



Information for Applicants: Background to Women's Design Service

1. Women's Design Service's guiding mission is *“ to work to ensure that the design and use of the built environment reflects the needs and aspirations of all women”*.
2. Women's needs and requirements in the built environment are different from men's. In terms of biology, there are issues which will be permanent in any society; women are generally smaller and less physically strong than men, women menstruate, women carry and give birth to children, women have health problems specific to their gender, women generally live longer. All these biological issues have an impact on women's needs in terms of the way our towns and cities are planned, the nature of our transport systems, the design of buildings and the type of furniture, fixtures and fittings that are provided. In social terms we still have a society where women are the main carers of both children and the elderly, where women earn far less than men, where men greatly outnumber women in the ranks of designers and decision makers, where women's lives are much more complicated and where women's access to transport is much more difficult.
3. Women's Design Service was established in 1987 to address these issues by:
 - i. carrying out action research
 - ii. working with women at grassroots level particularly those from traditionally disadvantaged communities
 - iii. organising training, seminars and conferences
 - iv. producing publications and guidelines.
4. Over the years we have worked on many issues affecting women in the design and use of the built environment including:-
 - i. housing
 - ii. transport
 - iii. planning
 - iv. regeneration
 - v. community safety
 - vi. leisure
 - vii. toilets
 - viii. facilities for children
 - ix. disability issues



5. We are a charity and a company limited by guarantee, and our registered office is at Tindlemanor, 52-54 Featherstone Street, London, EC1Y 8RT. We have a small core staff team undertaking a range of project work, policy development and consultancy. We engage associates to work alongside us on projects, research and consultancy assignments.
6. Our trustees provide strategic direction and come from a range of design and community backgrounds. We have a membership of individuals and organisations from UK and abroad. Our members come from a diversity of groups and they are linked by their commitment to improving the urban environment for and with women.
7. Our Shared Values state that we aim to:-
 - i. be a woman-centred and woman-led organisation working to achieve gender equality
 - ii. promote inclusive design and planning that is responsive to the needs of women especially those who have been traditionally marginalised
 - iii. be an ethically based organisation acting with commitment and integrity
 - iv. to value diversity and promoting equality
 - v. promote empowerment, participation and partnership
 - vi. create an open, honest, supportive and transparent organisation
 - vii. act in a professional manner at all times
 - viii. create an efficient, effective and influential organisation
 - ix. be a learning organisation encouraging creativity, adaptability and sharing of knowledge
 - x. seek to minimise any negative environmental impact and promote sustainability in working practices