

■ A Mayor for Equality

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[Picture of Ken Livingstone (c) LBC]

■ Introduction



Now more than ever, London needs a Mayor who puts women's equality at the heart of their agenda.

London's diversity – central to the city's social and economic vibrancy – would always make this necessary. But the implications of the Tory-led government's public spending programme for London make it urgent.

The coalition government's Budget plans spending cuts of £99 billion per year through to 2015-16 (Budget summary, www.direct.gov.uk).

That would mean imposing £45 billion cuts in London.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies said of the Budget that: 'the tax and benefit changes announced in the emergency Budget are clearly regressive as, on average, they hit the poorest

households more than those in the upper-middle of the income distribution in cash, let alone percentage, terms'.¹

Cuts on this scale mean a war on equality. They will – as initial estimates of the coalition government's spending plans have demonstrated – fall massively on women. They will erode the entire fabric of our society – wrecking core public services, cutting essential benefits and tax credits and destroying jobs.

In so doing so the government's programme will deepen inequality – women, disabled people, black and minority ethnic communities are already disproportionately likely to be in the poorest sections of society. Child poverty cannot be tackled when government is cutting a myriad of child related benefits and tax credits. Benefits relied upon by disabled people have been targeted for cuts. By removing important supports to children and young people these cuts will cut off potential. The government can declare its commitment to social mobility all it wants: its policies will entrench inequality.

Such policies will fall particularly hard on women – and that is why I welcome the legal challenge by the Fawcett Society who correctly described the cuts as the biggest in peacetime. Women are 52 per cent of the population: attacks on this scale, falling disproportionately on women, would devastate women's lives and will be felt right across our city.

Boris Johnson supports the government's policies. Indeed he pre-empted them by his own attacks on equality, such as cutting resources for London's affordable childcare programme, cutting plans to make the Underground more accessible, cutting the number of women in senior positions at the Greater London Authority, reducing engagement with London women and equality communities and cutting the Safer Travel in London board.

London cannot afford these policies. We need a pro-equality agenda to be once again at the heart of City Hall.

The cuts facing London are breathtaking. I have set out some of the detail of these in my paper 'London Can't Afford the Cuts' (1 September 2010).²

This document follows that by looking in particular at the impact on women of the policies of the government and Boris Johnson – but also addresses some other equalities implications of the current situation. I will be publishing further ideas on equality for Londoners during this selection campaign.

As London's Mayor from 2000 to 2008 I placed equality at the heart of my programme. I would do so again: London needs a Mayor unequivocally opposed to these cuts and committed to using every power the Mayor has to promote equality for women. Of course the Mayor's office has limits, but even where these are reached – and the office has considerable powers – the Mayor can and must use the influence that office holds to oppose government policies that attack equality and to present the positive alternative for London.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Livingstone". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ken Livingstone

1. SPENDING CUTS AND WOMEN'S EQUALITY



Published and promoted by Simon Fletcher by and on behalf of the Ken Livingstone Campaign at 10 Melton Street, London NW1 2EJ

The effect on women of the government's policies will include the compound effect of spending cuts on public services, job losses in both the public and private sectors and cuts in taxes and benefits.

Alongside the impact of public spending cuts will be that of the government's wider programme. The government has signalled its intention to downgrade wider equality objectives in such moves as its attempt to introduce anonymity for those charged with rape, its plans to weaken equality legislation in the public sector and its review of the powers of the equality commission.

1.1 Public spending cuts and women's jobs

An initial estimate of 600,000 job losses in the public sector nationally and a possible similar number in the private sector³, will hit women hard. Sixty five per cent of those employed in the public sector are women, often working in lower paid jobs. Job losses in the public sector are likely to have a significant and disproportionate impact on women.

Women are particularly concentrated in certain jobs and sectors, making them particularly vulnerable to targeted cuts in sectors and jobs.

They also represent the overwhelming majority of part-time workers and even before the latest spending proposals the TUC estimated that, across the economy as a whole, 600,000 women were facing involuntary part-time work and 250,000 were in involuntary temporary work.⁴

London's Mayor should be doing everything possible to oppose these cuts and defend women's jobs in the public and private sector. I would work to defend London's public sector against cuts as well as re-establishing the work I initiated to support and extend good practice in the private sector.

I would press forward with the implementation of the London Living Wage, which I established. I would require the London Living Wage to be a condition of procurement, employment and services within the GLA group and Olympic Development Authority. I would use every lever I could to convince London employers to implement the Living Wage and aim to protect women workers in the private sector, including those who find their jobs contracted out as a result of public sector cuts.

1.2 Women's pension poverty

Women suffer more pensioner poverty than men and this is likely to grow with public sector job cuts.

Lower incomes across a woman's lifetime mean that women are less likely to be able to save and if they save at all, save lower amounts than men. Women are twice as likely as men to stop saving when they have children. The scale of poverty in retirement is mitigated for some women by public sector pensions. For many women these are far from generous in objective terms: half of all women pensioners who have worked in the NHS get a pension of less than £3,500 a year while the average local government pension for women is £2,000.⁵ However, compared to the private sector and as a result of the numbers of women working in the public sector, this pension provision reduces the levels of poverty for women in retirement overall.

Significant public sector job losses for women are therefore likely to increase the overall level of pensioner poverty. This will be worsened further if the government proceeds with significant privatisation of public services and attacks on public sector pension provision, as widely anticipated.

I would work to defend women against pension poverty, including working with women's and pensioner organisations as I did as London's Mayor between 2000 and 2008.

1.3 Public spending cuts, service provision and women

We will all feel the impact of public service cuts. However, the realities of women's lives mean that they will end up filling more of the gap left if services are cut. Women continue to take the greatest strain for care of children and other family members, more women are carers than men, many women work time to try to juggle childcare or care for parents with paid employment and women are far more likely than men to be single parents. The pressure on women will grow if social, care, education and health services suffer from cuts.

A Unison/TUC commissioned analysis estimates that public spending cuts, excluding benefit cuts, will fall hardest on the poorest tenth of households: 'All households are hit considerably, but the poorest households are hit the hardest. Assuming these cuts fall evenly across non-ring-fenced departments, the average annual cut in public spending on the poorest tenth of households is £1,344, equivalent to 20.5% of their household income, whereas the average annual cut in public spending on the richest tenth of households is £1,135, equivalent to just 1.6% of their household income'.

When the impact of spending cuts is combined with the Government's own analysis of the impact of tax and benefit changes 'the combined average annual loss in income and services for the poorest tenth of households is £1,514, equivalent to 21.7% of their household income. For

the richest tenth of households, the annual loss in income and services is £2,685, equivalent to just 3.6% of their household income.⁶

Cuts on this scale will damage the lives of women, who feature disproportionately among the lowest paid and among those in poverty.

1.4 Cuts in benefits and tax credits

The cuts in benefits and taxes planned by this government would have a huge negative impact on women – disproportionately so as analysis has already shown. Such is the scale of this attack that the Fawcett Society has launched a legal challenge that the government ignored the impact the changes would have on equality between women and men, and in failing to assess this impact breached the Gender Equality Duty.

The tax credits and benefits to be cut are ones on which women rely more than men. A House of Commons library analysis commissioned by Yvette Cooper MP showed that women 72 per cent of the revenue from tax and benefit cuts announced in the Budget will come from women.⁷

Partly this is because of cuts in benefits to children and families, much of which is paid to women. But even excluding support for children, women are more heavily affected by cuts in housing benefit and the switch to CPI uprating of the additional state pension and public sector pensions. The House of Commons analysis showed that if the impact of cuts in child benefits and family-related tax credits are discounted, women are still paying for 66 per cent of the cuts compared to 34 per cent for men.

As the IFS analysis has shown⁸, the government's own Budget analysis did not taken into account the effects of benefit changes which 'represent £4.1 billion of the £11 billion of welfare cuts announced in the emergency Budget'. On the basis of discounting huge areas of change, and by ignoring the distributional effect of service cuts, George Osborne claimed his Budget was 'progressive'.

Just some of the ways in which benefit and tax credit cuts will hit women

- **Housing benefit:** The impact of housing benefit cuts alone will hit women hard: an estimated 431,000 women nationally will be affected according to the National Housing Federation.⁹

This is planned at the same time as Boris Johnson is ending the policy that fifty per cent of new homes should be affordable and plans to reduce the proportion of affordable homes available for social rent. Fewer houses were built in London in 2009 than at any time over the last 20 years: work started on 11,480 homes, the lowest number since 1990, with only 4,180 affordable houses.¹⁰ This is a disgrace that I will address as London's Mayor.

Housing benefit cuts will hit London particularly hard.

The combination of these cuts will hit hard the more than 350,000 Londoners, almost 10 per cent of the total households in London, who are on a local authority waiting list. Cuts in housing benefit aim to push recipients into poorer quality homes and will force many to move, possibly losing jobs and intensifying class and social polarisation.

I will seek to reverse the attacks on the London Plan's targets for affordable homes available to rent and to buy and do everything I can to address the unmet housing need in London of women and families, including lone parent families.

- **Cutting lone parent benefits:** The government plans to intensify benefit 'conditionality' for lone parents: the change will mean that lone parents who receive Income Support will be cut off when their child reaches 5-years-old (instead of 10 at the moment) and will be transferred to Job Seekers Allowance, which is also to be cut by 10 per cent after 12 months receipt. The disproportionate effect of this on women is very high: 90 per cent of lone parents are women and London has higher proportions of lone parent families.

As lone parents in London face more complex barriers to employment and are, as a result, more likely to be unemployed, this will hit women in London hard.

One of the most important supports that could be provided to lone parents is affordable childcare. Boris Johnson has set back work in this area by abolishing London's childcare unit which supported London boroughs to provide affordable places.¹¹ Unison General Secretary, Dave Prentice, commented correctly that: 'Boris's savage cuts at the GLA are the standard bearer for the damage the Tories will do to public services, if they win the next election.'¹²

- **Cuts to grants and tax credits that will affect women with children including:** abolishing the Health in Pregnancy Grant and the Child Trust Fund, cutting the Sure Start Maternity Grant, cutting the baby and toddler elements of tax credits, increasing the rate at which tax credits are withdrawn as incomes rise and lowering the income cut-off for family tax credits. The TUC estimates the combined value of these and other cuts hitting families to be more than £13 billion¹³. The TUC also estimated that half a million 'working families' would lose around £1,000 a year as a result of the tax credit changes.¹⁴

These cuts mean an attack on women's incomes. For example:

- The Health in Pregnancy Grant is a one-off, non-means tested, grant of £190 that helps with the extra costs running up to birth. It is to be abolished from 1 January 2011.
- The Sure Start Maternity Grant is a £500 payment paid to low income women to help with the costs of having a baby. It is to be restricted to the first child from April 2011, representing a cut of £500 to low income women. Around 15 per cent of the grants are allocated in London, meaning that an estimated 20,000 women would be hit each year.
- Changes to tax credits which are intended to cut £3.2 billion in spending by 2015-16 will hit women. In London 737,000 families receive Child or Working Tax Credit. The cut in the baby element of tax credits will take up to £545 a year off low-income families with a child under one. An estimated 57,000 families with children in London will be worse off as a result of this cut (using HMRC Child and Working Tax Credit statistics and assuming the national average of 8 per cent of these receive the baby element applies in London).

The TUC estimates that tax credit changes will mean that £1293 a year will be cut from the income of the poorest families.¹⁵

Other cuts that will particularly hit women include:

- **Cuts in Child benefit:** the Budget included a freeze on child benefit for three years, taking a total of £975 million by 2014-15. Child benefit is unique in being a universal benefit paid directly to women and not dependent on joint income assessment (if the woman has a partner). So while a freezing of child benefit will hit more than 1 million families and the nearly 1.8 million children in London it benefits, its political significance as a benefit claimed by women and contributing to independence is also at threat. The Conservative Party have made no secret of their desire to chop Child Benefit more substantially. Fears that the freeze could be a trailer for a longer and deeper attack were confirmed in August when the government said it was considering the future of child benefit and other universal benefits like the winter fuel allowance.
- **Changing the inflation measurement:** The shift to using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rather than Retail Prices Index (RPI) as a formula for working out whether and how much benefits should be increased annually applies to all benefits. The CPI will produce a lower level of increase: in July it was 3.1 per cent compared to the RPI 4.8 per cent (www.statistics.gov.uk). So this one change will mean that year on year the value of all benefits, additional pensions, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and other benefits which women rely on will fall relative to the RPI measure and relative to the real cost of living. As the CPI excludes housing costs, people in London will lose out even further given the high cost of housing in London.

- **The impact of cuts in funding to local government:** London's local and regional government is set to lose at least £355 million this year as a result of the funding cuts already announced, according to London Councils. The GLA is set to lose £185.6 million. The full scale of cuts in London could be much higher once the impact of government cuts to schemes like the Building Schools for the Future will be affected by the cuts. The impact of these cuts on services used by women or by the women's and other equality voluntary sector groups is yet unknown.

2. OTHER EQUALITIES TO BE HIT BY SPENDING CUTS

As the Budget will hit the poorest people hardest, it will also deepen inequality of other communities which are disproportionately likely to be among the poorest – black, minority ethnic and disabled people, for example. Women in these communities will be hit harder and will be affected by combined cuts.

Disabled people have been singled out by the Budget to a staggering level and will be hit by the cuts in public services, in employment support, in education and training. Key areas include:

- **Undermining the independence of disabled people by cutting Disability Living Allowance:** The government's spending cuts aim at a 20 per cent cut in spending on and the number of people who receive Disability Living Allowance. DLA is a non-work related benefit that supports disabled people to be independent and which DWP research shows helps people avoid residential care and maintain good health (Research Report 649, July 2010). Many people use it to help them maintain jobs and active lives. Disabled people's organisations have understandably reacted angrily to the move.
- **Cutting the number of people receiving Incapacity Benefit:** all recipients are to be moved over to Employment Support Allowance which has a much harsher test. MacMillan Cancer Support and Citizens Advice are among those who have criticised the impact of this Work Capability Assessment.
- **Cuts in benefits linked to DLA,** such as the Disability Living Fund, which support independence. The Disability Living Fund is paid to people with high support needs who receive the higher rate of DLA. People use it to pay for support services and therefore achieve independence and choice in their lives. Even before the Budget, funding restrictions on the ILF led it to announce that it would accept no new applications for this year. The closure of the fund is feared.
- **Cuts in mortgage aid:** disabled people can receive help with mortgage interest and this is essential for many disabled people to get homes of their own. The National Housing Federation says an estimated 64,000 disabled people are at risk of falling behind with mortgage payments as a result. Many thousands of people could be made homeless.

- **The impact of cuts in other benefits** and supports that disabled people rely on because of the greater likelihood of being on a very low income: an estimated 178,000 disabled people nationally stand to be hit by the planned cuts in Housing Benefit.

These impacts will be echoed across many other communities facing inequality – black and Asian communities in London, older Londoners, young people who will now be denied a little support at the start of life. The truth remains that discrimination and inequality exist: as a result the cuts will hit different people in different ways.

3. THE ANTI-EQUALITY IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S WIDER PROGRAMME

The government's wider agenda will add to the impact of the spending cuts on women.

They need to be challenged by the Mayor. They are in stark contrast to the priorities I developed as Mayor and would do again.

These include:

- **Threat to law on equal pay:** when the Equality Act 2010 was going through parliament the Conservatives said they would not implement provisions to create greater pay transparency.¹⁶ Forty years on from the Equal Pay Act, the gender pay gap is one of the widest in Europe. Research by the Chartered Management Institute showed it could take another 57 years to get equal pay – which could be ambitious if the government scraps modest improvements in equal pay legislation such as this. In London pay transparency is particularly needed as the gender pay gap is wider: research I commissioned in 2008 showed that women in London then were paid an average 23 per cent less than men. Men predominate in the highest paid jobs and in some sectors women are being paid much less than their male counterparts.

I made action to identify the extent and causes of equal pay, to promote pay equality, to promote and deliver affordable childcare and to engage with employers a priority as Mayor. This has ceased under Boris Johnson.

- **Rape anonymity:** The coalition government's attempt to allow those accused of rape the protection of anonymity. The plans to change the law appear to have been shelved after a storm of protest from women's and equality organisations. But the government still wants the Press Complaints Commission to seek a voluntary agreement with the media to ensure rape suspects remain anonymous.¹⁷

This priority stands in stark contrast to the work done by my team between 2000 and 2008 to working with the Metropolitan Police on rape, which saw a drop in reported incidents of rape and a rise in the rape conviction rate.

- **Scrapping domestic violence protection orders:** the orders would have applied for two weeks, allowing women to stay in their home and the police to intervene to safeguard against violent behaviour. The coalition government's decision to scrap them was criticised by Women's Aid, who said the measure 'may have potentially helped to save lives is being cut'.¹⁸

As Mayor I would build on my earlier work on domestic violence, including through renewed coordinated inter-agency working to develop and build on the London Domestic Violence Strategy. Boris Johnson cut funds and staff from the GLA domestic violence team. I would make tackling domestic violence a priority with action and not just words.

- **A less representative politics:** Although the Conservatives won 305 seats at the election, there are only 49 Tory women MPs. Only 7 of the Liberal Democrats 57 MPs are women. Both parties oppose women-only shortlists. While Labour women's representation is still very low, it is better than either of these, at 81 women out of 256 MPs.

This fall in women's representation is consistent with the steps Boris Johnson took to remove women from senior positions at the GLA. None of Boris Johnson's appointments to the most senior positions in the GLA Group has been a woman. Five women occupied positions at the most senior level in the GLA group at the end of my Mayoral term: Nicky Gavron, the Deputy Mayor; Val Shawcross, Chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA); Mary Reilly, Chair of the London Development Agency (LDA); Murziline Parchment, GLA Director of Strategic Projects and Performance, and Joy Johnson, GLA Director of Media and Marketing. All were replaced by Boris Johnson with men or, in the case of the Director of Strategic Projects and Performance, their post was abolished. The post of Women's Adviser was abolished as was the annual Capitalwoman consultation conference, attended by 2-3,000 London women a year.

Subsequently Boris Johnson appointed a woman as director of environment, which has not addressed the overall massive imbalance in his senior team.

Only 1 out of 11 in Tory group on the London Assembly is a woman.

A representative politics is essential to getting policy right – especially for a city as diverse as London. As Mayor I will restore priority to ensuring women and London's communities are fairly included.

- **Weakening of public sector equality duty:** the Labour government introduced the Equality Act 2010. However, the coalition government has the responsibility to propose and agree the 'Specific Duties' for the public sector duty part of the Act. These are the things that public authorities actually have to do to implement the law. The coalition government published its proposals on 18 August. They remove many of the positive and constructive obligations there have been on the public sector to take precise steps

to ensure services are delivered equally. They have been criticised by equality organisations.

As Mayor of London between 2000 and 2008 I put tackling discrimination and delivering equality at the heart of my agenda. I wanted to do this because of my own political conviction: because I believe it is right. However, I was also supported by both the terms of the GLA Act and also by the public sector equality duties on race, gender and disability that came into force over that time and the specific duties that accompanied them. The government's proposals to weaken these equality duties are entirely wrong. They would encourage bad practice and damage progress towards equality.

This approach is in line with Boris Johnson's own approach. Women's representation has fallen at the GLA. Well before the coalition government took office events recognising and celebrating the contribution of London's diverse communities have been stopped or had funding removed: including the Pride Reception at City Hall, Black History Month and Capitalwoman. While I introduced a Disability Equality Scheme at the GLA even before legislation required it, Boris Johnson reduced the level of engagement with disabled people's organisations and his proposals to revise the scheme were announced a year overdue and have been criticised by disabled people's organisations for leaving out many areas.

4. TAKING WOMEN'S EQUALITY FORWARD FOR LONDON

In addition to the areas outlined above, there are many other important areas that need to be addressed. As Mayor I would give priority to a representative Mayoral team and a programme of engagement with London women to ensure that policies were informed by the needs of London's women and London's diverse equality communities.

I would make a priority of making the GLA reflective of Londoners.

I would adopt policies to ensure a women-friendly transport system: making buses, trains, stations and bus-stops safer for women with better lighting, more staff and more police.

I would protect farepayers – a policy important to women who on average have lower incomes and often distinct transport usage patterns. As I state in my transport document, 'Because I will not be as wasteful as Boris Johnson and I will protect transport revenues that can be used to ease pressure on the fare-payer it is possible to guarantee now that in all circumstances fares in the next Mayoral term will not be as high under me if I am elected than they will be under a second Boris Johnson term'.

I would resume priority to efforts to make public transport increasingly accessible to the widest range of people. Disabled and older women as well as parents with children and buggies need an accessible transport system. We made big strides in fitting public transport to the needs of users, but the Tube accessibility programme, in particular, has been very badly hit by cuts to the

upgrade programme. I will want to fully reassess those decisions and to ensure that those accessibility improvements that have been made in the past have been properly completed. For example, some disabled Londoners point out that stations which have step-free access are all very well, but if there is not the same facility to actually board the train then these measures are useless.

I would protect services such as Taxicard and Dial-a-ride, which many disabled and older women rely upon, from the Tory cuts.

In line with my opposition to cuts in benefits and tax credits to women and disabled people, I would support a new London Carers Alliance to support London's 600,000 carers.

I believe steps to address women needs in skills and training are required and would support a new code of practice developed through the London Skills Board covering in-work training, flexible working, access to non-traditional jobs and equal openings for women in new apprenticeships a year. The cuts in public sector funding to education at all levels, including higher education, will increase inequality and opposing that impact and doing everything possible to counterbalance is important.

I will give priority to tackling the growth of sex industry and trafficking, and the exploitation of women and girls, and arguing for much tighter regulation of places like lap-dancing clubs.

5. CONCLUSION

The coalition government's policies would be a disaster for women, for equality and for London. They will not be opposed by the current Mayor – who supports the government and whose own policies have undermined equality.

More than half of London's population are women. London's diversity is its strength and that diversity is reflected in the skills and talents of women living, working, studying and caring for families in London; women born in London and those who come from other parts of the UK and the world to contribute to the city. The diversity of London's women makes this a truly international city.

London is a city that is associated with the great movements forward for women's equality. It is a city where generation after generation of women, from the widest range of backgrounds and communities, has sought the freedom and equality to live their lives as they chose.

Attacking women on the scale involved in the government's spending plans would not only intensify women's inequality – which it will – it will drive up poverty levels across the entire city.

London cannot afford to be a city with rising inequality, where women are marginalised and the public sector erodes.

There is, of course, a limit to what the Mayor can do against national government policy but this should not be used to minimise what can be done. The London Mayor has very considerable powers and can also be a powerful advocate for progress.

As London's Mayor, I would use the full extent of my powers to help make women's lives fairer and more equal, to resist the impact of the coalition government's policies and reinstate equality at the heart of the city's administration.

¹ IFS 25 August, 2010

² <http://www.kenlivingstone.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Cuts2.pdf>

³ Guardian 29 June 2010, based on unpublished Treasury estimates

⁴ Women and Recession one year on, March 2010, TUC

⁵ TUC July 2009

⁶ *Don't forget the spending cuts! The real impact of Budget 2010*, Horton and Reed, 27 June 2010

⁷ www.yvettecooper.com 5 July 2010

⁸ August 2010 <http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn108.pdf>

⁹ National Housing Federation, 2 August 2010

¹⁰ Evening Standard 27 August 2010

¹¹ Evening Standard 8 April 2010

¹² GLA Cost cutting advisor, Unison, 9 April

¹³ TUC, Touchstone, 16 August

¹⁴ TUC Newsroom 20 July

¹⁵ TUC Touchstone 22 June 2010

¹⁶ Equality Act gets Royal assent, Equal Opportunities Review 200, May 2010

¹⁷ 'Anonymity for defendants in rape cases never made sense', Guardian 29 July 2010

¹⁸ Government shelves domestic violence prevention scheme, Guardian, 4 August 2010