

MAYOR OF LONDON

Women's Policy Summit 2023

City Hall, 6 March 2023

Introduction

On 6 March 2023, the Mayor of London held the first women's policy summit at City Hall, fulfilling a mayoral manifesto commitment to put the experiences and concerns of women at the heart of GLA policy-making.

The conference was developed in partnership with the [Women's Resource Centre](#) and built on [research commissioned by the Mayor in 2020](#), which revealed that women had experienced disproportionate economic, social and psychological impacts as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There were more than 80 attendees at the event, including representatives from voluntary sector organisations and charities, campaigners, councillors, London Assembly members, trade unions and individuals who support women across the capital.

As well as the Mayor of London, the Deputy Mayors for Children and Families, Planning, Regeneration and Skills and Housing and Residential Development took part. The event was chaired by Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice.



This report summarises the discussions and suggested actions from stakeholders who attended the summit. It sets out some of the actions undertaken by the Mayor to address gender inequalities, as well as actions that the GLA, government and others could take to advance gender equality.

Speakers at the Summit

- Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London
- Helen Pankhurst, feminist scholar and activist
- Sara Reis, Acting Director, [Women's Budget Group](#).

The Mayor of London called for [all public bodies to be made 'women-friendly' workplaces](#) and set out his policies on issues including domestic abuse, acute period pain and menopause.

Sara Reis outlined the Women's Budget Group findings on the [gendered dimension of the cost of living crisis](#).

This was followed by four breakout sessions, facilitated by mayoral and sector leads and focussing on some of the most pressing issues facing women in London, including the cost of living crisis, skills and employment, housing and the challenges facing the women's sector.



Finally, a plenary session chaired by Maggi Ferncombe, Director of Executive Office, [Unison](#), heard contributions from sector leads on addressing the cost-of-living crisis, housing, what and the challenges facing the women's sector, with opportunity for audience questions afterwards.

The findings from the breakout sessions and the plenary session will help to inform future GLA policy-development.

Summary of discussions from the breakout sessions

Below is an overview of some of the key topics covered by participants in the breakout sessions.

Breakout session 1: Cost-of-living crisis

Facilitators:

- Joanna McCartney, Deputy Mayor for Children and Families
- Kimberley MacIntosh, Women's Budget Group board member.

Key issues discussed

- Women are more likely to be in low paid work. They also face additional barriers to progression within work, as well as looking for work.
- Travel costs are preventing women from accessing vital support services such as legal aid and advice centres.
- Women trapped in abusive relationship often cannot afford to leave.
- The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated existing risks posed by issues such as low-paid work and domestic abuse. Women are having to make difficult decisions about finances, and this is affecting their health and wellbeing.

- The cost-of-living crisis is having a disproportionate impact on Black, minority ethnic and disabled women. The impact on migrant women with no recourse to public funds is particularly severe.

What the Mayor is doing to address the issues

- The Mayor has published his [equality objectives](#) which set out how he will work to create a fairer, more equal integrated city, where all people feel welcome and able to fulfil their potential. He is [championing the benefits of the Living Wage](#) and is encouraging employers to pay at least the London living wage to all employees.
- Implementing [gender-specific employment policies](#) that address the gender pay gap and are inclusive and supportive to women.
- Through the [Building a Fairer City Plan](#), the Mayor is demonstrating how innovative partnership work can address financial hardship and tackle inequalities.
- Providing information for people struggling financially through the Mayor's [Cost-of-Living hub](#).
- The Mayor is encouraging London employers to become [Good Work Standard](#) accredited and adopt best employment practices, including fair pay and conditions.

What the GLA and other key stakeholders could do to address the issues

- The GLA and others can take a rights-based approach to tackling gender inequality and ensure all forms of discrimination are addressed, prevented and eliminated in policies, processes and programmes. The GLA is currently looking to embed this throughout its work.
- Employers can implement gender specific employment policies, such as tailored training to enable career progression; focussed activity to eliminate any gender pay gap; and enhanced caring, adoptive and shared parental leave.

What the Government can do

- Take further steps to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and help those most in need.
- Suspend no recourse to public funds conditions.
- Invest in social infrastructure, such as community spaces and educational facilities, to support women.
- Consider the experiences of women and the potential impact on women ahead of Government policy changes.

Breakout session 2: Skills and employment

Facilitators

- Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and Skills
- Janet Gardner, Principal, Waltham Forest College

Key issues discussed

- There is a shortfall in flexible work, part-time work and hybrid work that meets women's needs, especially those with caring responsibilities.

- Black and minority ethnic women and migrant women are more likely to face workplace discrimination and more likely to be in low-paid work and/or working at night.
- Highly qualified migrant women face difficulties finding employment in equivalent roles.
- Employers not paying the London Living Wage is affecting women, especially those with families. There is need for better enforcement of the national minimum wage.
- The lack of support for women to access skills provision. This is compounded by transport costs.
- The lack of legal advice for women facing employment discrimination.
- Poor levels of progression for women across sectors, for example in social care.
- High childcare costs which prevent women working.

What the Mayor is doing to address the issues

- The Mayor is leading by example. The GLA [Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2023-24](#) sets out objectives on gender equality.
- He has developed the [Good Work Standard](#) and he is asking every London employer to work towards or achieve this.
- He is drawing attention to the intersectional impacts on employees' pay by publishing a combined [ethnicity, gender and disability pay gap report](#).
- He is encouraging employers to report and publish their gender pay gap, through his [Good Work Standard](#)
- He is supporting women to gain skills and access good jobs through the [Skills Roadmap for London](#).
- He is supporting small businesses, including those led by women, through the implementation of his Responsible Procurement Policy.
- He is supporting the [London Anchor Institutions](#) and their ambition to procure small and diverse businesses in London.
- The Mayor's [Women's Night Safety Charter](#) is prioritising women's safety on the transport network at night.

What the GLA and other key stakeholders could do

- Employers can support inclusive and flexible employment practices that enable women to return to the workforce, including women with criminal records.
- Employers could provide safe and affordable transport for women who work at night.

What the government can do

- Enforce the national minimum wage.
- Strengthen inclusive and flexible employment policies.
- Bring forward and enhance policies to increase the provision of and reduce the cost of childcare.

Breakout session 3: Housing

Facilitators

- Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development

- Anna Kear, CEO, Tonic Housing.

Key issues discussed

- The need for an intersectional approach, –particularly on the issues facing black and minority ethnic women, and disabled women.
- The challenges facing the refuge sector due to the lack of suitable accommodation for women to move into, once they are ready to leave the refuge.
- A focus on housing individuals and meeting local targets, rather than taking a holistic and cross-borough approach to meeting accommodation needs.
- The lack of suitable accommodation and support for refugee women.
- The shortage of both temporary and accessible housing in London.
- The need for greater accountability in the housing sector.

What the Mayor is doing to address the issues

- The Mayor has secured more than £4.8bn to build [affordable homes](#).
- He set up the [London Domestic Abuse Partnership Board](#) to improve provision of support and accommodation for victims of domestic abuse and their children.
- He published London's first [Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy](#) through which he is prioritising early intervention and access to safe crisis accommodation, and second-stage and move-on accommodation.
- He launched a £126m [London Refugee Housing programme](#) to fund delivery of affordable homes and provide housing for refugees.
- The Mayor's [Housing Strategy](#) will ensure meaningful engagement in the development of community-led housing.
- The GLA and partners will continue to invest in [high quality housing](#).

What the GLA and other key stakeholders could do

- Local authorities and partners could provide incentives for people to move into appropriate accommodation.
- Local authorities, housing associations and partners could look at housing issues more holistically, rather than solely focussing on meeting individual needs.

What the government can do

- Provide additional funds for housing providers to build affordable housing.
- Provide funding for the retrofitting of existing homes to ensure they are safe and accessible.
- Ensure housing policies prioritise marginalised women.

Breakout session 4: Challenges facing the women's sector

Facilitators

- Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Deputy Mayor for Communities and Social Justice
- Vivienne Hayes, CEO, Women's Resource Centre.

Key issues discussed

- Funding for the women's sector is short-term and not equitable.
- Process for procurement and competitive tendering creating challenges for women's sector organisations.
- Intersectionality: support for work that builds coalitions across class, race, gender and disability.
- Women using services are often in crisis and exacerbated by rises in the cost-of-living.
- The need for greater support for women who have been victims of trafficking and modern slavery, to prevent them being trafficked again.



What the Mayor is doing to address the issues

- The Mayor's [Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy](#) sets out the actions he is taking to support victims and survivors of violence.
- The Mayor's Building Strong Communities Fund will award nearly £1m in micro and small grants to support equity-led voluntary and community organisations. This will include projects run by and benefiting women and girls.
- As a co-founding member of [CHANGE](#), the Mayor will [build connections between other world cities](#) to advance gender equality and share best practice.

What the GLA and other key stakeholders could do

- Funders could make funding more accessible, sustainable and less onerous for women's sector organisations.
- Support the collaborative work within the women's sector which is developing collective voice.

What the Government can do

- Provide free nursery places.
- Provide more accessible, sustainable and less onerous funding for women's sector organisations.

Plenary session



Key points raised by sector leads

- The biggest issue facing the women's sector is the lack of core funding.
- The intersectional impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- Women are juggling competing priorities.
- Women are more likely to be in low-wage jobs.
- Lack of affordable and accessible childcare.
- Need for more family-friendly policies at work.
- Women need to be at the heart of decision-making.
- Women make up over 50 per cent of the population of London. Public spending on services and support for women should be proportionate to spend on men.

Key priorities for the women's sector

- Grants programmes that support the core work of the women's sector.
- Empower women and ensure their views are heard in policy decisions.
- Hold more summits for women and increase collaboration across the sector.
- Ensure employers adopt flexible working.
- The GLA must lead by example.
- Greater support for transport costs.
- Campaigning for free childcare provision.

The Mayor of London's commitment to further action

There was a consensus among the Summit attendees to hold future summits to bring together women's sector organisations and experts, to enable their views to be fed into future policy decision-making at City Hall.

The key points raised at the Summit will be passed on to the [London Partnership Board](#) to help shape the delivery of this work.

The Mayor of London agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to inform them of the issues raised as part of the summit.



Next steps

If you would like to be kept informed of future GLA work on addressing gender inequalities, please email Lorraine.sue@london.gov.uk.