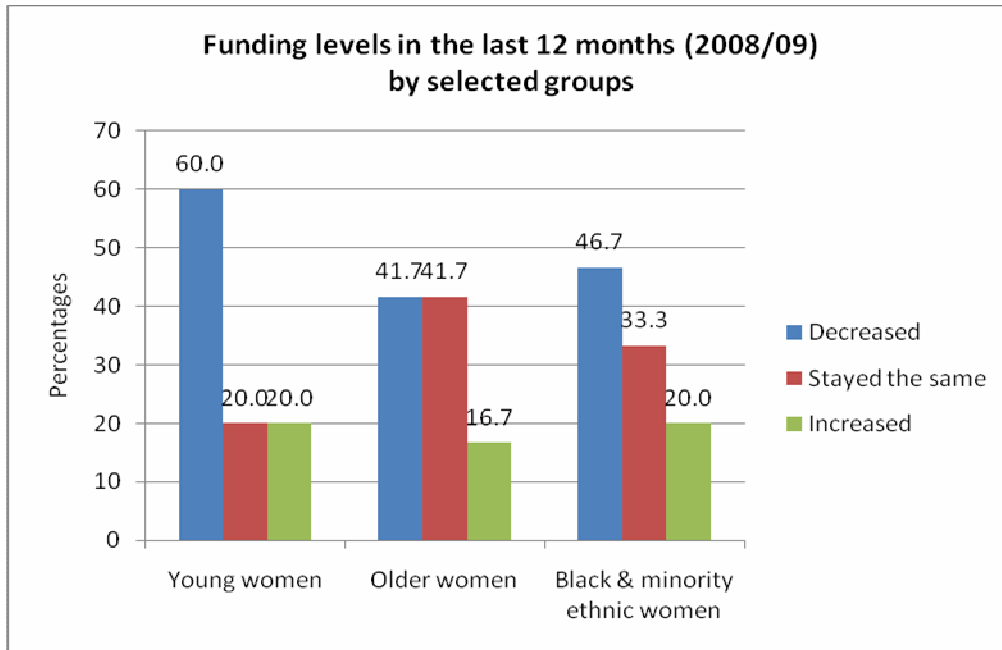


Other comments about groups of women targeted

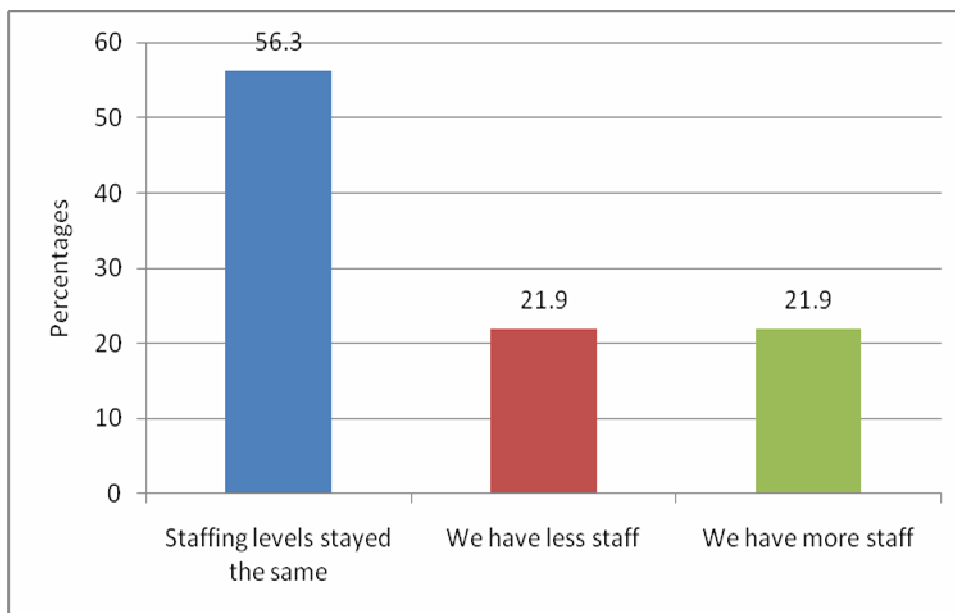
- All ages and groups any faith or orientation
- All plus parents/carers, unemployed women and women with mental health issues
- Charity for women with breast cancer
- Women offenders
- Women with mental health and wellbeing needs
- All women over the age of 16yrs
- Any women interested in starting or growing a business
- All women irrespective of strands
- All women suffering domestic violence
- Any women over 16 years of age living or working in South Tyneside Borough
- Women who have experienced domestic abuse
- Survivors of rape / sexual abuse

3. Have your funding levels reduced, increased or stayed the same over the last 12 months?

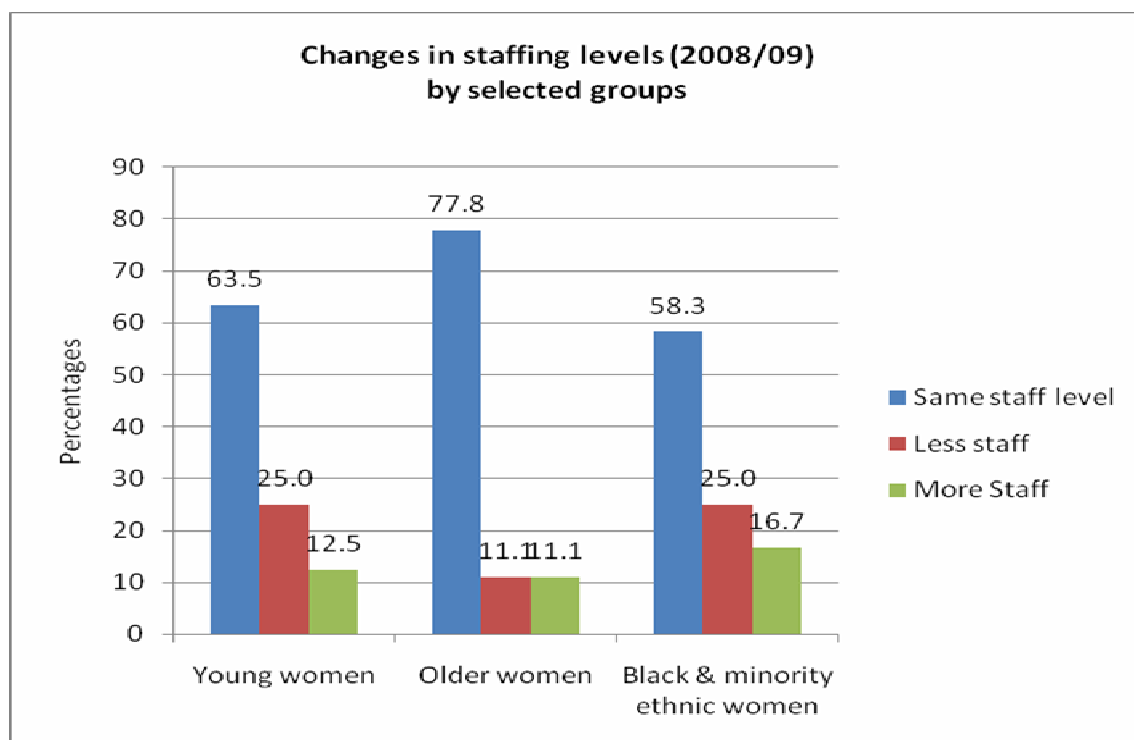




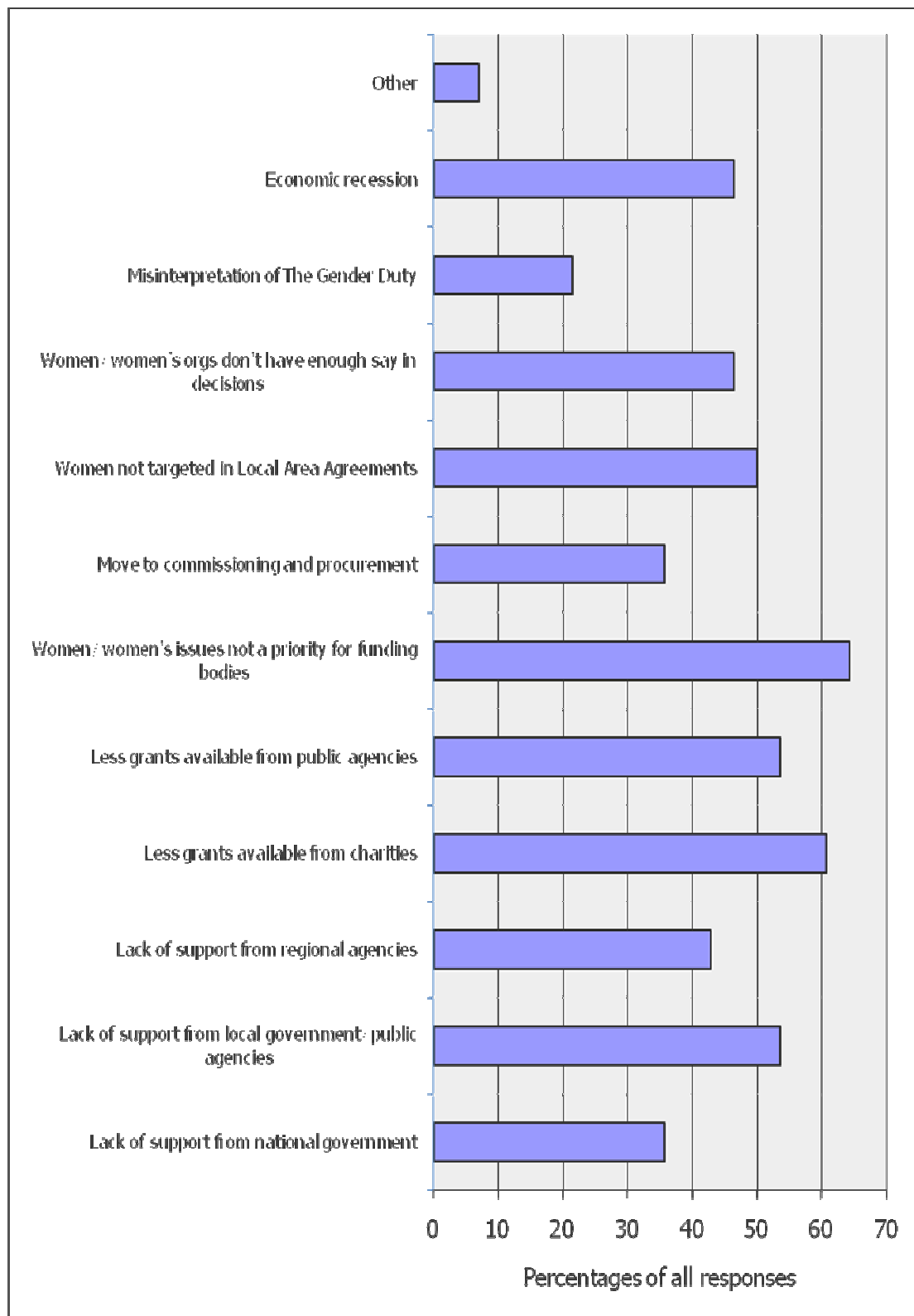
4. Have your staffing levels reduced, increased or stayed the same?



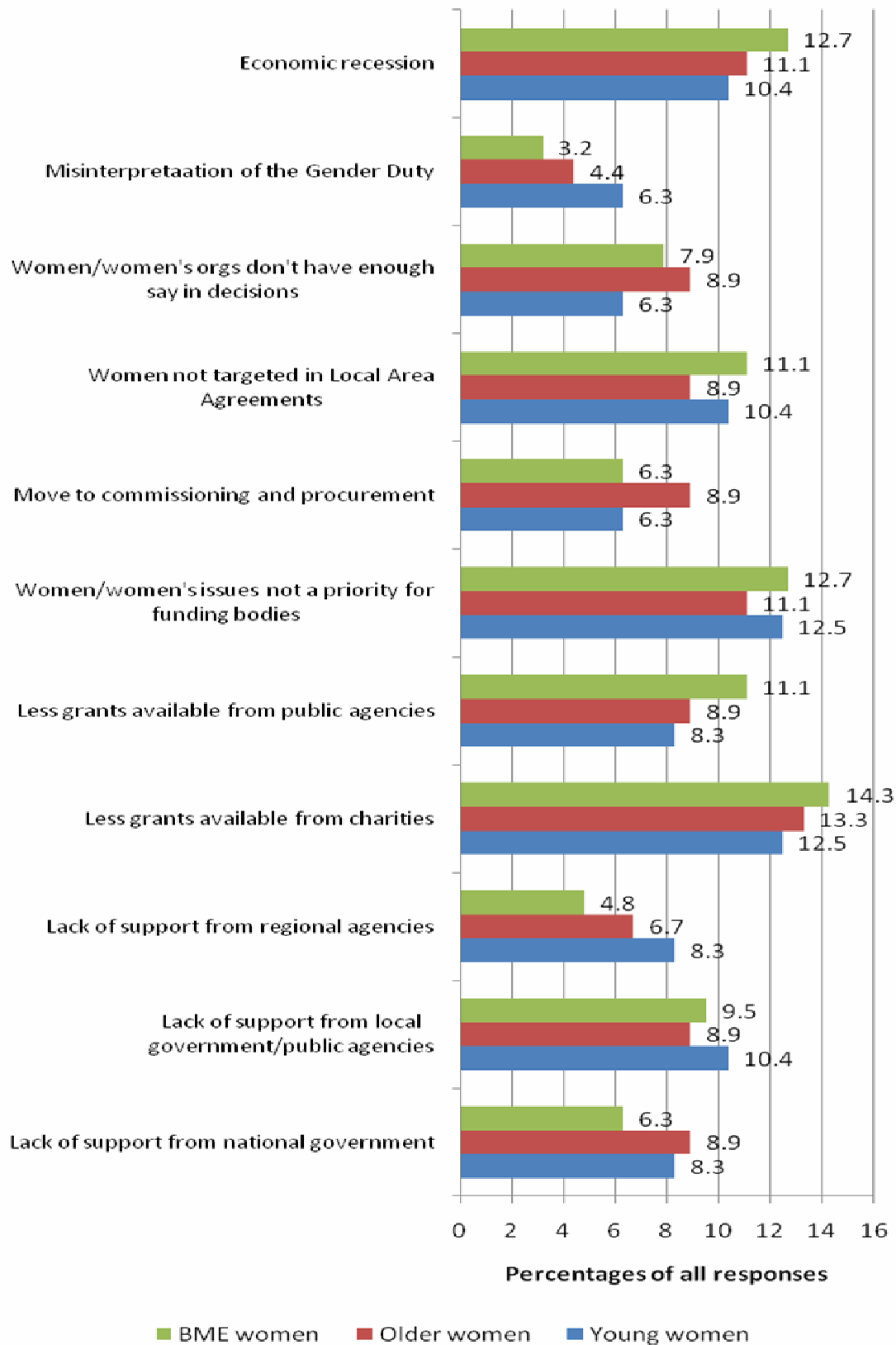
Of the 41 responses, 9 groups/organisations have no paid staff (22% of all respondents). Of the 32 groups/organisations, over half stated that their staffing level stayed the same; about 22% had less staff compared to previous financial year.



5. What do you think are the causes of cuts in funding to women's groups and organisations?



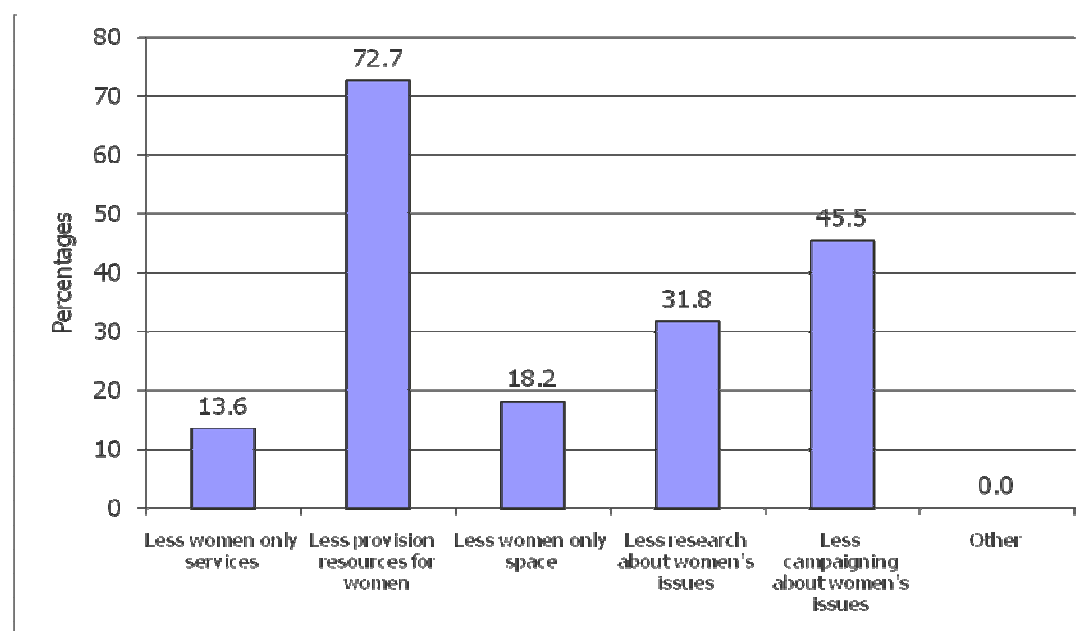
Causes of cuts by selected groups

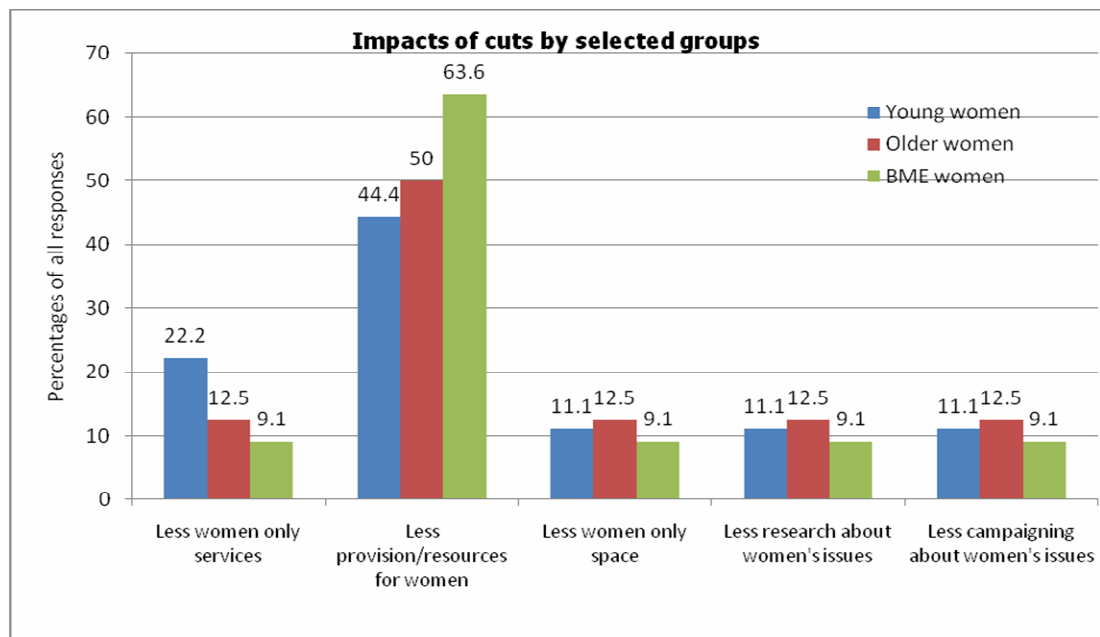


Other comments about causes of cuts

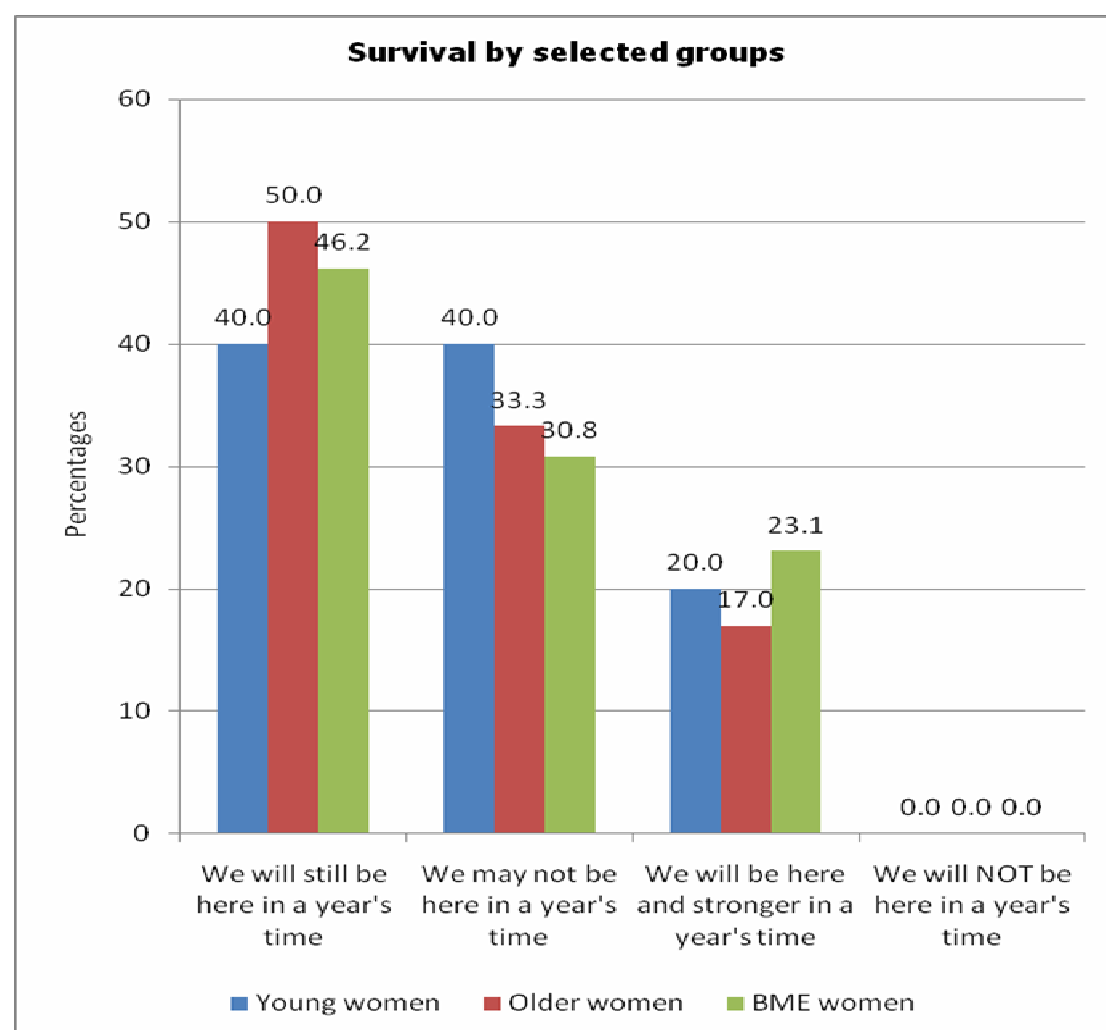
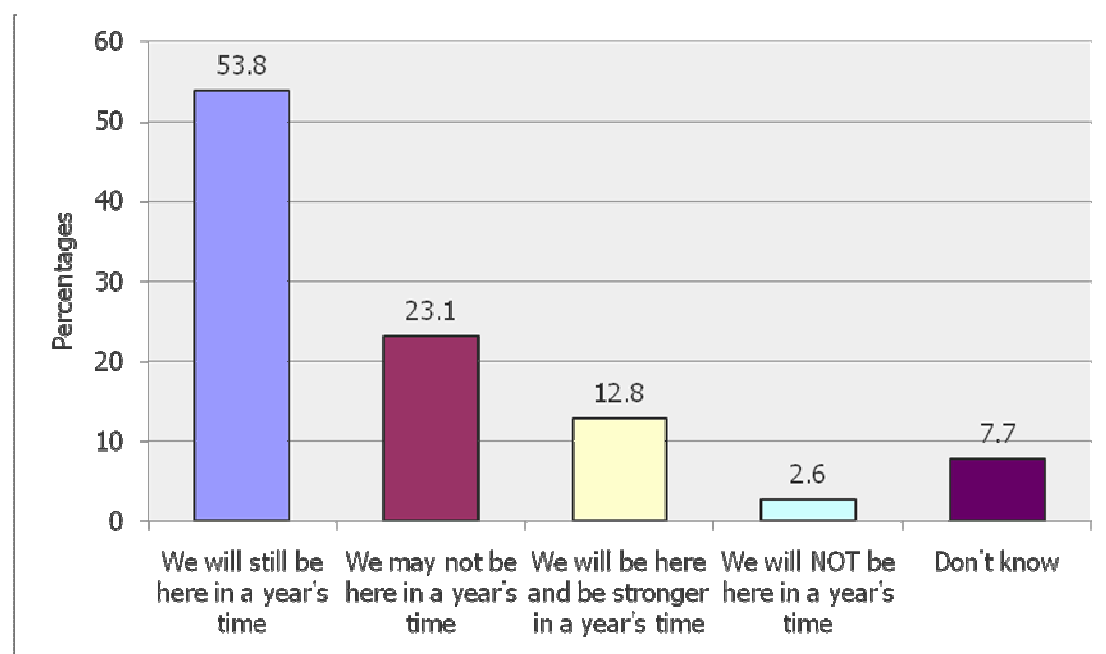
- Feeling from many women that we have achieved equality and so there is nothing left to campaign on. Campaign fatigue from those who fought this far and feel they have done enough.
- Rising costs of hiring rooms etc. We sacked our two staff and closed our main office and now operate as a voluntary group.
- No-one has anytime to fundraise or look for opportunities (voluntary network steering group all involved in women's sector organisations).
- Women don't have time to fund raise or to do voluntary work on top of their jobs. Employed women who are activists have less and less free time for voluntary work.

6. What are the impacts of cuts in funding?





7. Do you think your organisation will still be here in 12 months time?



8. Do you know of any women's groups/ organisations that have closed down through lack of funding in the last 12 months?

The number of known groups/organisations to be closed down may be in a single figure but some respondents pointed out that they were aware of many organisations struggling to stay afloat. Some groups/organisations were known to be struggling for resources and some were on the brink of closure, including WHAC in Ashington, Tynedale Women's Training Project in Hexham and Fourth Action. Those known to have closed down included:

- Stockton International Family Centre
- Some clubs are struggling for membership
- Berwick Family Centre
- Durham initiative for girls and young women
- Ashington Women's Centre

9. Other comments on the health of the women's sector in the North East

There are many challenges faced by the women's sector in the North East. Some respondents shared the way they coped with the changes:

- Our approach is to encourage and create more collaborative work, this not only avoids competitive atmosphere regarding chasing available commissions/funding but strengthens individual practice and organisations.
- Really important to get the Learning and Skills Council, as it changes role in the coming year, actively to promote gender equality for women as well as men. This was the main source of our funding (through ESF) for the last few years which has now completely gone.

The major challenge, however, is the drying up of funding. Many were not optimistic about the survival of the women's sector in the current funding climate, nor were they optimistic about the imminent change in government after the General Election:

- If we had more money more facilities, more equipment, more space, and more trips where as at the moment we don't have any, the group will increase bigger.
- Many minority and ethnic women's organisations specially those that get funding or have Local Area Agreement with statutory bodies are being threatened of closure or at best very reduced services. My organisation is a social and cultural group so hopefully will not be affected as badly.
- Although we have attracted additional funding this year this is not sustainable - all is short term 'funny money' to deal with the recession or to deliver short term contracts. We have taken advantage of this but it does not help us to plan for the longer term and there is no commitment to fund core essential services. Grant funding is scarcer and although domestic violence should be attracting mainstream funding it is not built into budgets but funded Ad Hoc to tick boxes. I am concerned for the longer term and cannot plan beyond next year on any of our many funding streams. In addition, the fact that we hold numerous grants for delivering what is essentially one service, we are subject to onerous

performance management and monitoring criteria that detracts from the core business and is disproportionate to the amount of funding reported upon.

- Despite growing as an organisation - mainly through time limited project work - this does not tell the full story i.e. core funding has remained at a standstill and may not necessarily be secured. One funder withdrawing in the coming year may destabilise the organisation quite quickly. The picture is more complex so core funding and project funding may need to be accounted for separately - to determine how much 'infrastructure' is in place which might help to sustain organisations.
- I fear the incoming Conservative government may end quangos such as the WNC so if we wish to keep such organisations they must be more effective by for example communicating with groups outside London. The WNC needs the support of women's groups who at present may see them as London centred, shambolic and ineffective. Both government departments such as the WNC and women's groups really do need to work closely together to ensure a solid future.

Another related issue to funding is that the priority is dictated elsewhere in a decision making hierarchy where few women are involved:

- It is a shame that single gender work is no longer a priority in government agenda.
- Increasingly it seems to be a struggle for women to maintain and run their own self-directed organisations. It is possible to gain funding for work with women according to priorities determined elsewhere - usually by policy makers - but it is important that there should be space for self-directed activity and autonomous groups. As paid work becomes more pressured and conditions of employment more demanding, there is less time for women to engage in the type of voluntary activity which is directly in touch with need.
- Women's sector does need targeted focus, especially in line with the recent developments around the Gender equality, Forced Marriage legislation and legislations around violence against women. There are still very few women in decision making positions, especially from the BME sector.

There are also some time-honoured observations about the women's sector:

- It is difficult to get younger women involved because they work and have child care issues.
- It's all really hard work!

Appendix 3: Delegates List

	Name:	Organisation or group:	Email Address:
1.	Andrea Whale	Government Office North East	andrea.whale@gone.gsi.gov.uk
2.	Angela Oxberry	Women's Health in South Tyneside	angela@whist.org.uk
3.	Anne Bonner	Riverside Community Health Project	anne@riversidechp.co.uk
4.	Rumin	The Angelou Centre	aspire2project@yahoo.co.uk
5.	Carol Blythe	One North East	carol.blythe@onenortheast.co.uk
6.	Chrow Sharif	Kurdish Ladies Tees Valley	nahidarahim@hotmail.co.uk
7.	Cullagh Warnock	Northern Rock Foundation	cullagh.warnock@nr-foundation.org.uk
8.	Derry Nugent	Community Foundation serving TyneandWear and Northumberland	dn@communityfoundation.org.uk
9.	Dr. Belgin Ozalp	Pearl Women Association	info@pearlwomen.org.uk
10.	Fazeelat Iqbal	Newcastle Muslim Women's Group	fazelat@yahoo.co.uk
11.	Jinan Al Zaidawi	Sisters Together	
12.	Fiona Neasham	Open Gate	fiona.opengate@btconnect.com
13.	Funlola Shobo	Community Restore	lolashobo@hotmail.co.uk
14.	Gaynor Clarke	NEWomen's Network	Gaynor_clarke@hotmail.com
15.	Genevene Heather Goodwin	Encouraging Women into Enterprise	lioness.training@yahoo.co.uk
16.	Gill Goulding	Eva Women's Aid	gill@eva.org.uk
17.	Hala Zaluczkowska	Fourth Action / NNWN	hala@nnwn.org
18.	Hengemeh Emami	Newcastle Muslim Women's Group	hengemeh25@yahoo.co.uk
19.	Hilarie Tucknott	Business and Professional Women	skylark2@o2.co.uk
20.	Ingela Andersson	Compact Advocacy Team	ingela.andersson@ncvo-vol.org.uk
21.	Jan Vincent	BRIDGE	janvincent_bridge@yahoo.co.uk
22.	Janice Walker	Tynedale Women's Training Group	twtg@hotmail.co.uk
23.	Jaya Gajparia	Women's Resource Centre/ National Equality Partnership	Jaya@wrc.org.uk

	Name:	Organisation or group:	Email Address:
24.	Jennifer McCarthy	Community Voice FM	jennifer@cvfm.org.uk
25.	Joy Nancarrow	WHIST	joy@whist.org.uk
26.	Julia Lyford	NCDN / Fourth Action	julia@ncdn.org
27.	Justine King	BECON	justine@becon.org.uk
28.	Karen Constantine	Women's Resource Centre/ National Equality Partnership	KarenConstantine@wrc.org.uk
29.	Kathy Lloyd	Tees Valley Women's Centre	kathy.lloyd@btconnect.com
30.	Kauser Hussain	BME Youth and Community Engagement	Kauser-cclinks@hotmail.co.uk
31.	Anne Marron	Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre	lhewitt@tynesidercc.org.uk
32.	Lesley Kirton	YWCA England and Wales	lesley.kirton@ywca.org.uk
33.	Liz Barraclough	Hillcroft College	e_m_barraclough@yahoo.co.uk
34.	Lola Ibhaddon	Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council	lola_ibhaddon@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
35.	Lyn Coulthard	WEA	lcoulthard@wea.org.uk
36.	Mark Wright	Equality and Human Rights Commission	mark.wright@equalityhumanrights.com
37.	Michelle Golding	Film maker	
38.	Al Basary Ibtihal	Sisters Together Tees Valley	ibtihal_albasry@yahoo.com,
39.	Nasreen Din	Al-Haadiyah Educational Institute	nasreenusman@hotmail.co.uk
40.	Natalie Maidment	VONNE	natalie.maidment@vonne.org.uk
41.	Nejat Mohammednur	AWET Community	rahelam@hotmail.com and nejatii@yahoo.com
42.	Patricia Lowes	BIG Lottery Fund	plowes@biglotteryfund.org.uk
43.	Paula Sugden	Durham County Council Domestic Abuse service	paula.sugden@durham.gov.uk
44.	Pauline Kimantas	National Association of Voluntary and Community Organisation	Pauline.kimantas@navca.org.uk
45.	Penny Remfry	Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre	premfry015@aol.com
46.	Rahel Bereketab	AWET-Eritreans	bina@refugee.org.uk

	Name:	Organisation or group:	Email Address:
47.	Rebecca Veazey	Women's Resource Centre	Rebecca@wrc.org.uk
48.	Roma Yagnik	Open Clasp Theatre Company	roma@openclasp.plus.com
49.	Safina Siddique	Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre	ssiddique@tynesidercc.org.uk
50.	Sarinder Bhandal	Women's Anand group	sarinderb@gatesheadcab.org.uk
51.	Shamshad Iqbal	Newcastle Muslim Women's Group/ The Angelou Centre	shamshad@wwmail.co.uk
52.	Sharon O'Brien	The Social Investment Business	sharon.obrien@socialinvestmentbusiness.org
53.	Sreeleka Reddy	Sangini	info@sangini.org.uk
54.	Shruti Jain	Sangini	info@sangini.org.uk
55.	Sue Ashmore	Business and Professional Women	sueashmore@hotmail.com
56.	Sue Donoghue		manuka.sue@yahoo.com
57.	Sue Robson	NEWomen's Network	sue@suerobson.co.uk
58.	Tania Pouwhare	Women's Resource Centre	Tania@wrc.org.uk
59.	Umme Imam	The Angelou Centre	angeloucentre@btconnect.com
60.	Valerie Duncan	National Assembly of Women	naw@sisters.org.uk
61.	Vicki Gilbert Jackson	National Assembly of Women	vicki_gilbert_jackson@hotmail.com
62.	Vivienne Hayes	Women's Resource Centre	Vivienne@wrc.org.uk
63.	Wen Cai	Sunshine Project	sunshine.project@hotmail.co.uk
64.	V. Arelongka		
65.	Kate Mukungu	Tyneside Women's Health	kate.mukungu@tynesidewomenshealth.org.uk

Appendix 4: Biographies of speakers and workshop leaders

Cullagh Warnock - Programme Manager, Northern Rock Foundation - manages the Foundation's Safety and Justice programme which seeks to reduce the incidence and impact of domestic abuse, sexual violence, prostitution, child abuse and hate crimes, by investing in better support for victims. Cullagh also oversees the Foundation's domestic abuse initiative. Cullagh joined the Foundation in 2003. Previously she worked for a number of voluntary organisations, including being co-ordinator for youth project Streetwise in Newcastle upon Tyne. She has also worked as a grants officer for the National Lottery Charities Board, as regional advisor for Comic Relief, and as an assessor for the Princess Diana Memorial Fund.

Derry Nugent, Philanthropy Director, Community Foundation serving TyneandWear and Northumberland - Derry joined the Community Foundation in May 2004 and came with over 20 years' experience in the voluntary and community sector as a volunteer, paid worker and trustee with local and national charities. Derry's early career was in the Citizens Advice Bureaux service followed by a period at Sunderland City Council. On moving into the world of grant-making, Derry worked for the Big Lottery Fund and chaired the North East Advisory Committee of Children in Need. Derry is currently a trustee of Voluntary Organisations North East (VONNE) and a Justice of the Peace.

Ingela Andersson works for the Compact Advocacy Programme, which is based at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Her role is to advocate on behalf of voluntary and community sector organisations when public bodies make decisions or act in ways that are not Compact compliant. Ingela has been with the Compact team since 2007, handling cases with both national and local public bodies. She was previously working at Friends of the Earth, mainly working on Climate Change and Food campaigns and has also done voluntary work with Mencap and Mind. She is currently studying part time for an MSc degree in Social Policy.

Julia Lyford - Julia has worked within the community sector for 21 years, having previously been a youth worker with a stint at the National Youth Agency. Roles have included management adviser with Derby CVS, regional posts with YWCA and Age Concern, and funding and project developer with various local community based projects. She established Fourth Action in 1998 as a freelance partnership focussing on gender equality. In 2001 Julia was seconded to become the Advisor to the NE Equality and Diversity Forum, and was instrumental in the early development of the North East VCS Equalities Coalition. She has used her experience of developing user-led networks to help develop the Northumberland Community Development Network, and North Northumberland Women's Network. Julia also sits on the NE Rural Affairs Forum.

Lesley Kirton - YWCA England and Wales - Lesley has worked with community based community and social enterprise development projects for the last 15 years. Working in both inner urban and rural areas with all of the Local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber and with over 50 3rd sector organisations she has helped them to improve what they do and increase their incomes generating over £10,000,000 of grant funding for them. In addition she has considerable experience in commissioning and tendering and has managed her own CIC to develop and support 3rd sector organisations that are trading or are aspiring to trade. A qualified social enterprise practitioner Lesley has considerable experience of working as a freelance consultant supporting social enterprises, helping 3rd sector organisations develop socially enterprising income generation ideas and advising them as to their income generation potential and external contracting and funding opportunities. She has worked with many women's organisations and is now working for YWCA to identify income generation opportunities in the North of England and to help to develop collaborative partnerships in the NE, NW and YandH. An experienced trainer and facilitator she has developed and delivered workshops on added social value, getting the funding right, developing income streams and understanding loan finance and she is happy to advise, support and enable small organisations to improve what they do whilst not losing site of what they were invented to do in the first place and always seeking to deliver social return on investment.

Lola Ibadon - has worked extensively with public, private and voluntary sector organisations identifying and supporting the creation of social enterprises at local, sub-regional and regional levels in the North East. Her work involves the provision of business skills training workshops for social enterprises including facilitating the development of new initiatives, networking events and conferences. She has a vast working knowledge of grant regimes and policies around funding, having set up and managed a number of these under various public sector programmes. Lola is also actively involved in social enterprise development activities in a voluntary capacity.

Patricia Lowes, Big Lottery Fund - I have worked for the BIG Lottery Fund for 11 years (previously NLCB and Community Fund). I have worked across various funding programmes. I now work in the Policy and Partnership directorate of the BIG Lottery Fund. As a Regional Policy and Partnership Manager I work across the whole of the North East region. Some of my key functions are strategic, focussing on the regional policy context; ensuring good regional intelligence informs decision-making by committees and all forms of engagement with external stakeholders. During the course of my work I meet with funding advice workers and potential applicants, giving advice and information on our extensive range of strategic and demand led programmes and advising on our funding criteria and policies.

Pauline Kimantas - Pauline has extensive experience of working in the voluntary sector in England and Scotland. Her experience includes service delivery of social and health care services, service user and carer involvement with adults with a learning disability and unpaid carers, and advocacy, lobbying and influencing policy. She has also worked in infrastructure support at local, sub-regional and regional level. Many of the organisations she has worked with have depended on volunteer involvement. She was introduced to commissioning and procurement through her involvement in the development of a regional advocacy strategy and commissioning of advocacy and information and advice services. As Manager of NAVCA's Local Commissioning and Procurement Unit she leads the NAVCA team which is responsible for increasing the knowledge and skills of local infrastructure organisations in commissioning and procurement. In 2007 she completed a masters degree in sociological research. As part of this work she used a feminist framework to carry out a study on older women and active citizenship.

Sue Robson - is a freelance researcher and community development practitioner, She has extensive knowledge of community development and regeneration gained from 25 years field work experience in voluntary, public and private sector contexts in the North East and nationally. Sue's passion for promoting women's equality is expressed through her community development practice and strengthened through many years of academic feminist studies. Sue specialises in designing and implementing action research methodologies to embed reflection and learning in organisations, networks and partnerships. She has extensive experience of working with marginalised groups, such as women, people from economically disadvantaged communities, children and young people and Black and ethnic minority groups. Sue is a good communicator and facilitator with the ability to present information in a range of different formats. She is studying for a PhD in Community Development at Durham University - *'Identifying the possibilities for effective measures of community development whilst maintaining the dynamism of professional practice.'*

Tania Pouwhare, Head of Policy, Women's Resource Centre - Tania's background is in gender equality and prior to moving to the UK, she worked as Policy Advisor at the national office of Women's Refuge in New Zealand. There she covered a range of domestic violence policy issues, worked with statutory agencies and conducted research. Tania also worked as an independent health researcher in areas such as cancer, unintentional injury, breastfeeding and family planning. Tania's particular areas of interest are indigenous women, sexual and reproductive rights, fine arts, and women in the blues music genre.

Umme Imam- Umme Imam manages The Angelou Centre, a women's organisation which aims to promote the economic inclusion of ethnic minority women through training, employment and enterprise in the North East. The Angelou Centre currently hosts the Regional Black Women's Domestic Violence Network and the North East Women's Network.

Umme joined The Angelou Centre following her retirement from Durham University as lecturer in Community and Youth Work. Her academic and research interests were focused on exploring intersections of race, ethnicity and gender and their impact on South Asian women, young people and children. Her background is in community development work with women in India (where she was born and educated) and in the UK where, over the last twenty-five years, she has been actively involved in the development and management of a range of voluntary and community projects focusing on ethnic minority women's issues.

Vivienne Hayes is the Chief Executive of the Women's Resource Centre (WRC) - WRC is the national umbrella body for the women's voluntary and community sector, providing capacity building services to member organisations working to improve the lives of women, and consulting on and responding to government policy affecting the sector. She studied sociology at Warwick University, Women's History at Essex University and more recently Management at Westminster University. Vivienne's first inspiration comes from her mother, a working class woman who left school in her early teens to work in a factory, but who impressed upon her children the importance of education and an open mind. Vivienne has spent the last 20 years working in the women's sector, both delivering and managing services. Her passion is to support and improve the life experiences of women and their children, and most of her work has focused on this. Having grown up during a time when feminism and equalities issues were firmly on the agenda, Vivienne recognises the need to continue to raise these issues at a time when things seem to be slipping back in terms of progress for women and the whole equalities debate. Vivienne is a Trustee of Rosa, the UK women's fund and has recently been appointed a commissioner of the Women's National Commission. She is also Chair of HEAR, London's regional equalities and human rights VCS network.