

Tina Jenkins  
Sector Development Team  
Active Communities Unit  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Allington Towers  
Allington Street  
London  
SW1E 5EB

11 November 2003

Dear Ms Jenkins,

**RE: ACU Infrastructure Consultation**

Rights of Women welcomes the consultation paper from the ACU on infrastructure organisations and the future of the voluntary and community sector. We fully endorse the submissions made by the Women's Resource Centre in relation to the consultation paper, and have taken the opportunity below to emphasise points in relation to the paper that we believe to be of particular importance.

1. We have used several of the services provided by the Women's Resource Centre and find this second tier organisation to be an essential support to our own work in providing frontline services to women. We believe that second tier organisations should in future play a key role in enabling organisations offering 'by women for women' services to build their capacity and sustainability. Such recognition by government of the importance of such organisations should reflect a broader commitment to valuing, supporting and promoting the essential services provided by the women's sector.
2. Any strategy adopted by the ACU as a consequence of this consultation should be fully equality proofed. This means checking the impact of proposals on people within the six equality strands: gender, ethnic background, disability, sexuality, age and religion. In the context of promoting community participation and supporting civil society, we would also argue that social and economic background should be taken into account in measures intended to result in an effective and appropriately diverse voluntary sector. Particular attention must therefore be paid to addressing obstacles facing Black women and women from minority ethnic communities, disabled women, lesbian,

bisexual, transsexual and transgender women, older women and women experiencing social exclusion, including women asylum-seekers and refugees.

3. We also believe that any resultant strategy needs to recognise that individuals and groups may have multiple identities, and that they may consequently need support from different infrastructure organisations. Recognising and actively supporting groups representing individuals with multiple identities will be a key part of a successful strategy on the voluntary community sector.

***Background: Rights of Women***

Rights of Women is an industrial and provident society, which was founded in 1975 to promote the interests of women in relation to the law. We run a free, national confidential telephone legal advice help line for women. We specialise in advising in family law, especially domestic violence and Children Act matters. Rights of Women works to attain justice and equality by informing, educating and empowering women on their legal rights. We are a membership organisation and our activities include producing publications, organising conferences and training courses, and doing policy and research work.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding our response. I look forward to seeing the results of the consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

Ranjit Kaur  
*Director*