

Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee room 5 (Hybrid)

Meeting date: 16 January 2023

Meeting time: 14.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting registration (14:00– 14:30)

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

(14:30)

2 Papers to note

(14:30–14:40)

2.1 Letter from the Llywydd to all Members regarding prioritising Committee business

(Pages 1 – 2)

2.2 Letter from the Finance Committee to Committee Chairs regarding scrutiny of the 2023–24 draft budget

(Pages 3 – 6)

2.3 Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to the Chair regarding the Legislative Consent: Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill

(Pages 7 – 8)

2.4 Letter from the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership to the Chair regarding the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

(Pages 9 – 19)

2.5 Correspondence from the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding childcare workforce

(Pages 20 – 21)



- 2.6 Correspondence between the First Minister and the Finance Committee regarding scrutiny of financial implications of Bills**
(Pages 22 – 26)
- 2.7 Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and Luke Fletcher to the Chair regarding the second meeting of the UK–EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly**
(Pages 27 – 28)
- 2.8 Letter from The Magistrates Association to the Chair regarding additional evidence**
(Pages 29 – 31)
- 3 Motion under SO17.42 (vi) and (ix) to exclude the public from items 4, 5, 6 and 8 of the meeting**
(14:40)
- 4 Forward work programme**
(14:40–15:10) (Pages 32 – 43)
- 5 Inquiry into data justice: Consideration of the appointment of an expert adviser**
(15:10–15:15) (Pages 44 – 46)
- 6 Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill: Order of Consideration – agreement ahead of Stage 2 proceedings**
(15:15–15:20)
(Page 47)

BREAK (15:20–15:30)

- 7 Draft Budget 2023–24: ministerial evidence session**
(15.30 – 17.00) (Pages 48 – 110)
Jane Hutt, Minister for Social Justice
Hannah Blythyn, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Claire Bennett – Director Communities & Tackling Poverty

Maureen Howell – Deputy Director Tackling Poverty & Supporting Families
Sian Gill – Head of Financial Reporting

8 Draft Budget 2023–24: consideration of evidence
(17:00–17:15)



Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS

Llywydd, Senedd Cymru

Right Honourable Elin Jones MS

Llywydd, Welsh Parliament

Agenda Item 2.1

Senedd Cymru
Plas, Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN

Llywydd@senedd.cymru

0300 200 6565

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

Llywydd@senedd.wales

0300 200 6565

All members

Via email

1 Rhagfyr 2022

Dear Member,

Prioritising Committee Business

At recent meetings of the Chairs' Forum some concerns have been raised that a minority of committee members are prioritising other commitments over committee business, at times.

Guidance on Virtual and Hybrid Proceedings, including Committee proceedings was issued recently. I would like to remind members also of the importance of making time for committee business.

Whilst occasional absence from committee meetings is anticipated in our procedures, it is expected that a substitute will be sent in place of an absent member to avoid disruption to committee business.

One issue, described by Chairs, is that some committee members routinely leave at the end of the public part of a meeting. This means they are not present for private agenda items that might be scheduled at the end of a meeting. This is disrupting the work of some committees.

The Chairs' Forum has endorsed the report by Professor Diana Stirbu: *Power, Influence and Impact of Senedd Committees: Developing a framework for measuring committees' effectiveness*.

As part of her work, Professor Stirbu considered the features of committee effectiveness. One feature arising from her research is:

Effective committees have Members who are fully engaged and interested in their work. Members are prepared, are listening, and supporting each other in committee sessions.

Committee Chairs expect members of their committees to be fully engaged with all aspects of a committee's work, and to prioritise committee work over other commitments for the full duration of committee meetings (including any private items scheduled). This is essential if committees are to be effective in the delivery of their objectives.

Of course, there are legitimate reasons why a member might not be able to engage fully with the work of a committee. In such circumstances, a Member should discuss this with the relevant committee Chair. The committee Chair can take account of this, from the perspective of supporting the Member, and delivering the committee's objectives.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Elin Jones'.

Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS

Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Chair, Children, Young People, and Education Committee
Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
Chair, Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee
Chair, Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
Chair, Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Chair, Local Government and Housing Committee

12 December 2022

Dear Committee Chairs,

Draft Budget 2023-24

I wrote to you prior to the summer recess in relation to the Finance Committee's pre-Budget engagement work and the Committee's Plenary debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities for the forthcoming Budget. I am now writing to provide a further update on the Draft Budget scrutiny.

Consultation

At the start of the autumn term, the Finance Committee undertook a consultation seeking information on the Draft Budget on behalf of all Committees. We received 29 responses which are available on the Finance Committee webpage.

Timetable

As you will be aware the publication of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget has been delayed again this year due to the UK Autumn Statement that was announced on 17 November. The Minister for Finance and Local Government (the Minister) has confirmed that she will publish the outline and detailed Draft Budget together on 13 December. The Minister will appear before the Finance Committee on 14 December for an initial evidence session on the Draft Budget.

Budget focus

The focus of this year's budget is likely to centre on the cost of living crisis, rising energy costs and high inflation. In addition, the Finance Committee has identified a number of areas which we would like to see the focus of scrutiny, these are:

- what impact are inflationary pressures having on revenue and capital budgets and how has this changed affordability of previous plans;
- how resources should be targeted to support economic recovery and what sectors in particular need to be prioritised;
- to what extent alleviating climate change should be prioritised in supporting economic recovery;
- how budget allocations support aspirations of the Net Zero Wales plan;
- Welsh Government policies to reduce poverty and the impact of cost of living crisis and gender inequality;
- approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocations (preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early);
- sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation;
- how evidence is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations;
- how the Welsh Government should use taxation powers and borrowing;
- support for businesses, economic growth and agriculture post-EU transition;
- what are the key opportunities for Government investment to support 'building back better' (i.e. supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act).

In addition, the following areas were identified as priorities during the Committee's stakeholder and engagement events during the summer term:

- tackling inequality and poverty – what are the priorities and how suitable is the current support given the proportion of people living in relative income poverty in Wales?

- NHS waiting lists – is there evidence of a robust plan, supported by adequate resources, to address the record number of people in Wales on waiting lists for planned or non-urgent NHS treatment, is it clear this is a priority for the Welsh Government?
- children and young people – is sufficient funding being provided and appropriately directed to support children and young people whose education, development, mental health and well-being have been affected by the pandemic?
- issues for long term sustainability of NHS, social care, further and higher education, local government and other public services, including how they can make efficiencies and transform how they deliver services.
- economy and infrastructure – are the right schemes being prioritised to support Welsh businesses and the economy, how does the Welsh Government enable Wales to prosper post COVID-19 and Brexit?
- how should the Budget address the needs of people living in rural communities and develop rural economies?
- creating a greener Wales – are Welsh Government’s plans to move to a greener economy clear and is sufficient investment being made to tackle climate change and its impacts? Do these plans need to be revised to reflect the increased urgency to reduce reliance on gas and oil given the war in Ukraine?
- third sector and volunteering – how can the Welsh Government support third sector organisations as they deal with financial challenges and increased demand for some services as a result of the cost of living crisis and pandemic.
- taxation – How should the Welsh Government use its tax raising and borrowing powers and do you feel these powers should be expanded, kept the same or reduced?

We hope that the [consultation](#) and [engagement work](#) will complement and inform the work of policy Committees and I would encourage you to use some of the areas outlined above as the focus for your budget scrutiny.

Budget Process Protocol

As mentioned, the publication of the Welsh Government Draft Budget has been delayed again this year. This is the fourth consecutive year there has been a delay, which has resulted in curtailed scrutiny periods for the Senedd. The Finance Committee therefore believes the time is right to review the [Budget Process Protocol](#) that was introduced in 2017. Whilst the protocol has many benefits, we believe it requires updating to reflect established practices and recent experiences, particularly the trend in recent years for the publication of the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget to be delayed in

light of the timing of UK fiscal events. I have recently written to the Minister proposing changes in the following areas:

- formalising the Committee's pre-budget engagement and scrutiny work; and
- providing greater certainty in relation to the timing of the Draft Budget.

The Minister has previously expressed a willingness to engage with the Finance Committee on this issue, and we hope that she will consider these changes to be proportionate. I will update Committee Chairs on this issue once I have received the Minister's response. The Finance Committee hopes that these changes can be addressed and implemented ahead of the 2024-25 budget round.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the Draft Budget process, please feel free to contact me or the Clerk to the Finance Committee, Owain Roberts, 0300 200 6388, seneddfinance@senedd.wales.

Yours sincerely,



Peredur Owen Griffiths
Chair, Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

14 December 2022

Dear Jenny

Legislative Consent: Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill

You will be aware that the UK Government has introduced to the UK Parliament the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill (the Bill). If passed, the Bill would set in motion the UK Government's plan to retain, revoke or reform thousands of pieces of retained EU law (REUL). It would also begin a countdown to 31 December 2023, when the majority of REUL will automatically expire unless Ministers take action to save or reform it. Of concern to us, as legislators, is the fact that the Bill would enable Ministers, rather than parliaments, to significantly alter the UK's regulatory and legal landscape.

My Committee has, for some time, been keeping a watching eye on the UK Government's plan for REUL, and we began asking questions of the Welsh Government some months ago.

With the laying of the Bill before the UK Parliament, and in anticipation of the Welsh Government bringing forward the likely necessary consent memorandum, my Committee agreed to seek the views of stakeholders both in Wales and across the UK. We sought views on a number of matters including to what extent the Bill might impact Wales' regulatory landscape; what role should the Senedd have in the revocation and reform of REUL in devolved areas; the Welsh Government's decision not to carry out its own assessment of REUL, including not forming its own view on what is devolved and what is reserved; and whether the Bill might introduce new limitations for the Welsh Government, which wants to improve pre-Brexit standards, where possible.

Enclosed are the submissions we received from the Wales Governance Centre and Wales Council for Voluntary Action, and the Public Law Project. We believe this evidence may be of interest to your Committee.

You will also be aware that the Welsh Government has now laid before the Senedd a legislative consent memorandum in respect of the Bill, and that my Committee has lead responsibility for scrutinising the memorandum.

At our meeting on Monday 5 December, we took evidence from Mick Antoniw MS, the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, in respect of the Bill and the Welsh Government's legislative consent memorandum. You may wish to note that the Counsel General repeated his concerns that the implementation of the Bill, should it be passed and enacted, has the potential to overwhelm the governments of the UK. You may also wish to note that concerns about implications for Senedd Business and for the Welsh Government's own legislative programme were also discussed.

I am writing to other Senedd Committees to draw attention to the evidence we received which falls within the remit and interests of their Committees.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies

Huw Irranca-Davies
Chair

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality & Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

15 December 2022

Dear Jenny,

Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

During the General Principles debate on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill on 29 November 2022 I stated that I would write to you to confirm in more detail the Welsh Government's responses to your Committee's recommendations.

As I said during the debate, I am grateful to the Committee for its considered stage 1 scrutiny, and for recommendation 1 which confirmed that a majority of the Committee agreed that the Senedd should support the Bill's general principles.

Recommendation 2 is a broad-ranging recommendation which is accepted in principle on the basis that:

- i. The Welsh Government is already engaging with social partners as part of our Theory of Change refresh. The Theory of Change research will enable us to identify the key outputs and outcomes expected from the Bill and the data needed to monitor and evaluate progress. It will not be possible, however, to specify outcomes and key metrics relating to specific policy initiatives that may arise in future from the work of the Social Partnership Council ('SPC'); or in relation to the operation of the Social Partnership Duty by specified public bodies; or regarding how public bodies may operationalise the 'Fair Work' amendment to the "Prosperous Wales" goal within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('WFG Act'). This is because we simply do not know at this stage what issues Ministers may ask the SPC to provide advice on, or what issues the SPC may choose to focus on itself, nor how the new duties on public bodies will influence their decision-making and actions in future. Specifying metrics and outcomes would require that we prejudge all of these things or make assumptions that may not turn out to be correct;

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Hannah.Blythyn@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Hannah.Blythyn@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- ii. As far as the socially responsible procurement duties are concerned, we are currently in the process of working through outcomes and metrics as part of the Social Value project, although this work will not be completed in time for us to share the outcomes with the Committee as part of the scrutiny process. Our evaluation framework will, however, be published in due course; and
- iii. We are updating the Explanatory Memorandum and RIA, and whilst we are satisfied that we have clearly spelled out the overall vision of the Bill, as part of that work we will consider how we can develop further the narrative underpinning the Bill.

In relation to recommendation 3 which asks that we set out terms of reference for the SPC, I confirmed during the debate that the Welsh Government would not be accepting this recommendation on the basis that the Bill itself defines the functions of the SPC and how it will be constituted, as well as bestowing on it wide supplementary powers and functions in pursuit of those functions, which the Welsh Government believes is the right balance. Work is already under way with social partners, through the Social Partnership Forum, to prepare the ground for the SPC. This includes practical arrangements and discussions on an initial work programme. I will keep the Committee updated on the work of the Forum.

Recommendation 4 is accepted, and the Welsh Government will bring forward a stage 2 amendment to add a duty to consult with other Social Partnership Council members before making revisions to the Council's procedures.

Recommendations 5 and 6 are not accepted. As per my response to recommendation 3 above, and as I said during the debate, the Welsh Government's view is that the SPC should have flexibility to determine its own ways of working - in keeping with the principles of social partnership. Nothing in the Bill would prevent a task and finish approach to some, or perhaps all, of the SPC's work. Neither do we intend to provide in legislation for any additional sub-groups. Again, it will be a matter for the SPC to determine what sub-groups it wishes to establish in the context of its work programme which will change and develop over time.

Recommendation 7 is accepted in principle. I am currently considering potential approaches which would aim to ensure that non-Wales TUC affiliated union members are also represented on the Council. I will write to you again ahead of our stage 2 Committee session to inform you of my intentions in regard to this matter.

Recommendation 8 is accepted. The Welsh Government agrees that the SPC must reflect all walks of Welsh life, and we are already working with social partners, through the Social Partnership Forum, to ensure that appointments to the Council are as broad and representative as they can be.

Recommendation 9 is rejected. I set out in some detail during the general principles debate the reasons why the Welsh Government does not accept that a mediation or dispute resolution mechanism is necessary. The section 16 duty requires public bodies to seek rather than to achieve consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions or their staff representatives in setting their well-being objectives. If, for whatever reason, it is not possible to reach agreement despite best efforts, the duty to seek consensus or compromise will nonetheless have been discharged. There would, in effect, be nothing to mediate between the two parties involved. Where there may be concerns about how a public body goes about discharging its statutory functions, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has powers to investigate complaints against public bodies, including complaints of maladministration, and the Auditor General for Wales's role includes examining how public bodies manage and spend public money, including how they achieve value in the delivery of public services. Ultimately, the actions of public bodies may be challenged in the

courts

Recommendation 10 is accepted on the basis that we have already committed to produce specific guidance on Fair Work. This will support public bodies to set objectives that maximise the body's contribution to fair work as part of the Prosperous Wales well-being goal and the steps and actions they may take, although as is the case now, it will continue to be for public bodies to decide their objectives and the steps they will take to meet those objectives as part of their well-being duty under the WFG Act.

The short time available to me to respond during the debate meant that I was unable to explain fully why the Welsh Government's is unable to accept recommendations 11 and 12 which relate to the Future Generations Commissioner's role and to public bodies' global responsibilities under the WFG Act.

In relation to recommendation 11, the Bill will not impose any additional duties, powers, or obligations on the Commissioner. The Commissioner's office, like any other body, will need to engage with the social partnership agenda as it becomes a central part of how public bodies work in Wales. It is for the Commissioner to determine their priorities in delivering their general duty to promote the sustainable development principle. Fair Work will be one of many outcomes described in the seven well-being goals which the Commissioner will contribute to through their work on promoting the sustainable development principle in guiding how public bodies work. As far as the Commissioner's funding is concerned, the Minister for Social Justice is currently considering the statutory estimate from the Commissioner's office as part of ongoing budget discussions. If it is decided that the Commissioner requires additional funding to support the proposed additional bodies subject to the well-being duty following the consultation, we will ensure that this information is conveyed to the Committee.

I would also like to add to what I said in plenary in relation to the Committee's recommendation 12, which asks that we bring forward an amendment to the Bill regarding the globally responsible well-being goal, and to address the issues raised by Fair Trade Wales et al in their briefing note to Members. These concerns relate to how a contracting organisation's "area" is defined in section 22(3) of the Bill as "the area by reference to which the authority primarily exercises its functions, disregarding any areas outside Wales" (in respect of which the Bill cannot make provision). To be clear, this "disregarding" provision refers to where the functions of a body can operate or be discharged, which, for legislation made by the Senedd, is Wales. It does not stop a contracting authority from considering issues such as modern slavery in supply chains overseas, or environmental matters across the world. And, to the extent that authorities are subject to the sustainable development duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act, they will actively be required to take steps to contribute to the globally responsible Wales well-being goal, which means that in carrying out their well-being duties, they must take account of whether a particular action may make a positive contribution to global well-being. I said during the debate that I would arrange to meet with representatives of those organisations who submitted the briefing note. I will update the Committee on the outcome of that meeting once it has taken place.

In relation to recommendation 13, which the Welsh Government accepts, I will update the Committee once further discussions have been held with the Office for National Statistics and the Charity Commission in relation to the potential impacts of bringing these bodies within the scope of the socially responsible procurement duties of the Bill.

In relation to recommendation 14, which is also accepted, we will set out further detail in the revised Explanatory Memorandum to clarify how the Public Procurement duty, set out in the Regulations which are supplemental to the Public Sector Equality Duty, and the socially responsible procurement duty in the Bill, align.

In relation to recommendation 15, as I stated during the debate, the Welsh Government agrees with the premise that we should be using public procurement to support the Welsh economy and that this might potentially be achieved through setting targets. However, we do not necessarily agree with the Committee's view that including targets on the face of the Bill would 'ensure that the aims of the socially responsible procurement duty are realised'. Discussions with partners are continuing in relation to this issue, and I will provide the Committee with further information on the outcome of those discussions ahead of the stage 2 Committee session in January.

Recommendation 16 is accepted, subject to the outcome of the discussions currently under way in relation to recommendation 15. However, the Committee should note that whilst the Government will look to means to include the address of the contractor for each contract on the register, the inclusion of 'any other information required to facilitate data-gathering and monitoring needed for the setting' will be difficult to achieve at this stage given that we are not yet in a position to specify what we intend to measure and therefore what data will be required to assess the contribution of procurement to the Welsh economy. As in relation to recommendation 15, further information will be provided to the Committee on this point once a position has been reached following discussions with key stakeholders. It should also be noted that the purpose of the contracts register is to aid transparency for potential suppliers etc. Data will be collected and reported as part of the annual reporting process.

In relation to recommendation 17, which is accepted, I will ensure that the revised Explanatory Memorandum includes further detail on the procurement and contract management workforce training that will be put in place to support the sector ahead of implementation.

Recommendation 18 asks that the Welsh Government clarifies the roles and relationship between the Procurement Centre of Excellence and the SPC's procurement sub-group and how it intends to ensure that the Procurement Centre of Excellence and SPC's procurement sub-group will play a role in driving the collaboration and improvement agenda forward. A Procurement Centre of Excellence is in the process of being set up. Its establishment is not included in this Bill. However, if passed, this new legislation will require both challenge and support. The SPC's Procurement Sub-group will form part of the challenge function, along with other arrangements for oversight which will be needed to cover procurement reform more generally. The Centre of Excellence, once established, will be part of the support function. The two will work together in that the challenge function (SPC Sub-group and oversight function) will identify where more support is needed (including from the Centre of Excellence) to enable public bodies to meet their socially responsible procurement duties under this Bill. By providing this clarification I consider the Welsh Government to have accepted recommendation 18.

The Welsh Government also accepts recommendation 19. I can confirm that we will work with industry bodies and representatives involved in construction procurement to develop robust guidance on how socially responsible procurement obligations and risk should be shared through the whole of the supply chain. This is already an important consideration for the development of the social public works clauses and the supporting statutory guidance. Whilst cultural and behavioural issues are more difficult to address via legislation, the reporting requirements should help to identify good and poor performance.

We also accept recommendation 20 and will ensure that reporting requirements resulting from this legislation are streamlined to ensure an appropriate balance between the need to increase transparency, keep the administrative burden placed on public bodies to a minimum, and avoid duplication of reporting requirements from other duties.

Recommendation 21 asks that we provide more detail on how procurement investigations will interact with existing powers held by the Future Generations Commissioner. I said during the debate that the Welsh Government accepts this recommendation. I also mentioned, however, that we will need to wait until the subordinate legislation to be made under the UK Government's Procurement Act, and the oversight arrangements to be put in place under that Act, are introduced before we are able to describe fully how these various bodies will work together in Wales. So, whilst I commit to providing this clarification, it is highly unlikely that I will be able to do so before the completion of the Senedd's scrutiny of this Bill.

In relation to recommendation 22, I explained during the debate why it is that the Welsh Government is unable to support this recommendation. In our view it would not be appropriate to require Welsh Ministers to consult the auditor general before the announcement of every investigation as such decisions should be at the discretion of Ministers. Recommendation 22 also asks that we set out the criteria that would trigger an investigation under section 41. In response to this point, I will provide the Committee with more detailed examples of the types of circumstances that might trigger an investigation before the stage 2 Committee session.

I also set out during the debate why we would be rejecting recommendation 23. I explained our view that provisions on the face of the Bill detailing the criteria that would trigger an investigation under section 41 would be too restrictive. I will ensure, however, that a non-exhaustive list of criteria is included in the guidance we will be publishing in support of this part of the Bill, which is the appropriate place for it.

Recommendation 24 is accepted in principle only on the basis that whilst the Welsh Government is happy to make a commitment to publish the statutory guidance in draft form for a minimum of six weeks' consultation, we do not accept that there should be a specific requirement on Ministers to consult with the Senedd as part of that exercise. The Government considers that the consultation it will undertake with stakeholders on the draft statutory guidance will ensure that it is fit for purpose and targeted at the audience to which it will be addressed.

In relation to recommendation 25, I confirmed during the debate that this recommendation is accepted, and that work is already underway on updating the RIA – although as I made clear in plenary, there is a limit as to what is possible in terms of estimating financial costs and savings in such exercises. As is customary, we will of course engage with our key stakeholders in undertaking this further work.

Recommendation 26 is also accepted. As I said during the debate, the Welsh Government agrees with the Committee's view that it is important for us to consider whether extra facility time will be needed for trade unions to fulfil their obligations relating to the Bill. I mentioned that we are currently undertaking a project consulting with employers and union representatives to better understand current ways of working and to explore the possible impact these additional requirements might have at a local level. However, we already know that the level of facility time currently made available varies greatly across employers, and that this will continue to be the case after implementation. In addition, the costs associated with facility time release also vary significantly and are often dependant on the substantive role of particular individuals. Modelling the potential costs and benefits across the piece is therefore extremely difficult, but we will provide as much additional detail as we are able to capture in the time available before we are required to lay the revised RIA.

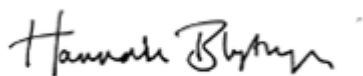
Recommendation 27 asked that we publish "the agenda, minutes and outputs for the Shadow Social Partnership Council since start of the pandemic in 2020. To enable transparency these documents should be published before the end of 2022". In the debate

I said that the Government rejected this recommendation, but in response to recommendation 28, which we accept in principle, we would provide to the Committee a summary report on the work of the SSPC. We do not accept recommendation 27 because we do not share the Committee's view that publishing these documents would be 'in line with what is being proposed for the SPC' and would "inform the work of the [Social Partnership] Forum". The SSPC was established very specifically as a forum to address the challenges of the pandemic, and as such the agendas and minutes of the meetings themselves would be of no practical benefit to those engaged in the work that is now underway in preparing the ground for the SPC. The report that I will provide to the Committee will, however, demonstrate how the social partnership approach proved effective in ensuring Ministers were able to consider a range of different perspectives when taking decisions on complex issues during the pandemic.

I trust that the information provided in this letter is useful to the Committee. I will write to you again before we reconvene for our stage 2 deliberations in January to provide more information in relation to recommendations 3, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 22 and 28. I will also ensure that the Committee Clerk is informed as soon as our stage 2 government amendments have been published on the Documents Laid webpage.

I have attached for information copies of the letters I have sent to the chairs of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Finance Committee, and I am sending a copy of this letter to the chairs of both of those Committees also.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Blythyn AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of the Finance Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

15 December 2022

Dear Peredur,

Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

During the General Principles debate on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill on 29 November 2022 I stated that I would write to you to confirm in more detail the Welsh Government's responses to your Committee's recommendations.

Recommendation 1 asks that we update the Regulatory Impact Assessment to model costs based on current/forecast inflation data. I confirm that we accept this recommendation and will update the analysis to reflect inflation and relevant pay agreements since the RIA was originally prepared.

Recommendation 2 is accepted - but accepted only in principle - as it relates to matters wider than this Bill for which I am responsible as lead Minister. Given the broad scope of the recommendation, it has been shared with Cabinet colleagues, and the Welsh Treasury has been asked to consider how supplementary financial information which incorporates general price inflation might best be presented in future Explanatory Memoranda. The Committee will receive a full response on this matter in due course.

Recommendation 3 is rejected. As I mentioned during the debate, there is a limit to what is achievable in terms of estimating the potential costs and benefits of legislative changes of this kind. We are not able to identify the extent to which contracting authorities are already carrying out socially responsible procurement, and so the costings in the RIA are based on our assessment of the work that would be needed to review existing documents and processes and make the necessary changes. Having said that, I also committed during the debate to undertaking as thorough an update of the RIA as time allows between now and the re-laying deadline before stage 3, and as part of that work we will explore whether there is any way of providing a greater level of detail in relation to Part 3 of the Bill.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Hannah.Blythyn@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Hannah.Blythyn@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Recommendation 4 requests that the Welsh Government “work with the Scottish Government to see if there are any lessons learnt around cost impact and report back to the Committee with those findings”. I accepted this recommendation on the basis that we have already engaged with Scottish Government to discuss the costs and timescales associated with their procurement legislation, and I can assure the Committee that this information was used to develop the costings presented in the RIA.

Recommendation 5, which is accepted, asks that we undertake “further work analysing and estimating the cost benefits of the whole Bill once the relevant data is available and this information should form part of the post-implementation review”. I can confirm that costs and benefits will be considered, as far as is possible, as part of our post-implementation review work.

In relation to recommendation 6, which we also accept, it is important that I be clear with the Committee that whilst we agree that any additional requirements placed on businesses must be proportionate (the procurement duties have been intentionally designed in a way that provides for them to be applied proportionately), the due diligence requirements in relation to socially responsible outcomes will have to be paid for, and will therefore need to be factored in to bid costs. This will inevitably mean that some cost increases will have to be passed on to customers.

Recommendation 7 is accepted in principle. This legislation will not be the sole causative influence on take-up of the real living wage over time, and as such it will be impossible to disaggregate its effect from the many other factors at play. Welsh Government will however undertake a separate exercise to assess take-up of the real living wage alongside our post-implementation review work.

Recommendation 8 asks that we provide support specifically for small and medium-sized businesses to enable them to participate in contracts. I accept this recommendation and can assure the Committee that this is something that Welsh Government is already committed to.

In the debate I said that the Welsh Government would not be able to accept recommendation 9 because an analysis of the impact of the construction contract management duty on small and medium-sized businesses is simply not possible in the time available. We have not yet developed the detail of what will be required by the construction contract management duties, and so we are unable to analyse the potential impact any more than we have already done - the details of which are included in the RIA.

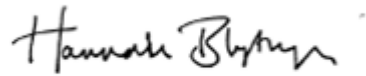
In relation to recommendation 10, we will be publishing a summary of the consultation on extending the well-being duty to new devolved public bodies shortly. An RIA will also be produced in relation to any regulations which may be required as a result. In relation to the Future Generations Commissioner’s funding, I understand that the Minister for Social Justice is currently considering the statutory estimate from the Commissioner’s office as part of ongoing budget discussions. If it is decided that the Commissioner requires additional funding to support the proposed additional bodies subject to the well-being duty, we will ensure that this information is conveyed to the Committee.

Finally, I confirm that the Welsh Government accepts recommendation 11 and will include a mid-term assessment outlining financial costs as part of our post-implementation evaluation work.

I trust that the information provided in this letter is useful to the Committee.

I have attached for information copies of the letters I have sent to the chairs of the Equality and Social Justice Committee and the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, and I am sending a copy of this letter to the chairs of both of those Committees also.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hannah Blythyn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small mark at the end.

Hannah Blythyn AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

15 December 2022

Dear Huw,

Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

During the General Principles debate on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill on 29 November 2022 I stated that I would write to you to confirm in more detail the Welsh Government's responses to your Committee's recommendations.

I confirmed in the debate that the Welsh Government would not be accepting recommendation 1 because we do not consider it appropriate to include within the Bill's 'Interpretation' section a definition which is set out elsewhere only in statutory guidance. The guidance referred to is issued under a separate power (as opposed to duty) in another Act and serves a specific purpose which may not align with the duties under this Bill and, indeed, that guidance may change in the future or could, potentially, be withdrawn by a future Government. As I said in plenary, the Bill provides for Welsh Ministers to issue guidance to public bodies on the operation of the Social Partnership Duty and that is the appropriate way in which to deal with matters like this.

Recommendation 2 is accepted. We will develop and publish advice to assist individuals and organisations to improve their understanding of fair work, their awareness of the benefits of fair work, and illustrative examples of steps that organisations can take to promote fair work. This advice will be of particular interest to those organisations who are subject to the provisions of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and the trade unions who represent workers in those organisations. However, we also intend to make the advice of broader interest to businesses, employers, and trade unions more generally.

I set out my reasons for rejecting recommendation 3 during the debate. We will not be applying the negative procedure to the power to issue the public services outsourcing and workforce code because the Code is not legislative, and as such it would not be appropriate for it to be made subject to the negative procedure as if it had legislative force. The Code will however be subject to wide consultation, which will help ensure it is targeted to the

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Hannah.Blythyn@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Hannah.Blythyn@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Back Page 18
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

audience it addresses.

The Welsh Government accepts recommendations 4 and 5 and we will bring forward amendments at stage 2 to add to the Bill a specific duty to consult in relation to the Code to be made under section 32 and the guidance to be made under section 31.

Recommendation 6 is not accepted for the reasons I set out in plenary: namely that we will be developing the Code in social partnership and in consultation with stakeholders. In order to do this we will need to engage these groups from the beginning. This approach means we will not be in a position to publish a draft version of the Code before stage 3 takes place in March.

I said during the debate that I would provide you with further details as to why recommendations 7 and 8 are rejected. These recommendations ask that we amend the Bill so that the regulations to be made under sections 38(3)(a) and 38(3)(b) are subject to the affirmative procedure, rather than the negative procedure. The Committee is aware that in determining which procedure is most appropriate Ministers apply the principles set out in the [Welsh Government guidelines on subordinate legislation: draft affirmative or negative assembly procedure](#).

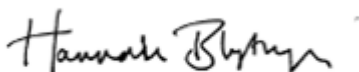
Any regulations we make under 38(3)(a) and 38(3)(b) will be to provide details of any further matters (in addition to those already set out in sections 38(1) and (2)) that contracting authorities' procurement strategies must contain. This is essentially a future-proofing arrangement to ensure that any changes in procurement practice - which could be dictated by wider statutory changes over which the Welsh Government may have no discretion - are able to be applied if this should become necessary. We are satisfied that the negative procedure provides sufficient opportunity for democratic scrutiny of any regulations made in exercise of this power.

Finally, in relation to recommendation 9, I wish to reiterate the apology I made in plenary to the Committee: the reference to a 'convention' in my letter of 15 October was included in error and I acknowledge that no such convention exists.

I trust that the information provided in this letter is useful to the Committee. I will also ensure that the Committee Clerk is informed as soon as our stage 2 government amendments have been published on the Documents Laid webpage.

I have attached for information copies of the letters I have sent to the chairs of the Equality and Social Justice Committee and the Finance Committee, and I am sending a copy of this letter to the chairs of both of those Committees also.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Blythyn AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Partneriaeth Gymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

—
**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Julie Morgan MS
Deputy Minister for Social Services

16 December 2022

Childcare workforce

Dear Julie,

During a recent Committee discussion on the forward work programme, we agreed to seek further information on the childcare workforce. We are aware that with the Welsh Government's existing Childcare Offer and the Co-operation Agreement to expand free childcare to all two years, including a focus on providing and strengthening the provision of Welsh medium childcare, that a key component to deliver these commitments will be having an sufficient number of trained childcare professionals across Wales.

In responding to the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report on childcare "[Minding the Future](#)" and specifically their recommendation around the lack of ethnic diversity in the sector, the Government [stated](#) there would be a review of the 10 year plan for childcare, playwork and early years workforce. Please could you provide us with an update on this review, when you expect it to be completed, and commit to sharing a copy of the review with the Committee when completed?

In light of the shared areas of interest, I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

We would appreciate a response by Wednesday 18 January.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
SeneddPlant@senedd.cymru
senedd.cymru/SeneddPlant
0300 200 6565

—
Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
SeneddChildren@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/SeneddChildren
0300 200 6565

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister

19 December 2022

Dear First Minister

Scrutiny of the financial implications of Bills

Thank you for your letter of 7 December, in response to the Finance Committee's request for the Welsh Government to revert back to the practice of providing a written response to Committee Stage 1 reports prior to the Stage 1 debate taking place.

It is disappointing that you are not able to give a commitment to this modest request. Your letter suggests that "it is during the Stage 1 debate that Ministers provide an explanation of the Government's response to the recommendations in each Committee report". However, we believe that this should not be considered common practice as it is not always possible for Ministers to provide a full and thorough response to each recommendation given the limited time available during the debate itself. As highlighted in my initial letter, it is standard practice that the Financial Resolution motion is taken immediately after the Stage 1 motion has been agreed. The Senedd therefore has very little time to consider the Government's response, before having to make a decision to commit resources.

You also state that there may be circumstances where more time is required to consider certain recommendations or where the detail needed to provide an informed response is not available in advance of the Stage 1 debate. Given that the timetables for Government Bills are proposed by the Welsh Government, with the Business Committee agreeing the deadlines for Stages 1 and 2, consideration should be given to moving away from the practice of voting on the Financial Resolution motion on the same day as the Stage 1 debate takes place. A similar decision was taken in the Fourth Assembly, reversing the default position to delaying voting on the Stage 4 motion until a week after Stage 3 proceedings had concluded, to allow Members the opportunity to consider the



final version of a Bill prior to the Senedd being asked to approve it. We believe the same principle should apply to the Financial Resolution motion. This would allow time for Members to reflect on the Welsh Government's response to the Finance Committee's report. We consider this to be particularly important given that there is no further opportunity for the Senedd to formally consider the financial implications of Bills after the motion has been agreed.

Finally, you state that legislation "may be novel" and that there may be "situations where multiple varying factors mean precise costings are not achievable until the provision is tested and assessed". The Committee acknowledges these challenges, however, it is not acceptable for the Welsh Government to simply not attempt to calculate the potential costs of legislation. The Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is a key tool to critically assess a range of methods explored in relation to the development of a legislative proposal and to provide an evidence based approach to policy making-decisions. We recognise that "precise costings" may not always be possible but it is imperative that RIAs contain the best estimate possible for costs and benefits to enable us to fully scrutinise the overall financial implications of a Bill, a point we have made as a Committee on a number of occasions.

We find it regrettable that the RIAs that have accompanied Bills introduced so far this Senedd seem to be more of a "by-product" of the decision-making process, rather than the tool driving it. The latest Bill we considered, the Agricultural (Wales) Bill, is a framework Bill where a significant proportion of costs relate to a future Sustainable Land Management scheme that will not be finalised until next year. In these situations, the Senedd may end up agreeing a Financial Resolution to a Bill based on the information contained in the RIA on introduction that subsequently could escalate significantly. This lack of clarity makes our role as a Finance Committee very challenging and significantly hampers our ability to take a decision on whether or not costs are reasonable.

Should the Welsh Government continue to provide RIAs where information is incomplete or insufficient, it will leave the Committee with little choice but to compel Ministers to reappear before the Committee once the information requested is available to ensure the financial information provided by the Welsh Government stands up to robust scrutiny.

As you are aware, a number of Senedd Committee have raised similar concerns regarding the timeliness of Welsh Government responses ahead of Stage 1 debates. This paints an unfortunate picture and calls into question the spirit in which the Welsh Government engages with the Senedd on legislative matters. I therefore ask you to reflect on the issues above and reconsider the Welsh Government's position of providing a written response to the Finance Committee's reports prior to the Stage 1 debate and to give consideration to tabling the Financial Resolution motion at least a week after Stage 1 has been



agreed. Given the current pressures on public finances it is more important than ever that the Welsh Government provides as much clarity and assurance as possible before Members are required to authorise spending arising from a Bill.

As these issues cut across Committee remits, a copy of this letter has been sent to the Chairs of all Senedd Committees.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peredur Owen Griffiths MS'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'P' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of the Finance Committee

7 December 2022

Dear Peredur,

Scrutiny of the financial implications of Bills

I am writing in response to your letter of 16 November 2022 regarding the scrutiny of the financial implications of Government Bills.

Your letter highlights concern that the Welsh Government has moved away from practice in the Fifth Senedd where Welsh Ministers provided written responses to Stage 1 reports in advance of the General Principles debate and Financial Resolution.

It is during the Stage 1 debate that Ministers provide an explanation of the Government's response to the recommendations in each Committee report and in most, but not all, circumstances have provided further detail through a formal letter.

While there were occasions during the Fifth Senedd where the Government responses were issued before or on the date of the General Principles debate, this was not routine practice for all Bills. In fact, over half of responses were issued in writing after the debate or provided verbally during the debate.

Ministers endeavour to respond to the Committees as soon as reasonably possible but it is not always practical for Welsh Ministers to do this prior to the Stage 1 debate for every Bill, so in practice these written responses may be provided after the debate has taken place.

There may be circumstances where more time is required to consider the implications of the recommendations or where the detail needed to provide an informed response is not available in advance of the Stage 1 debate. In addition, the legislation may be novel and while we aim to provide best estimates of the likely costs, there are situations where multiple varying factors mean precise costings are not achievable until the provision is

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Mark.Drakeford@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Mark.Drakeford@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

tested and assessed. Nonetheless, we will continue to inform the Finance Committee of the financial information relating to each Bill as they go through the various Senedd scrutiny stages.

In addition, Welsh Ministers will continue the practice established during the Fifth Senedd of writing to the subject and Finance Committees in advance of Stage 3 proceedings of a Bill if significant changes have been made to the Regulatory Impact Assessment post Stage 2.

Your letter along with this reply has been copied to all Welsh Ministers. This reply is also issued to the Business Committee and the Chairs of Policy Committees.

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

MARK DRAKEFORD

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

21 December 2022

Dear Jenny,

The second meeting of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly

The UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) provides for the establishment of a UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly (PPA) as part of its governance structures. The PPA plays an important role in overseeing the implementation of the TCA and any future UK-EU agreements.

It is the only body that can hold to account the Partnership Council, the body with overall responsibility for the TCA. It is made up of European Commission representatives and UK Government Ministers.

We represented the Senedd at the second meeting of the UK-EU PPA on 7-8 November. During this meeting the issue of citizens' rights was discussed and we were able to highlight the important work your Committee has done on this issue. We therefore wanted to draw your attention to our [short report](#) on the outcome of the proceedings and in particular the conclusions reached on citizens' rights.

Our report also made a number of recommendations on how the Senedd could make the most of the engagement opportunities presented by the PPA. These include:

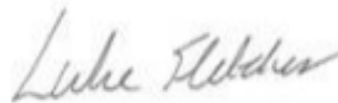
- providing reports of matters of interest to other Senedd committees such as the Equality and Social Justice Committee; and
- working with Senedd committees to develop informal relationships with members of the UK and EU delegations to the PPA.

We hope to take this work forward in the new year in advance of the next meeting of the PPA in May 2023 and hope this report is of interest to your Committee in the meantime.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee



Luke Fletcher
Member
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee

06 January 2023

Ms Jenny Rathbone MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Dear Jenny,

Equality and Social Justice Committee evidence session: follow-up questions

Thank you very much for your invitation to appear before the committee and give evidence on the two issues of the experience of women offenders and the experience of children and young people in court with speech and language difficulties.

At the meeting, I undertook to write to the committee with some further details on some of the questions. I set out the further information below. I hope the committee finds it useful as it continues its inquiries.

Women offenders

Impacts of the pre-sentence report (PSR) pilots

At the session, I emphasised that pre-sentence reports were absolutely key in helping magistrates identify complex needs of women offenders. Magistrates are highly reliant on the suggestions of probation made through the pre-sentence reports, so the lack of information specific to the needs of female offenders can limit the options available to sentencers.

As the pilots began during an exceptional time for probation, with the reunification of the service and in the context of the pandemic, it is too early to assess impact. However, we consider that anything which has the potential to improve early identification and treatment of complex needs should be welcomed.

The pilots' impact should be regularly monitored and fed back to stakeholders, including magistrates, to ensure that they can be confident that the alternative delivery model works for female offenders as a distinct priority group.

The resourcing of PSR pilots

You asked me if I had evidence of the resourcing of these pilots. We are not aware of the funding decisions which govern these pilots. Decisions governing investment in individual pilots is a matter for the Ministry of Justice.

We know that confidence in the long-term viability and availability of services is a key element of the confidence sentencers have in alternatives to custody as a whole. It is important, therefore, that investment to fulfil the aims of the Female Offending Blueprint as a whole must be on a sustainable basis.

Observed regional disparities in short sentences

The committee asked me about observed regional disparities in short sentences across Wales. It is difficult to explain these disparities in the absence of robust and detailed data. Statistics on offender outcomes are not broken down very clearly. In their current form, they obscure many variables that might reveal the factors which make custody unavoidable. That is one of the reasons why the Magistrates' Association calls for greater open data, as a key element of open justice, so that it is possible to learn from the data and to better understand disparities.

As it stands, the data does not currently make clear what offenders are sentenced for, whether the sentence is their first sentence or if they have been sentenced on breach, and the individual's offending history. It also does not make clear how many custodial sentences are due to an offender not agreeing to be subject to a community order instead.

Magistrates must sentence according to guidelines published by the Sentencing Council. These set out, among other things:

- The starting points for sentencing of a particular offence
- The factors the bench should consider makes the offence more harmful
- Factors that make the impact of the offence worse (aggravating factors), and those which can be seen to mitigate it (mitigating factors).

The guidelines point magistrates to the starting point when custody is unavoidable or when the case is serious enough, but they also strongly emphasise that the bench must consider the impact of sentencing on women, as they are aware that the impact on women of a custodial sentence is usually greater. The impact on dependants must be considered as a mitigating factor when considering whether an offender should be sentenced to custody.

While the content of the PSR is helpful to the bench in understanding alternatives to custody, whether these recommendations are made hinges on the availability of services (for example, whether there is a women's centre, and the viability of curfew).

Where there are no viable options available in the community and the threshold for custody is reached, the bench must sentence a female offender to custody. This, as I told the committee, shows the importance of robust community alternatives, such as residential women centres, in reducing custodial sentences which members tell us they feel adds a real additional option and alternative to prison.

As mentioned, the evidence of regional variances the committee outlined can only be understood fully when sufficient data is available. We would support the publication of statistics displaying this to allow for greater transparency.

Magistrates' appraisals and training

Finally, you asked me about magistrates' appraisals. Magistrates are appraised every four years. Magistrates sitting in youth court are appraised every two years.

Magistrates receive much training, learning and development on the needs of female offenders. At the MA, we regularly hold sessions at conferences, post resources online on our training platforms and via our member magazine, hold webinars for members, and offer talks to our local branches on the unique needs of female offenders.

Training is focused on raising awareness of the underlying and complex needs of women that we know can make them more vulnerable in custody. Training in this area is pivotal as it means that – even in the absence of a detailed PSR – magistrates are aware of these needs and can ask questions in court to ensure they have all the relevant information.

Children and young people with speech and language difficulties

The available support in court for children with speech and language difficulties

Support for children with speech and language difficulties in court tends to vary by area. Members tell me that some Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have speech and language experts on the team, but ultimately each YOT is independent, and they all work differently.

In the youth court, the presiding justice on a bench of magistrates has an obligation to lead the process in a way that can be fully understood by a child or young person, and to ensure they have suitable support. The presiding justice should ensure all court users use suitable language to facilitate understanding. As a matter of good practice, the youth offending service should identify any issues and tell the bench; and if there are, suitable support needs should be sought as applicable.

Information on whether children and young people in court have speech and language difficulties is not available in all cases, but members tell me that the youth offending service (YOS) do try to prepare the child before court starts.

Promoting trauma-informed practice

Finally, the committee asked me about the one innovation that would best help foster a trauma-informed approach in the youth courts. In my answer to this question, I emphasised training and development for magistrates. Magistrates already undergo training specifically for sitting in youth court before they begin sitting in youth court and undertake consolidation training around a year after they start sitting. Ad hoc learning and development is also offered by the Magistrates' Association (both nationally and locally). However, our members often express a desire for more continuing training and development.

Youth panels of magistrates have regular meetings to which their local youth offending teams are routinely invited. Ensuring these teams make regular presentations to panels about the level of observed need in relation to speech and language difficulties in children and young people in the youth court would be a worthwhile area of best practice. This would alert the youth panel to trends in their local area, and would provide a training opportunity for magistrates on how best to accommodate a child before them with these difficulties.

On behalf of the Magistrates' Association, thank you once again for allowing me to speak about these issues before the committee. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if we may assist with anything further.

With all best wishes,



Tom Franklin
Chief executive
Magistrates' Association

Agenda Item 4

By virtue of paragraph(s) vii of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 5

By virtue of paragraph(s) vii of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) vii of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Jane Hutt MS
Minister for Social Justice
Welsh Government

1 November 2022

Dear Jane,

Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24

In advance of our scrutiny session on the Draft Budget 2023-24 in January 2023, I would be grateful if you would provide information in the following areas.

General information

Overview

Last year, there was an increased budget for all Welsh Government departments, with £110m allocated to the Social Justice MEG – revenue. The Draft Budget for 2022-23 gave an indicative allocation for 2023-2024 of £122m. Are you now able to maintain this commitment to increase the spending allocation in the Social Justice MEG in the Draft Budget 2023-24 in the light of what may be announced by the UK Government on 17 November? Please can you provide:

- A breakdown of the 2023-24 Social Justice Main Expenditure Group (MEG) allocations by Spending Programme Area, Action and Budget Expenditure Line (BEL).
- Commentary on each of the Actions within the MEG, including an analysis and explanation of changes between the First Supplementary Budget 2022-23, the Draft Budget 2023-24 and the First Supplementary Budget.
- Evidence on how equality and social justice is driving Welsh Government overall priority-setting and budget allocations.
- Details of how spending allocations have been re-prioritised, or transferred from other departmental budgets (MEGs), to ensure the Welsh Government delivers its priority “to shield the most vulnerable” in light of the cost of living crisis as set out in its response to the UK Government’s mini-budget.

Strategic Integrated Impact Assessments (SIIA)

In last year's Draft Budget 2022-23 report, we called on you to publish an updated Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment before the Senedd debate on the Final Budget (**Recommendation 1**). Although you accepted this recommendation, you did not provide an updated SIIA; instead directing us to all Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees.

- Have you reviewed your approach to assessing impacts of draft budget decisions on different groups as part of the draft Budget process for 2023-24?
- In what ways has the SIIA been improved?

Equality, Race and Disability Data Units

We welcomed the establishing of Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units in our previous Draft Budget 2022-23 report, recognising the need for strengthened evidence to address inequality (**Recommendation 2**). The Evidence Units have published a set of joint priorities 2022-27 without any reference to budgetary planning. Please can you provide:

- Specific details of how the work of the units has helped to inform spending decisions in the Draft Budget 2023-24?

Gender Equality Review

The Programme for Government includes a number of commitments relating to gender equality and in last year's Draft Budget, you set out spending in a number of areas designed to advance the Gender Equality plan.

- Can you confirm whether the Gender Equality Plan has been updated following completion of the work you commissioned the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre to undertake on the impact of the pandemic on women?
- In your response to our call for further detail on how you were funding implementation of the Gender Equality Review (**Recommendation 3**), you referred to the priorities of the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights group, which are: Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, Care and Women's health.
- Please provide details of the impact any spending allocations have had in these priority areas, as well as an explanation of whether there are continued funding allocations to progress these priorities in the Draft Budget for 2023-24?

Tackling poverty and reducing inequality

Inflation and the cost of living

In last year's Draft Budget report, we highlighted our concerns about inflation and the impact the rising cost of living could have on different people. We recommended that the Welsh Government reprioritise funding when

necessary to support the most vulnerable (**Recommendation 4**). Can you set out the approach taken by Ministers to review spending allocations designed to help tackling poverty including:

- details of specific allocations to support households with cost of living pressures in the 2023-24 Draft Budget;
- whether any in-year transfers have taken place to increase recurrent allocations designed to tackle poverty, such as increases in the allocation to the Discretionary Assistance Fund and Single Advice Fund;
- details of how spending allocations have been re-prioritised in the draft Budget 2023-24 in order to protect the most vulnerable households from financial hardship; and
- the evidence the Welsh Government has used to understand the impact of these decisions on groups facing inequalities due to protected characteristics and/or socio-economic status.

Debt

Following the publication of our [report](#) on debt in November 2021, please can you provide an update on how the current economic situation is impacting on the implementation of our recommendations. Specifically:

- details of any specific spending allocations to prevent and alleviate debt in the Draft Budget 2023-24; and
- details of how cost of living pressures, particularly those impacting households on the lowest incomes have influenced spending decisions.

Fuel poverty

Our [report on fuel poverty and the Warm Homes Programme](#) was published in May. Please can you provide an update on how the current economic situation is impacting on the implementation of our recommendations.

- Please provide details of specific allocations to tackle rising levels of fuel poverty, and of how you are working with the Minister for Climate Change on the next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme?

Preventative spend

We recommended in our draft Budget report 2022-23 (**Recommendation 6**) that you should commission independent, expert research advice to improve how we measure the effectiveness and impact of preventative spending measures. We said this work should draw on international examples and best practice and should conclude before the Budget process for 2023-24 begins. You accepted this recommendation, stating that “an update of delivery of the Budget Improvement Plan will be published alongside the 2023-24 Draft Budget”. Please can you:

- confirm how the research and advice has informed decisions on preventative spending measures in the draft Budget 2023-24;
- commit to publishing the research findings; and
- outline how budget allocations have been shaped by the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

I would be grateful for your response by 14 December 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature reads "Jenny Rathbone" in a cursive, flowing script.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Date: 16 January 2023

Title: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget 2022-23

General Information

1. Our resource allocation for the Social Justice MEG published at draft budget 2022-23 was £110.355m; this was set to increase to £122.685m for the 2023-24 financial year. At final budget 2022-23 our resource allocation increased from £110.355m to £227.585m this was mainly due to one off non recurrent allocation of £116.9m which were allocated as part of a package of measures to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.
2. For the 2023-24 draft budget our baseline for planning was the indicative budget set as part of the 2022-23 Spending Review. The table below demonstrates the changes made from 22-23 draft budget, to the first supplementary budget of 22-23 and the 2023-24 Draft Budget.

Table 1: Overview of changes to BEL tables

	Draft Budget 2022-23	Final Budget 2022-23	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23	Indicative Budget 2023-24	Draft Budget 2023-24
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Resource	110,355	227,585	229,793	122,685	142,057
Capital	17,000	18,496	18,496	17,494	17,494
AME	28,063	28,063	28,063	26,045	25,132
Total	155,418	274,144	276,352	166,224	184,683

3. A breakdown of the 2023-24 Social Justice MEG allocations by Action and BEL is included at Annex A.

Overview of changes between 23-24 indicative budget and the 23-24 Draft Budget

4. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget to enable us to protect key areas, the Minister for Finance and Local Government undertook a reprioritisation exercise to release funding from within existing plans and re-focus limited resources in the areas of greatest need. The principles that underpinned the reprioritisation exercise were to deliver a balanced budget and protect the Programme for Government.
5. The Social Justice MEG was asked to contribute £2.68m towards this exercise which resulted in the following budget reductions being made on a recurrent basis:

Table 2: Savings identified to the Social Justice MEG on a recurrent basis

Budget Expenditure Line	Budget reduction £'000s
Fire and Rescue Service – Communication System – we ended funding for the Airwave contract	1,640
Social Partnerships	100
Public Appointments	200
Advice Services	174
Supporting Communities	250
Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	316
Total	2,680

6. Difficult decisions were necessary to reduce budgets, and these were taken in full consideration of the impacts the reductions would have. Budgets for the Social Partnership, Public Appointments and Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights BELs will still increase between 2022-23 and 2023-24 but at a slower rate than previously planned.
7. The reduction to the Advice Services budget was possible due to the completion of a time limited European Transition project. This project came to an end and allowed the funding to be repurposed towards other areas. A saving of £250k has been possible against the Supporting Communities budget. This element of the budget was uncommitted and provided an annual contingency from which the portfolio was able to respond to requests for support for cross governmental priorities during the year.
8. Due to the reduction of £1.64m against the Fire and Rescue Service – Communications System BEL, the Firelink (Airwave) grant we provide to the FRAs of £1.640m revenue annually, will cease to be provided from 2023-24. The grant is a contribution towards the FRAs' service fees for the Firelink operational communication system. [
9. Using funding released from the reprioritisation exercise, together with positive changes to our overall settlement as a result of the Autumn Statement, the Welsh Government has targeted additional allocations towards delivering our Programme for Government commitments and helping those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
10. Our portfolio received revenue **allocations of £22m** as part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget; this included **£18.8m for the Discretionary Assistance Fund, £2.2m for the Basic Income Pilot** and a further **£1m to meet inflationary pressures across the MEG**. The £1m uplift was allocated as follows:

Table 3: allocation of the £1m inflationary uplift across the Social Justice MEG

Budget Expenditure Line	Allocation £'000s
Community Support and Safety – 1.65% uplift to baseline	373
Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – 1.65% uplift to baseline	130
Support for the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering – 1.65% uplift to baseline	130
Chwarae Teg – 1.65% uplift to baseline	6

Budget Expenditure Line	Allocation £'000s
Future Generations Commissioner – 6% increase to baseline to meet expected increases to public sector pay. Also included £81k to correct baseline from previous position.	171
Older People’s Commissioner – 6% increase to baseline to meet expected increases to public sector pay.	95
Children’s Commissioner – 6% increase to baseline to meet expected increases to public sector pay.	95
Total	1,000

Commentary on Actions

Supporting Communities Action

Table 4: Supporting Communities Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Basic Income	Resource	5,000	10,000	12,200
Financial Inclusion	Resource	125,822	20,202	39,002
Financial Inclusion	Capital	1,496	494	494
Digital Inclusion	Resource	2,149	1,399	1,399
Supporting Communities	Resource	6,794	1,483	1,233
Supporting Communities	Capital	1,000	1,000	1,000
International Development	Resource	1,275	1,275	1,275
Social Partnerships	Resource	886	961	861
Community Bank	Capital	1,500	1,500	1,500

Basic Income BEL 1089

11. The profile for the Basic Income Pilot agreed at the time of the 2022-23 Draft Budget was £5m in 22-23, £10m in 23-24 and £5m in 24-25 in line with the projected costs of the pilot with a peak of payments in year two. No changes were made to the budget at the first supplementary budget in 22-23.

12. An allocation of £2.2m has been made as part of the 23-24 Draft Budget; this allocation has been baselined into 2024-25.

Financial Inclusion BEL 1694

13. The first supplementary budget in 22-23 included the following non recurrent revenue allocations made at the 22-23 Final Budget as part of a wider cost of living package:

- £90m for Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme
- £15m for DAF; and
- £0.62m for Credit Unions.

14. These allocations were made for one year only. The 22-23 final budget also allocated £1m in financial transaction capital to the Financial Inclusion BEL to undertake a “no interest loan” scheme starting in December 2022. The £1m is being loaned to the new consortium, Social Credit, (a collaboration between

Robert Owen Community Bank, Purple Shoots and Plend) as lending capital for the pilot. This was offset by repayments of £6k.

15. Due to demand for the Discretionary Assistance Fund continuing to be very high during 2022-23, an allocation of £18.8m has been made in 2023-24 to meet this continued demand which has been baselined into 2024-25. The flexibilities that were introduced during the Covid pandemic, and which have remained to date in order to include supporting the UKG's removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, are being reviewed to ensure equity of access in the current cost of living crisis. The review will prioritise providing enhanced levels of support for people experiencing crisis. The timing of any changes going live are also under review. I am currently taking evidence from key partners in the Social Justice sector to shape the best way forward for the fund.

Supporting Communities BEL 1086

16. The Supporting Communities BEL includes a revenue budget of £6.794m at the 22-23 first supplementary budget. This includes the following non recurrent resource allocations made at 22-23 final budget:

- £1m to the WLGA to tackle food poverty,
- £0.7m for Big Bocs Bwyd and £0.2m for Fareshare Cymru; and
- £3.418m in respect of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.

17. No further allocations were made at the first supplementary budget. The indicative budget for 23-24 returns to its baseline position of £1.483m.

18. No changes were made to this BEL as part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

19. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget this BEL has been reduced by £250k. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise. This has removed a contingency held within the MEG to respond to in year request for cross governmental support to particular priorities.

Social Partnerships BEL 1693

20. No changes were made to this BEL as part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget or the 22-23 final budget.

21. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget this BEL has been reduced by £100k. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise. This reduced the planned increase for the BEL that was due to take place between the 22-23 draft budget and the 2023-24 indicative budget.

Digital Inclusion

22. No changes were made to this BEL as part of the final budget. As part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget a transfer of £750k from the HSS BEL took place to extend the digital inclusion and health procured programme.

International Development

23. No changes were made to this BEL as part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget or the 22-23 final budget.

Community Bank

24. No changes were made to this BEL as part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget or the 22-23 final budget.

Fire and Rescue Services and Resilience Action

Table 5: Fire and Rescue Services and Resilience Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Fire & Rescue Services	Resource	8,045	8,405	8,405
Fire & Rescue Services	Capital	1,000	1,500	1,500
Fire & Rescue Services – Comms Systems	Resource	3,915	3,915	2,275
Fire & Rescue Services – Comms Systems	Capital	210	210	210
Community Fire Safety	Resource	848	848	848
Community Fire Safety	Capital	900	900	900

25. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

26. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget the Fire & Rescue Services Communications Systems budget has reduced by £1.64m. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise. This will mean that financial support from the Welsh Government towards the Airwave contract will end on 31 March 2023.

Commissioners Action

Table 6: Commissioners Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Older People's Commissioner	Resource	1,598	1,598	1,693
Children's Commissioner	Resource	1,678	1,580	1,727
Public Appointments	Resource	375	600	400
Future Generations Commissioner Wales	Resource	1,509	1,509	1,680

27. No allocations were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 first supplementary budget or the 22-23 final budget.

28. The budget for the Public Appointments BEL was planned to increase by £255k as part of the indicative budget plans for 23-24. This change was undertaken as part of the 22-23 Spending Review. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget the indicative budget was reduced by £200k removing part of the planned increase. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise.

29. The budget for the Children’s Commissioner at the first supplementary budget of 2022-23 was higher than the indicative budget in 2023-24 following an in-year transfer received from the health MEG to support pressures reported by the Children’s Commissioner that were not possible to meet through the Social Justice MEG at the time of publishing the 2022-23 Draft Budget.

30. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget each Commissioner has received an uplift of 6% compared to their baseline budget (2022-23 Final Budget). This resulted in an uplift of £90k for the Future Generations Commissioner and uplifts of £95k for the Older People’s Commissioner and the Children’s Commissioner. The Children’s Commissioner also received a non cash budget of £52k. The Future Generation’s Commissioner received a further £81k so that they’re baseline budget was increased from £1.509m to £1.590m in line with a previous agreement.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Action

Table 7: Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000’s	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000’s	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000’s
Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	Resource	8,006	7,875	8,005
Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	Capital	2,200	2,200	2,200

31. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget. At the 22-23 first supplementary budget a revenue allocation of £131k was made from the Climate Change MEG to the VAWDASV revenue BEL following the Internal Review of the Homelessness Prevention Grant which aligned funding with the Safer Wales – Street Life funding.

32. As part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget an allocation of £130k has been made to the VAWDASV revenue BEL which is an increase of 1.65% compared to their baseline.

Equality and Community Cohesion Action

Table 8: Equality and Community Cohesion Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000’s	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000’s	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000’s
Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	Resource	17,148	17,632	17,316
Chwarae Teg	Resource	360	360	366

Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights BEL 7060

33. The budget for this BEL published at first supplementary budget included the following non-recurrent resource allocations made at the 22-23 final budget:

- £1.5m for Migrant Intergration;
- £1m for Gypsy & Roma Traveller digital services;
- £0.7m for Period Dignity; and
- £1m for Equalities Initiatives.

34. The indicative allocation for 23-24 included an allocation of £4.946m, this indicative allocation for 23-24 was reduced by £316k. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise.

Advocacy Services Action

Table 9: Advocacy Services Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Advice Services	Resource	12,831	11,849	11,675

35. The Advice Services BEL included a non-recurrent resource allocation at final budget 22-23 of £1.7m for the Single Advice Fund. A further allocation of £1.056m transfer was made at the first supplementary budget in 22-23 as a result of a transfer from HMT for Debt Advice Funding.

36. The indicative budget for 2023-24 includes £1.674m to support the single advice fund.

37. The budget for the BEL has been reduced as part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget by £174k which is as a result of a European Transition project coming to an end. This reduction took place as part of the Social Justice MEG's contribution to the Welsh Government reprioritisation exercise.

Support for the Voluntary Sector

Table 10: Support for the Voluntary Sector Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Support for the Voluntary Sector & Volunteering	Resource	7,494	7,494	7,624

38. No changes were made to this BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

39. As part of the 23-24 Draft Budget this budget has increased by £130k which represents a 1.65% increase on the baseline.

Community Support and Safety

Table 11: Community Support and Safety Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Community Support & Safety	Resource	22,625	22,625	22,998

40. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

41. As part of the 23-24 Draft Budget this budget has increased by £373k which represents a 1.65% increase on the baseline.

Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints

Table 12: Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Female Offending & Youth Justice Blueprints	Resource	1,075	1,075	1,075

42. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

Gypsy Traveller Sites

Table 13: Gypsy Traveller Sites Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Gypsy Traveller Sites	Capital	3,690	3,190	3,190

43. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

Community Facilities

Table 14: Community Facilities Action

BEL	Resource / Capital	First Supplementary Budget 2022-23 £000's	Indicative Budget 2023-24 £000's	Draft Budget 2023-24 £000's
Community Facilities Programme	Capital	6,500	6,500	6,500

44. No changes were made to these BELs as part of the 22-23 final budget or the 22-23 first supplementary budget.

Prioritising support for the most vulnerable

45. This draft budget has been prepared in hard times following years of austerity as well as the continuing impacts of Brexit and the pandemic. Inflation is at a very high level and expected to remain high through 2023-24 impacting at a higher level for those on the lowest incomes. These factors have exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis we are now experiencing. Our priority has been to protect public services, tackle inequalities and shield the vulnerable; however, we have had to do this within the context of limited funding and also recognising that inflation means our budgets are now worth considerably less than they were worth in December 2021 when our plans were originally published.

46. As part of the preparation of this Draft Budget, across Welsh Government a reprioritisation exercise was undertaken to identify where funding could be released from within existing plans to be refocused on areas of greatest need. The reprioritisation work has been based on three priorities:

- Protecting frontline public services and our ambitions for the future;
- Continuing to provide help to those most affected by the cost-of-living crisis; and
- Supporting our economy through recessionary times.

47. Each Minister will set out the reprioritisation decisions taken impacting their own portfolios within their own evidence papers.

48. Within my own MEG I have prioritised funding for the Discretionary Assistance Fund and the Basic Income Pilot. I have allocated an additional £18.8m to the Discretionary Assistance Fund in 2023-24, baselined into 2024-25, which brings the budget next year in line with the demand we are seeing in this financial year. The DAF is a key tool in our response to the cost-of-living crisis and ensures that support is available to the most vulnerable members of our society.

49. The Basic Income Pilot is a radical intervention, supporting a group of young care leavers with an income of £1,600 (before tax) every month. We continue to support the pilot, which will run for two years and are allocating an additional £2.2m in 2023-24 to ensure that support is available to all those eligible to participate in the pilot.

50. We received a small inflationary uplift for the MEG of £1m as part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget to support key priorities in my portfolio including allocations to the third sectors and to PSCOs.
51. Across Welsh Government other allocations have been made to support the most vulnerable which include £9m for Pupil Development Grant, and £10m for Housing. These allocations are all baselined into 2024-25. In addition to this we have allocated £40m in 2023-24 reducing to £20m in 2024-25 to support our ongoing response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine; this funding will support those fleeing the conflict and seeking sanctuary in Wales.
52. I have also protected funding for our work to tackle Violence Against Women, Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse (VAWDASV). The Welsh Government has developed its new, five-year VAWDASV National Strategy for 2022-26 alongside a group of key partner organisations including the police, specialist sector and survivors. Our Programme for Government commits to strengthening the strategy to include a focus on violence against women in the street and workplace as well as the home. Delivery of the strategy will be through a Blueprint approach which brings together devolved and non-devolved organisations. The VAWDASV revenue budget for 2023-2024 is £8.005 million, which supports the Programme for Government commitment, while the capital budget is £2.2 million, which supports a range of statutory and voluntary organisations' VAWDASV capital projects.

Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment

53. We continue to outline the steps we are taking to reform budget and tax process improvements as part of our Budget Improvement Plan which is published alongside the Draft Budget. This year we have worked collaboratively with the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) to explore how we undertake the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA); this has included some changes within the SIIA published as part of this Draft Budget. Further longer-term actions are being explored through continued working with the BIIAG to review our approach to assessing impacts of budget decisions as part of the Budget Improvement Plan (BIP).
54. It also remains important to recognise that this SIIA outlines the contextual evidence that has supported our spending decisions. It is just one of a suite of documents published as part of our Draft Budget, with the impact of spending decisions outlined as part of the main narratives in chapters four, complemented by the SIIA at Annex A. Following publication of the Draft Budget, the Minister for Finance and Local Government will publish an extensive summary of all Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees on allocations within each MEG; this will provide a more detailed account as to how Draft Budget decisions have impacted on different groups.

Equality, Race and Disability Data Units

55. The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units have met regularly with the Minister for Finance and Local Government's officials preparing the draft budget over the last year, sharing relevant releases and events on equality evidence to inform the budget process. More recently, in collaboration with analysts across

the wider Equality, Poverty and Children's Evidence and Support Division, they have provided a high-level and intersectional analysis of available evidence on inequality to highlight which people may be most impacted by budget cuts. The evidence was summarised across a range of issues including who were most likely to be impacted in areas such as long-covid, the cost of living and environmental emergencies. The information provided has been used to inform the SIIA which will sit alongside the 2023-24 Draft Budget.

56. As outlined in the Equality and Disability Evidence Unit's strategy, in the longer term, they will provide high level advice, guidance, support and challenge so that data on inequalities can be used appropriately by policy officials to support better policy decisions including policy impact assessments and spending decisions.

Gender Equality Review

57. Our Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan provides the framework through which we will address the changing landscape for women in Wales. The first phase implementation plan which identifies short- and medium-term priority actions, was published in March 2020 and covers the period 2020-23.

58. Given the impact of Covid-19, there was a need to update the plan to reflect the new context. The Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre and the Bangor Institute for Health & Medical Research (BIHMR) was commissioned to identify international, innovative practice that may be included in the Plan to ensure it properly responds to the impact of Covid-19 in relation to gender equality. The final report was published in February 2022.

59. Alongside this, an analysis of the lived experience of women in Wales throughout the pandemic was undertaken by WEN Wales as a part of their work programme supported through the Equality and Inclusion grant funding.

60. A dedicated Gender Equality Forum was established earlier this year to oversee implementation of the Gender Equality Review and Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan. This work was previously undertaken by a sub-group of the Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Right steering group. However, the standalone Forum will provide more time for detailed discussions to drive forward and scrutinise progress.

61. The reports from both the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre and WEN Wales were shared with Forum members following their publication in February/March 2022. An internal progress review against the Plan was also undertaken and an update was shared with Forum members in February 2022. This showed that although work on the plan was slower than anticipated due to the pandemic, a significant amount of work across a range of priority actions had been undertaken.

62. All these actions are feeding into the work currently underway to co-produce the next iteration of the Plan which will reflect the changing priorities for women and girls in Wales in light of both the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. Gender Equality Forum members are instrumental in the co-production role. Using their own expertise, lived experiences of their clients and networks and evidence from reports including those from the Wales Covid-19 Evidence Centre and WEN Wales, the Forum has identified key priority areas to be addressed.

63. At the most recent Forum meeting held in October, Forum members were able to engage directly with policy officials working on women's health and unpaid care to explore these priority areas in more depth.
64. Upcoming work includes a further progress update on actions in the Plan which will be provided to Forum members in January. This will be accompanied by a workshop with Forum members to identify and refine specific priority areas and actions, consider where actions need to go further and where there are gaps/changing priorities and to consider the Gender Action Plan alongside the development of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP), LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the work of the disability rights taskforce.

Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan

65. A key priority of The Welsh Government is our commitment to creating an anti-racist nation by 2030. Our Wales Anti-racist Action Plan, which was launched on Tuesday 7th June, is built on the values of anti-racism and calls for zero tolerance of all racial inequality.
66. Since the launch of the report, we have appointed the Head of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan Implementation Team. Recruitment for other roles is currently underway.
67. Work is also underway to establish the Governance structure. We have now completed the sifting and interviews for seven external anti-racism experts and eleven diversity representatives with lived experience to join the External Accountability Group. The induction and first meeting of the External Accountability Group will be held in January 2023.
68. Work is also underway to establish Regional Forums which will capture lived experience and provide a direct link to our work and engagement with our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people across Wales.
69. We have now received feedback on our draft communication plan, and we are hoping that our central communications plan to promote the work of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan will be completed by the end of December.
70. The initial recommendations made in the Deeds not Words and Roadmap reports will also be considered to determine whether there are longer term recommendations that could now be incorporated into the new plan or if there are any gaps.
71. An update of the plan will not mean that work on the existing plan will end or that work cannot begin until the new plan is published.
72. The Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan is cross-governmental and cross-cutting. The actions in the plan are owned by different areas of Welsh Government and the spending allocations to progress the actions are therefore taken across Welsh Government. The Programme for Government prioritises implementation of key aspects of this Plan and reflects the priority areas identified by the Gender Equality Forum. Action is already underway in many of these areas.

73. Officials from the Equality team co-ordinate the plan, influence cross government policy development and monitor progress.
74. A key aim of the Plan is to embed equality across Welsh Government by ensuring that all policy areas take account of the intersecting needs of citizens in Wales when developing and implementing policy and practice and there have been some significant steps forward in this area.
75. We have made a commitment to embedding **gender budgeting** in our budgetary processes. A longer-term plan of this work can be found in our Budget Improvement Plan which is updated annually alongside our Draft Budget. Consideration of gender is undertaken as part of our Strategic Integrated Impact assessment which is published alongside our 2023-24 Draft Budget.
76. As is outlined in the updated Budget Improvement Plan, we have continued to evolve our work to embed a gender focused approach in a number of areas. To ensure we are learning lessons from others, we have used our links through the Well-being Governments network (WeGo) to continue engagement with world leaders such as Iceland and Canada and widen our networks with others operating in this area. We are working closely with members of the Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) to look at how a tool such as gender budgeting can assist us in strengthening our budget and tax processes, with a particular focus on how we assess the impacts of our spending decisions.
77. Changes to this process are being considered both in the short and longer term with a clearer plan of action being developed collaboratively with the Group and further detail can be found within this Plan. The Plan also provides an update on our three Gender Budgeting pilots; the Personal Learning Accounts (PLA), the Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) pilot and the E-Move project being delivered by Sustrans Cymru.
78. Gender mainstreaming was also identified as a key mechanism to embed equality across Welsh Government. In 2021 the Minister for Social Justice agreed funding for a Mainstreaming Equality Pilot to take place. Dr Alison Parken led the work which began in November 2021 and reported in September 2022. The equality mainstreaming model was tested on a live policy area to produce a practical case study and recommendations as to how the mainstreaming model could be incorporated into policy making across Welsh Government.

Social Model of Disability

79. The Welsh Government is committed to applying and embedding the Social Model of Disability throughout everything it does.
80. The 'Locked Out: Liberating Disabled People's Lives and Rights in Wales beyond COVID-19' report was published in July 2021. The report highlights the inequalities that many disabled people face in Wales which were exacerbated by the pandemic. The Disability Rights Taskforce was originally established to run until the summer 2023, but this has been extended to 31 March 2024. The work of the Taskforce is based on a common understanding of the Social Model of Disability, Human Rights, and Co-production.

81. The Taskforce established the following workstreams were identified as priority areas for the programme of work: Embedding and Understanding of the Social Model of Disability (across Wales):
- Access to Services (including Communications and Technology)
 - Independent Living: Social Care
 - Independent Living: Health and Wellbeing
 - Travel
 - Employment and Income
 - Affordable and Accessible Housing
 - Children and Young People
82. The Working Groups have a range of stakeholders, which includes organisations that support disabled people, disabled people with lived experience and Welsh Government policy leads. A facilitation contract with Access Design Solutions is in place.
83. All members of the Taskforce and working groups have been offered training on the 'Social Model of Disability', delivered by Disability Wales. Officials are also developing bespoke training for colleagues in the Health and Social Care inspectorates.
84. Training on Co-production will be delivered to the Taskforce and working group members in December 2023 and January 2024.
85. A remuneration process for 'community mentors' is currently under development.
86. The working groups will co-produce the Disability Rights Action plan, to be published in 2024.
87. The UK Government introduced a Bill of Rights (Economic, Social and Cultural rights), in June, and as of yet no date has been set for the second reading of the Bill. Subject to the Bill not being withdrawn, a Legislative Consent Memorandum will need to be laid before the Senedd. The scope of the Bill which seeks to repeal the Human Rights Act 1998 is wide. The intention is that the UK will remain a state party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The wide scope means that if the Bill proceeds, it is conceivable that amendments may be laid with the intent to legislate for Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights. ESC rights are contained in UN Conventions rather than the ECHR; a recent report by the Brown commission has recommended that there should be new and constitutionally protected, social rights.
88. While opposition amendments may not be accepted, any serious proposal to make ESC rights justiciable and subject to the oversight of the courts would be a significant constitutional development. The work being undertaken by the Human Rights Action Group will, in part, consider how ESC rights can be given effect to in Wales via legislation or otherwise.

Inflation and the cost of living

89. Inflation and its impact on cost of living has been a key consideration as part of this draft budget. Since the publication of our draft budget last year, we announced a one year £330m package of support to tackle the cost of living crisis which included £90m to implement a Welsh Government Fuel Support

Scheme in the autumn of 2022 as well as an additional £15m for the Discretionary Assistance Fund and £1.7m for the Single Advice Fund in 2022-23. Further support has also been provided to the Discretionary Assistance Fund in year with its forecast overspend managed within the MEG.

90. As we have set out above, as part of the 2023-24 Draft Budget, as a Government we undertook an exercise to review and reprioritise our budgets in order to prioritise our support where it was needed most. As a result of this exercise the following allocations have been made to support households with cost-of-living pressures through this Draft Budget:

- **£18.8m for the Discretionary Assistance Fund** – the DAF provides emergency support payments for people in need and is a fundamental part of our support for vulnerable individuals. The additional allocation of £18.8m in my MEG will ensure people severely impacted by the cost-of-living crisis can continue to access this emergency support.
- **£9m for Pupil Development Grant** - Tackling the impact of poverty on children and young people's attainment is central to our flagship Pupil Development Grant (PDG). In MEWL MEG year on year we have extended the PDG to reflect the increase in eFSM learners, with funding for 2022-23 now at around £130m. The current cost of living crisis and economic downturn is having an impact on lower income households. Building on the additional £20m allocated as part of last year's Spending Review, we have allocated a further £9m to the PDG from 2023-24 to support our most economically vulnerable learners.
- **£10m for Housing** - The cost-of-living crisis and subsequent impact on household budgets means many people are unable to pay their rent or other household bills and risk falling into rent arrears and subsequently risk facing eviction. This is pushing more individuals to seek homelessness prevention support from local authority homelessness teams, there is a very real risk that the already high presentation numbers will continue to increase as the cost-of-living crisis further impacts households. An allocation of £10m to the MCC MEG has been made to prevent homelessness and maintain 'no-one left out' approach to ensure no-one is forced to sleep rough. The additional funding will enable further homelessness prevention measures, including where homelessness cannot be prevented, meeting the costs of temporary accommodation.

91. We are also maintaining our financial support in other areas, for example Pupil Development Grant Access. The PDG Access grant has made a huge difference to many lower income families across Wales, helping to remove the worry surrounding the purchase of school uniform and equipment, enabling children to attend school and take part in activities at the same level as their peers. In 2021/22 the grant was extended to eligible children and young people in all compulsory school years, meaning that even more families can now benefit from this support. For 2023-24, the budget for PDG Access is £13.6m, with funding of £125 per learner for all year groups up to Year 11, and £200 for learners in Year 7.

Debt

92. In 2023-24 we will make £11m grant funding available to Single Advice Fund (SAF) services, from which at least £3.1m will be ringfenced to fund the provision of generalist and specialist debt advice services. We have a longstanding commitment to supporting advice services, recognising how these services tackle income poverty, prevent homelessness, enhance employability, and bring improvements to health and well-being of some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Since January 2020, SAF services have helped 144,000 people deal with over 660,000 social welfare problems. Those helped were supported to claim additional income of £83 million and had debts totalling £23 million written off.
93. It is rare that debt is the only problem a person will have, this is why debt advice is delivered through the integrated SAF, where a person will get advice to resolve their debt problems, together with income maximisation support and help to resolve other social welfare problems, such as, housing or employment or discrimination. This ensures any underlying causes of debts are tackled, enabling people to take more control of their finances.
94. With the uncertain economic climate, the demands on advice services, especially debt advice, will continue to increase in the next financial year. Our continued funding of the collaborative SAF delivery model, which provides services to address a person's crisis needs and offers them wraparound support to develop their resilience to future social welfare problems occurring, will help to meet some of this increased demand by reducing the need for people to keep returning for advice.
95. The cost-of-living crisis is having a negative impact on household budgets throughout Wales, but we know it is the most vulnerable people who are facing the toughest financial struggles. In the last year, 83% of people accessing SAF services identified themselves as coming from a population group who are being hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis, including older people, disabled people, and people from Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Communities. By maintaining our grant funding for the SAF in 2023-24, we can be confident that our advice and support services will be reaching the people who are in most need.
96. As a Government we have repurposed our budgets in order to prioritise funding for those hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis. This has resulted in additional allocations for the Discretionary Assistance Fund, homelessness services, and the Pupil Development Grant as set out above.

Fuel poverty

97. The Warm Homes Programme has developed in response to the current crisis and the committee recommendations. Since 2010 to the end of March 2021, more than £394m has been invested to improve home energy efficiency through the Warm Homes Programme, benefitting more than 67,100 lower income households. People on means tested benefits or who have specific health needs and are eligible, have been able to receive free energy adaptations such as heating, insulation or solar panels as part of our Nest scheme. For 2020/21 Nest provided over 15,500 households with tailored advice and referrals to third party services. Benefit entitlement checks resulted in a household average £2,091

potential increase in benefit take-up, increasing benefit take up by nearly £1m last year. Although not yet published, officials expect a similar level of activity and outcomes for 2021/22 and in the current financial year.

98. The Warm Homes Programme Nest Scheme improvements include investing in innovation through solar PV and more recently the introduction of battery storage, which will enable homes to use energy at source. This has resulted in some households being able to exceed the expenditure cap. An enhanced winter fuel campaign launched on 1 November, delivered through the Warm Homes Programme Nest scheme, is targeting a wider audience on energy efficiency advice, accessible to all households in Wales, also providing sign posting to claim what's yours via AdviceLink Cymru. Wider advertising is planned into early next year to increase the targeting of the campaign.
99. The Minister for Climate Change made an oral statement in plenary on 8 November providing information about how the Welsh Government will approach the challenges and opportunities of responding to the climate emergency across all housing tenures. The intention is to continue to take a fabric first, worst first and low carbon approach, delivering measures to improve the energy efficiency of the least thermally efficient low-income households in Wales.
100. This will be achieved in two parts: Part one will bring forward the procurement of a replacement demand led service, to ensure continuity to assist those least able to pay to respond to the cost-of-living crisis. This will also ensure a just and affordable transition to low carbon homes. Part two is the development of a whole housing stock approach to decarbonisation to provide a long-term strategy for energy efficiency, fuel poverty and decarbonisation for the sector.
101. From a wider perspective, funding of £380m has been made available for a package of measures to support households, since October 2021. This includes funding for; the Discretionary Assistance Fund, helping people meet their emergency needs, such as food and fuel; the £150 Cost of living payment; further 'Claim what's yours' campaigns and support for advice services to help people access their benefit entitlements; £4.9m to support access to food and the development of food partnerships; and funding to support the development of Warm Hubs.
102. The 2021/22 Winter Fuel Support Scheme supported 166,780 households with a £200 payment towards their energy costs. scheme, The 2022/23 Welsh Government Fuel Support has extended support to more households in the current scheme, including:
- Supporting a wider cohort of benefit households;
 - Measures to support households who do not pay for their energy costs directly to a supplier;
 - Support for all households including those off grid i.e., Oil and LPG;
 - Extending the payment window to allow individuals a wider opportunity to claim and Local Authorities more time to identify eligible residents and to process payments.
103. As of 2nd December 2022, we have made payments to over 275,000 households under the Welsh Government Fuel Support Scheme.

104. We have invested £4m through the Fuel Bank Foundation to support households on pre-payment meters who are struggling with the cost of topping up their energy and to support those off grid to purchase bulk fuel such as oil and LPG to heat their homes.
105. Up to the end of November 2022 the Fuel Bank Foundation had issued 2,666 vouchers to support those who are not able to afford to top up their pre-payment meters – supporting over 6,300 people. Their Heat fund, established as part of our £4m support package, has supported over 50 households to buy bulk fuel worth £21,000.
106. The extension of the fuel support scheme will mean nearly 200,000 more households on child tax credits, pension credits, disability benefits, carers allowance, contributory benefits and those receiving help from the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to pay their council tax bill will now be eligible. As of 18 November, payments have been made to over 260,000 households.
107. We have seen strong demand for the Pre-Payment Meter top up vouchers under the Fuel Bank Foundation with 2666 vouchers issued between August and the 20 November this year supporting over 6336 individuals. This is broadly in line with the predicted rate by the Fuel Bank Foundation. In terms of the heat fund for bulk purchase of fuel for off grid homes, 54 households have received support to date to a value of £21,000.
108. Funding for the Warm Homes Programme is within the Minister for Climate Change's portfolio.

Preventative Spend

109. Our VAWDASV National Strategy, outlined above at para 52, includes an increased focus on preventative work and work with perpetrators. Tackling perpetration is one of the six main workstreams of our Blueprint approach to delivering the strategy, but prevention is also a crucial, cross-cutting theme across all the workstreams. The underlying principles which will inform our approach are to:
- Tackle perpetrators by changing the culture of misogyny and harassment
 - Create dialogue amongst men about what masculinity means,
 - Build and sustain effective services,
 - Hold perpetrators to account,
 - 'Turn off the tap' and create societal changes to de-normalise and marginalise attitudes that give succour to abusers including challenging beliefs,
 - De-normalise sexual violence and harassment,
 - Undermine the environment in which DA takes place.
110. We are continuing to support **Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)**, increasing our total budget for Community Support and Safety from £22.625m in 2022-23 to £22.998m in 2023-24. Although policing is not devolved, we are committed to keeping communities in Wales safe through our funding for PCSOs. PCSOs provide visible and practical support to communities, building relationships with local people and delivering work to prevent crime and ensure people feel safe where they live.

111. On the 13 December the **Child Poverty Progress Report 2022** was laid before the Senedd. The report shows the Welsh Government has made tackling child poverty a priority. We have made significant investment in a range of policies and programmes to promote prosperity, prevent and mitigate poverty and reduce the number of children living in poverty in Wales despite the extremely difficult financial climate.
112. In 2022/23 we will have invested £1.6bn in supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis by providing targeted help to those who need it the most and through programmes and schemes which put money back in people's pockets. The 2023/24 draft budget provides funding for those programmes which will address the immediate consequences of the ongoing cost of living crisis such as an enhanced package for the Discretionary Assistance Fund in the Social Justice MEG. It also continues to provide funding for preventative measures to address poverty and inequality such as continuing to provide income maximisation advice through the Single Advice Fund, and additional funding for the Basic Income Pilot for Care Leavers. It will also ensure we can maintain all those other programmes in Wales, which put money back in people's pockets – from free prescriptions to free school meals and support with the costs of sending children to school.
113. We will continue to enrol eligible young care leaver onto our Basic Income pilot. The £20m pilot will explore the benefits of a Basic Income to Care leavers in Wales on this extremely vulnerable group of young people as they transition from care into adulthood. The evaluation of the pilot will provide an opportunity to explore the longer term impacts of a regular basic income payment, including on poverty and how this payment can support the young people in the choices they make and their immediate and longer term prospects.
114. We commissioned the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) to undertake an international review of what works in tackling poverty and the report was published in September 2022 <https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/review-of-poverty-and-social-exclusion-in-wales/>. It identifies four key areas of focus around which poverty alleviation efforts could be coordinated going forward including (i) Reducing costs and maximising income, (ii) Pathways out of poverty by enabling wider socio-economic participation, (iii) An enabling environment and (iv) Mental load and mental health affecting people living in poverty and social exclusion.
115. This research confirms that the Welsh Government cannot tackle poverty and inequality alone. Our future approach will see greater levels of engagement with our key partners across Wales to drive activity and strengthening the impact of our collective efforts by working together towards a common goal. Working alongside our partners, we will use every lever we have available to make a positive difference for people in poverty to ensure they are able to fulfil their potential.
116. In the coming months we will launch a consultation on a refreshed Child Poverty Strategy for Wales with a view to publishing the Strategy in Autumn 2023. This will be informed by evidence from our child poverty review which looked at what more needs to be done to ensure that existing poverty programmes have maximum impact on the lives of children living in poverty; it will draw on the findings of the Wales Centre for Public Policy's review of what works in tackling

poverty. We will also be seeking the views of people and organisations across Wales, including those with a lived experience of poverty.

117. Committing to this action was seen in the context of the wider work of the Budget Improvement Plan (BIP). On this basis there were other important steps that needed to be explored before any consideration could be given to commissioning independent expert advice.
118. Through our reformed Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) we are engaging with key stakeholders on improving budget and tax processes. Our BIP already outlines the actions we are taking on prevention. Consideration of prevention is part of the planned 2023 work schedule for BIIAG. As part of this work, we will consider the case for using commissioned expert advice, balanced against the costs of doing so. We will also continue to engage with international experts and other nations to draw on best practice in areas of wider budget process improvement.
119. An update of delivery of the Budget Improvement Plan has been published alongside the Draft Budget on 13th December 2022.
120. Our 2023-24 Draft Budget continues to be guided by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This builds on the action we took last year as part of the Welsh Spending Review to align funding up to 2024-25 with delivery of the Programme for Government which contains Welsh Government's Well-being objectives.
121. A particular focus of the 2023-24 process has been balancing short- and long-term outcomes. This includes responding to short-term issues linked to the cost of living, Ukraine and wider inflationary pressures balanced against areas such as longer-term sustainability of public services. Prevention is at the heart of this approach, with the short-term investments in our Budget doing all we can to prevent those already disproportionately impacted from seeing further negative impacts as well as continuing to invest in the longer term, including to prevent the current context jeopardising the sustainability of public services.

Ukraine humanitarian response

122. It is important to set this in the context of our vision for **Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary**, which means that wherever people seeking sanctuary in Wales go, they are met with welcome, understanding and celebration of their unique contribution to society, and are treated with dignity and respect. If funding levels were reduced, or no further funding were to be made available, we would need to begin to implement an exit strategy from the point at which decisions were taken on the draft 2023-24 budget. Officials would continue to work with local authority and third sector partners to increase the rates of move on – but ultimately if transitional accommodation could not be secured within the short window available, significant numbers of Ukrainians would become homeless, triggering the local authority homelessness duty. It is clear that any significant shortfall in funding would potentially trigger further trauma for Ukrainians who have already had to flee a war zone, as well as reputational risk to Welsh Government around potential accusations of renegeing on humanitarian commitments.
123. What this means in effect is that WG would be passing the fiscal responsibility for the Ukrainian response onto local government. This would place additional pressures on an already very pressurised and struggling homelessness system,

with local authorities consistently facing over 1,300 people presenting every month in need of temporary accommodation. Local authorities are currently struggling to meet both the capacity requirements and costs associated with this existing demand, and any further increase in presentation numbers would further exacerbate this. Given the highly constrained nature of the property market at this point, and the cost and lead time for developing longer term accommodation, the solutions for local government would be limited and likely similar to the costly accommodation measures that we have been using.

124. The expectation of LAs to meet the costs of supporting Ukrainian people under the homelessness duty would exacerbate the financial pressures that they face. LAs are already forecasting large pressures in 2023-24 (over £0.5bn) and would have to find further cuts in other services, including job losses, to meet housing costs. This is in addition to the reduction in Year 1 tariff and the end of UK Government tariff funding after the first year, meaning that LAs have to continue to wider support services and young people in education and with no additional budget. Housing this number of people in expensive temporary accommodation is likely to be unaffordable for local authorities who may need to consider alternative options for them or others in the wider homelessness system as they prioritise scarce resources. This could undermine and reverse the progress made in homelessness services over the last 3 years and result in large numbers of people being forced to sleep rough or a fall back to the use of unsuitable accommodation solutions such as night-shelters and floor space. This also does not sit easily with our vision for Wales as a Nation of Sanctuary.

Annex A

SOCIAL JUSTICE						
RESOURCE						
Budget Expenditure Line	2022-23 Draft Budget	2022-23 Final Budget	2022-23 1st Supplementary Budget	2023-24 Indicative Plans	Changes	2023-24 Draft Budget
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Basic Income	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000	2,200	12,200
Financial Inclusion	20,202	125,822	125,822	20,202	18,800	39,002
Digital Inclusion	1,250	1,250	2,000	1,250	0	1,250
Digital Inclusion - Non cash	149	149	149	149	0	149
Supporting Communities	1,483	6,863	6,794	1,483	-250	1,233
International Development	925	1,275	1,275	1,275	0	1,275
Social Partnerships	806	806	886	961	-100	861
Action: Total Supporting Communities	29,815	141,165	141,926	35,320	20,650	55,970
Fire & Rescue Services	8,405	8,405	8,405	8,405	0	8,405
Fire & Rescue Services - Non cash	20	0	0	0	0	0
Fire & Rescue Services - Communication Systems	3,915	3,915	3,915	3,915	-1,640	2,275
Community Fire Safety	848	848	848	848	0	848
Action: Total Fire and Rescue Services and Resilience	13,188	13,168	13,168	13,168	-1,640	11,528
Older People Commissioner	1,589	1,589	1,520	1,589	95	1,684
Older People Commissioner - Non cash	9	9	78	9	0	9
Children's Commissioner	1,580	1,580	1,644	1,580	95	1,675
Children's Commissioner - Non cash	0	0	34	0	52	52
Public Appointments	375	375	375	600	-200	400
Future Generations Commissioner Wales	1,509	1,509	1,509	1,509	171	1,680
Action: Communities	5,062	5,062	5,160	5,287	213	5,500
Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	7,875	7,875	8,006	7,875	130	8,005
Action: Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and	7,875	7,875	8,006	7,875	130	8,005
Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	12,686	16,886	17,148	17,632	-316	17,316
Chwarae Teg	360	360	360	360	6	366
Action: Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	13,046	17,246	17,508	17,992	-310	17,682
Advice Services	10,175	11,875	12,831	11,849	-174	11,675
Action: Advice Services	10,175	11,875	12,831	11,849	-174	11,675
Support for the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering	7,494	7,494	7,494	7,494	130	7,624
Action: Support for the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering	7,494	7,494	7,494	7,494	130	7,624
Community Support and Safety	22,625	22,625	22,625	22,625	373	22,998
Action: Community Support and Safety	22,625	22,625	22,625	22,625	373	22,998
Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints	1,075	1,075	1,075	1,075	0	1,075
Action: Female Offending and Youth Justice Blueprints	1,075	1,075	1,075	1,075	0	1,075
MEG: SOCIAL JUSTICE	110,355	227,585	229,793	122,685	19,372	142,057

SOCIAL JUSTICE						
CAPITAL						
Budget Expenditure Line	2022-23 Draft Budget	2022-23 Final Budget	2022-23 1st Supplementary Budget	2023-24 Indicative Plans	Changes	2023-24 Draft Budget
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Financial Inclusion	0	1,500	1,500	500	0	500
Financial Inclusion - Repayments	0	-4	-4	-6	0	-6
Community Bank	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	1,500
Supporting Communities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Action: Supporting Communities	2,500	3,996	3,996	2,994	0	2,994
Fire & Rescue Services	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,500	0	1,500
Fire & Rescue Services - Communication Systems	210	210	210	210	0	210
Community Fire Safety	900	900	900	900	0	900
Action: Fire and Rescue Services and Resilience	2,110	2,110	2,110	2,610	0	2,610
Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	0	2,200
Action: Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	0	2,200
Gypsy Traveller Sites	3,690	3,690	3,690	3,190	0	3,190
Action: Gypsy Traveller Sites	3,690	3,690	3,690	3,190	0	3,190
Community Facilities Programme	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	0	6,500
Action: Community Facilities	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	0	6,500
MEG: SOCIAL JUSTICE	17,000	18,496	18,496	17,494	0	17,494

SOCIAL JUSTICE						
AME - RESOURCE						
Budget Expenditure Line	2022-23 Draft Budget	2022-23 Final Budget	2022-23 1st Supplementary Budget	2023-24 Indicative Plans	Changes	2023-24 Draft Budget
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Fire Service Pensions - AME	28,063	280,663	28,063	26,045	-913	25,132
Action: Fire and Rescue Services and Resilience	28,063	280,663	28,063	26,045	-913	25,132
MEG: SOCIAL JUSTICE	28,063	280,663	28,063	26,045	-913	25,132

Minister for Social Justice

Jane Hutt MS

8 November 2022

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2023-24

Dear Jane,

To support our scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2023-24, we would appreciate some information from you to compliment the information we have requested from the Minister for Education and Welsh Language and the Minister for Health and Social Care.

We would be very grateful if you could provide us with:

- Your overall views on the Draft Budget 2023-34 from an equality and social justice perspective insofar as it relates to children and young people.
- Your views about any sections of the population of children and young people who are likely to be particularly affected by spending decisions within the Draft Budget 2023-24 (e.g. vulnerable groups).
- Information about:
 - How you work with the Minister for Health and Social Care and her Deputies, and the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, to ensure that their budgets advance equality and social justice.
 - How you co-ordinate measures to mitigate Child Poverty across the Cabinet, and your assessment of any costs associated with the development and delivery of the refreshed Child Poverty Strategy, anticipated in 2023.
 - Any discussions you have had with the Minister for Education and Welsh Language in respect of allocations for:

- the impact of child poverty of educational outcomes, including the Pupil Development Grant;
 - the planned spending intended to deliver the Welsh Government's objective to narrow attainment gaps across all ages;
 - digital inclusion, and any assessment of the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and associated use of technology and has led to an increased reliance on learners using their own digital devices and any costs allocated to mitigate this;
 - financial inclusion and its link with the new curriculum; and
 - widening access to higher education among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and supporting students whilst at university to further social justice and social mobility.
- Allocations for the work of the office of the Children's Commissioner.

I would be grateful to receive the written information no later than 16 December 2022. I note that the Welsh Government intends to publish the Draft Budget on 13 December 2022. Please contact my clerk if you are concerned about meeting our proposed deadline in light of the budget timetable.

Given the shared interest across committees in some of the areas listed above, I have copied in the chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Title: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget 2023-24

Views on the Draft Budget

1. As a Welsh Government, we will continue to work to prioritise our budgets to shield the most vulnerable and maintain our commitment to create a stronger, fairer and greener Wales as we prepare our draft Budget 2023-24. There is no doubt, however, that this has been a challenging budget, the most challenging since devolution.
2. We have published our Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) of the Draft Budget which outlines the contextual evidence that has supported our spending decisions, including those related to children and young people. The SIIA is just one of a suite of documents published as part of our Draft Budget, with the impact of spending decisions outlined as part of the main narrative in chapter four, complemented by the SIIA at Annex A. Following publication of the Draft Budget we will publish an extensive summary of all Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees on allocations within each MEG; this will provide a more detailed account as to how Draft Budget decisions have impacted on different groups.
3. The Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) formerly the Budget Advisory Group Equality (BAGE), was set up in February 2022. The role of the Group is to provide advice, feedback and evidence from an equalities and inclusion perspective to ensure that budget and tax processes improve over the longer term, to better align funding to outcomes including. The Group is primarily intended to support delivery of the Welsh Government Budget Improvement Plan (BIP). The BIP is committed to exploring how we can better improve our approach to assessing the impact of Budget decisions. We are currently working with Children in Wales, Young Wales Project Board to co-produce a Young Person's version of the BIP which will be published in December 2023.
4. People across Wales are facing an uncertain future as a result of this unprecedented cost-of-living crisis. Families with children are more likely to be impacted than those without.
5. Those who will be most affected will be children from a household that has protected characteristics:
 - This includes children and young people who are disabled or live in a household with a disabled person
 - Black, Asian or minority ethnic children
 - Children in single parent households
6. In addition, families that are more at risk from the cost of living crisis include:
 - Households where the children are young
 - Children who live in larger families where there are more children
7. As part of this year's 2023-24 Draft Budget a number of allocations have been made respect relating to Children and Young People. This includes continuing our

commitment to support the Pupil Deprivation Grant with an additional allocation of £9m in 2023-24. This is designed to help children and young people from lower income households and looked after children overcome the additional barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential.

8. Schools in Wales are directly funded by local authorities – funding for schools is mainly provided through the local government settlement. As a result of the decisions we are taking, we are providing an additional £227m in 2023-24 and £268m in 2024-25 to the local government settlement which will include support for schools; this builds on the £0.75bn we outlined up to 2024-25 as part of our 2022 – 2025 Spending Review.
9. In addition to funding we are providing for schools via the Local Government Settlement, we are providing extra funding through Education budgets with an additional £5.5m to support the continuation of the Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards (RRRS) Programme in line with our Programme for Government commitment and a further £4.5m to support implementation of the Additional Learning Needs Act as part of our long-term programme of education reform. In addition, we are providing an additional £9m to support post-16 provision, including a review of Renew and Reform funding and other distinct pressures for school sixth form and FE sector.
10. We have also been able to make an allocation of £18.8m for the Discretionary Assistance Scheme and an allocation of £2.2m for the Basic Income Pilot. Data suggests that 50% of DAF payments are made to households with children. The additional support will ensure that this funding continues to be in place when individuals and families across Wales are facing unprecedented costs for the most basic of things, such as food and fuel. The basic income pilot is a radical intervention, supporting a group of young care leavers with an income of £1,600 (before tax) every month. We continue to support the pilot, which will run for the next two years and are allocating an additional £2.2m in 2023-24.

Working across Cabinet to ensure budget advance equality and social justice

11. As a Cabinet we are committed to promoting equality and social justice; these issues are considered through the cost-of-living Cabinet Sub-Committee as well as the Programme for Government Cabinet Sub-Committee.
12. In March this year, I took a paper to Cabinet on cross-government measures for tackling poverty. My cabinet colleagues gave their unequivocal support. I held a series of follow up bilateral meetings to discuss what more we can do across government to tackle poverty and inequality. The Minister for Education and Welsh Language presented at the most recent Tackling Poverty and Cost of living Summit in November and the Minister for Climate Change and Minister for Finance and Local Government have also contributed at the Summits we have held in 2022. The Deputy Minister and Social Services and I have held a number of joint meetings with stakeholders as our commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people are inextricably linked.

Child Poverty

13. Ministers are committed to achieving the objectives which focus on reducing the number of children living in workless households, increasing the skills of parents and

young people, reducing inequalities in education, health, and economic outcomes, creating a strong economy and labour market and action to increase household income.

14. As you are aware, the Cost of Living Cabinet Sub-committee, which is chaired by the First Minister, provides strategic direction to our response to the cost of living crisis. The Committee is focusing Welsh Government efforts, and those of our partners, in improving outcomes for low income households and ensuring a joined-up approach across portfolios.
15. Our Child Poverty Strategy sets out the Welsh Government's objectives for tackling child poverty through a focus on what we know works well using the levers available.
16. We will report on progress in achieving our child poverty objectives before the new year. I have given a commitment to refresh the current strategy. While the objectives remain relevant, the strategy itself does not recognise the impact of the pandemic, our exit from the EU or the cost of living crisis on poverty.
17. The new strategy will set out the collective approach we are taking as a Government to tackle child poverty. I will be taking a paper to Cabinet in January which will provide an opportunity to discuss our approach further.
18. The costs associated with developing the refreshed strategy will be minimal. They will relate to stakeholder engagement and steps taken to ensure that stakeholders and organisations, people and communities and children and young people can have their say. Funding will be allocated to support us to take steps to ensure that the voices of those most disadvantaged by poverty, have their voices heard.

Educational outcomes, Pupil Development Grant and attainment gaps

19. Countering the effects of poverty on children and young people's attainment is central to our flagship Pupil Development Grant (PDG). Year on year we have extended the PDG to reflect the increase in eFSM learners, with funding for 2022-23 at over £130m. This includes the Early Years PDG (EYPDG).
20. The current cost of living crisis and economic downturn is having an impact on lower income households. Building on the additional £20m allocated as part of last year's Spending Review, we are allocating a further £9m to the PDG from 2023-24 to support our most economically vulnerable learners.
21. We continue to work closely with PDG regional representatives to identify those areas where funding can have most impact, particularly in the context of the recommendations from the Review of School Spending in Wales report; prioritising additional funding for more deprived schools; and working with local authorities on ensuring more consistent and transparent school funding formulae.
22. We have made it clear that tackling the impact of poverty on attainment is at the heart of our national mission in education. The PDG has a key part to play in achieving this and we will build upon existing effective practice by ensuring that we target the funding as well as possible. Whilst ultimately the use of the PDG should be decided by schools, these decisions need to be more strategically influenced, better grounded in evidence and rigorously monitored for impact. To that end, we

have updated the terms and conditions of the grant and will be producing new guidance for schools on the use of the PDG working closely with the Education Endowment Foundation.

23. We are working with Bangor University who are undertaking research on the Effective Targeting of School Deprivation Funding in Wales. The key aims of the research project are to:
- Review how PDG is used in Wales and how similar grants are used in other parts of the UK.
 - Review the main indicators schools use to target funds and design interventions.
 - Evaluate how reporting impacts on learners, school staff and learner outcomes.
 - Review and make recommendations on appropriate measures and evidence of outcomes.
 - Identify what further work is required to ensure future policy making, resource allocation and targeting of resources at school level are fully optimised and evidence based.
24. Looked After Children are among our most vulnerable children and young people. In addition to support via the PDG, since 2021-22 we have provided start-up grant funding to a number of local authorities across Wales to implement a Virtual Schools model which aims to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of both looked after children and previously looked after children. The budget for 2022-23 is £1.1m and this is an ongoing pilot which will continue into its final year in 2023-24.
25. We have identified a small group of leaders to work as Attainment Champions who will provide focused peer to peer support to headteachers in schools involved in the pilot, attend round table discussions on lessons learnt, provide insights on their experience and advocate for this important policy area. This is a supportive and self-selecting pilot, working with headteachers who have demonstrated sustained progress addressing the impact of poverty on educational attainment, have experience of mentoring and capacity building and insight into the increasing pressures of the cost of living on parents and families. The pilot will see system leadership in action and is focussed on what we can learn about this supportive approach to inform future policy and practice. The pilot is being delivered by the National Academy for Educational Leadership and we are providing £157,600 for this work
26. The Programme for Government 2021-2026 commits the Welsh Government to: *Invest in the learning environment of Community Focused Schools, co-locating key services, and securing stronger engagement with parents and carers outside traditional hours.* This is a key part of delivering educational equality through our policy for tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment. It is equally part of our aim to build communities that are thriving, empowered, and connected.
27. Our ambition is for all schools in Wales to be Community Focused Schools - responding to the needs of their community, building a strong partnership with families, and collaborating effectively with other services.
28. In 2022-23 we have invested:
- £3.84m in increasing the number of family engagement officers employed by schools, with part of their role to be focused on improving pupil attendance;
 - £660k to trial the appointment of community focused schools managers; and

- £20m of capital investment to allow schools to develop further as community assets, making the school more accessible and open to its local community.

Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller Grant (MEGRT)

29. We understand the particular language and cultural barriers children from ethnic minority and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds can face, which is why it is crucial they receive support to reach their full potential.
30. We have provided a total of £11m to local authorities in 2022-23 via the Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma Traveller (MEGRT) grant to fund local authority support services, with funding being maintained for 2023-24. This funding supports the educational needs of all children and young people from ethnic minority communities, including Refugees and Asylum Seekers. This funding recognises the important role local authority services provide in supporting children and young people, and the sustained increase in numbers of minority ethnic learners with English or Welsh as an additional language, who need support.

Digital Inclusion in schools

31. As part of our 'Stay safe. Stay learning' programme, Wales was well positioned to support all learners with remote learning and quickly established support for digitally excluded learners in maintained schools through the foundations established by the Hwb EdTech programme.
32. The Education Policy Institute recognised the Welsh Government's digital strategy, existing infrastructure and collaboration with local authorities as key enablers for schools across Wales to deliver digital learning, particularly during the pandemic.
33. Digital equity is of paramount importance and the Welsh Government is committed to identifying new opportunities to support schools and local authorities to improve standards and reduce the impact of education on households, such as providing the all Wales Microsoft Education licensing agreement to allow all learners and teachers to download Microsoft Office at home **for free**.
34. Welsh Ministers are also fully committed to maintaining support for the Hwb EdTech programme to ensure that all maintained schools have equitable access to online tools and resources which can be accessed anytime, anywhere. The Welsh Government has invested over £180 million, including a further £10million this financial year, to future proof education technology infrastructure; provided over 230,000 end user devices, with significant work underway to refresh the teaching and learning tools and peripherals across Wales to help deliver the Curriculum for Wales.
35. Schools across Wales can also benefit from the Hwb digital learning platform, which is helping to improve the use of digital technology for teaching and learning. Hwb provides all learners and teachers in maintained schools, as well as other education stakeholders, such as trainee and supply teachers, with access to a range of bilingual digital infrastructure, tools and resources that are helping to transform digital teaching and learning in Wales. The Hwb digital learning platform has been designed to ensure the resources, tools and services can be accessed anywhere, anytime from an internet connected device.

36. Through these initiatives the Welsh Government have provided national foundations capable of supporting and delivering real transformation to the Education sector. It also ensures digital is at the heart of the Curriculum for Wales and provides support to schools to inspire our teachers and learners to create a culture which embeds digital practices.

Financial inclusion and its link with the new curriculum

37. Financial Inclusion and the Financial Wellbeing Delivery Plan for Wales aligns closely with the new curriculum in delivering learning for children from 3 to 16 years of age.

38. [The Delivery Plan for Wales](#) provides activities that aims to help 90,000 more children and young people in Wales getting a meaningful financial education and was co-produced by Welsh Government and Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).

39. Financial education is any activity that helps children and young people develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to manage their money well in later life. Financial education has very strong links to most aspects of future/adult financial wellbeing. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 gives Wales the ambition, permission, and legal obligation to improve social, cultural, environmental, and economic wellbeing.

40. The following actions are contained in the Financial Foundations section of the Plan:

- supporting credit unions to provide school savings schemes to increase the number of school-age children saving regularly supporting financial resilience. Welsh Government is currently supporting four credit unions to deliver school savers projects within Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot, Cardiff, and Bridgend. Different delivery methods are used – some schemes are children led maximising the learning opportunities, some teacher/volunteer led and others run by a dedicated school's officer;
- delivers the bilingual Your Money Matters textbook to all secondary schools in Wales and will evaluate its impact; and
- Financial education in the home, in government training programmes and in other youth settings is also a priority. Talk, Learn, Do (TLD) was developed and piloted in Wales. It helps parents/carers have conversations with children about money with the aim of improving financial capability. The TLD programme will also be expanded to include content for teenagers and young people, enabling parents of older children to support their transition into adulthood. Digitise Talk, Learn, Do (TLD) content Scope and engage a digital agency to create and publish TLD content digitally.

41. The teacher training pathfinder being delivered by Young Money in partnership with the Welsh Government addresses the limited support for teachers in delivering financial education. The aim is to continue to promote the learning in Wales and

encourage more uptake for teachers to enhance teacher knowledge, skills, and confidence in teaching about money, and improve young people's financial capability. Findings from the Wales pathfinder were published in Spring 2022 with, E-Learning being delivered in Wales (research evaluation <https://maps.org.uk/2022/05/11/financial-education-professional-learning-for-teachers-in-wales-pathfinder-evaluation/>)

42. The aim is to launch in other three nations by the end of 2022, with teacher training to commence in Spring 2023, ready for evaluation and next steps planning by Autumn 2024.
43. Officials are working with the MaPS and the steering group to continually monitor the roll out of these actions given the landscape change post Covid, and in the context of the cost-of-living crisis.
44. The Delivery Plan is supported with input from over 90 stakeholders in Wales including banks, building societies, educational institutions, government departments and this joint working with MaPS is vital to its success. We continue to work in partnership on this delivery.

Higher education

45. We provide the most progressive student finance system in the UK by providing living costs grants to support to those who need it most. The highest levels of grant are targeted to those students from households with the lowest incomes. Ensuring all eligible students have access to the same maximum amount of funding creates parity of opportunity for Welsh students.
46. Support is available to those wishing to study a designated higher education course at a university or further education institute in the UK and covers study at undergraduate through to postgraduate.
47. We provide additional support for disabled students to ensure they benefit from the same higher education opportunities and study experiences as their non-disabled peers. A non-repayable grant of over £32,000 per academic year is available for non-medical help, mobility assistance, equipment and where necessary, upgrades to living accommodation. The grant is non-means tested and available to eligible undergraduate, postgraduate, full-time, part-time and distance learning students without reduction; support is based on the student's needs.
48. Eligible care leavers aged under 25 are not means tested and automatically receive the maximum maintenance grant available. Universities in Wales also support care leavers through various projects, bursaries, and work with specialist charities. This work is expected to continue.
49. Welsh Government listened to young carers and has worked with the Student Loans Company to improve guidance to practitioners. As a result, greater discretion in attendance management for carers was agreed, ensuring they were not unnecessarily penalised for absences while caring.

50. We also have grants available for those in higher education with caring responsibilities, including a Childcare Grant, a Parents' Learning Allowance and an Adult Dependents' Grant.
51. Students with dependants can also apply for additional means-tested grants (known as Grants for Dependants) to support them with any additional costs they incur. This includes childcare. Furthermore, in academic year 2022/23, we removed the restriction preventing students on distance learning courses accessing these grants in recognition of the increase in blended learning and students seeking part-time study to help balance study and existing commitments. This is now available to new and continuing students.
52. We recognise that many students studying in Wales will not have access to our generous package of student support but the funding we have provided, to bolster hardship funds and mental health services and other support during the pandemic, and other emergency support being offered to students during the current crisis is available to all students, including our international students.
53. Widening access to higher education and beyond makes a significant contribution to society and the economy of Wales, supports our efforts to tackle inequality, social justice, social mobility, economic upskilling and institutions' civic mission activities such as working with schools.
54. HEFCW's Widening Access Programme of Action sets out how it delivers its approach to widening access under a number of strategic themes. Carers feature as an under-represented cohort and one of HEFCW's strategic priorities is to: 'prioritise carers, looked after children and care leavers in Widening Access strategy development and implementation'. Actions towards this priority include:
- Reaching Wider Programme strategies and plans to demonstrate partnership working with FE, schools and other organisations to prioritise carers, looked after children and care leaver activities; and
 - publish fee and access plan guidance to encourage support for carers, looked after children and care leavers.
55. The Programme of Action is supported by HEFCW's Reaching Wider Programme (RWP). By working with priority schools, colleges and communities the RWP aims to increase higher education participation from priority groups and communities in Wales by raising educational aspirations and skills and creating innovative study opportunities and learning pathways to higher education.
56. Over the current strategy period (2022/23 to 2024/45) HEFCW plan to invest £2m annually to support RW Partnership strategies. In addition, higher education institutions fund their contribution to the RW Programme through fee and access plan investment of £1.7m annually, giving a total investment over the period of £3.7m annually from 2022/23.
57. The aim of the programme is to engage with primary and secondary schools; young people up to the age of 18; adults aged 21 and over with no HE qualifications, from the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The project also works with care experienced individuals and carers; people with disabilities; and people from ethnic minority backgrounds to help reduce barriers to education faced by these groups.

58. HEFCW have been remitted to continue to support institutions in achieving rapid and sustained progress in tackling racism and improving the experience of staff and students in HE regardless of their racial background. This includes institutions working towards the achievement of a charter mark as a demonstration of their commitment to eradicating racism and racial inequality at all levels within the sector
59. HEFCW has allocated funding for universities in Wales to support race equality in higher education. The purpose of the funding is to prevent inequality, tackle anti-racism, support culture change and contribute to delivering the Welsh Government's Anti-racism Wales action plan.
60. Our Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, which was published following extensive consultation, includes specific actions for HE. The goals and actions we have set for HE build on the good work already being done within the sector and support their work to improve the experience of staff and students in HE regardless of their racial background.
61. All universities in Wales have hardship funds in place to support students in financial difficulty. Information about what support is available is provided on their websites and promoted through a range of channels.
62. Our universities have been taking steps to support their staff and students in dealing with the impacts of increased cost of living and other financial pressures. Measures being put in place include increased hardship funds, means-tested bursary schemes, short-term loans and crisis grants; warm study spaces; free or low-cost food and hot meals; on campus food banks; free period products; free online money and financial advice; free access to sporting and other activities; as well as increased mileage allowances for students on placements.
63. The steps being taking by our institutions, in addition to supporting their mental health and well-being, will help students to stay well and continue to engage with their studies, ensuring they able to succeed and achieve their ambitions and get the most out of their university experience.
64. Recognising the particular difficulties and challenges posed by the pandemic we allocated additional funding of £50m to HEFCW in 2020-21 to bolster support for students, particularly those facing financial, emotional or mental health difficulties. £10m was provided specifically for student mental health and well-being services and £40m to boost support for students facing financial hardship.

Allocations for the work of the office of the Children's Commissioner

65. Within a very challenging financial context, we are pleased to be able to provide the Children's Commissioner for Wales with an uplift to her budget.
66. This will enable the Children's Commissioner to carry out her important work as an independent human rights organisation in support of children's rights and entitlements and enabling their voices to be heard.

67. This funding will enable the new Commissioner to plan her work in line with the priorities shared with her by children and young people via her Ambitions for Wales survey. The results of that survey will be published in the new year. From the Committee's recent scrutiny of the Commissioner's Annual Report, the Committee is already aware of some of those concerns which are centred on children having enough money for the things they need.
68. We are pleased to be able to maintain the financial position of the Commissioner's office so that it can continue with its casework, participation activity, training and supporting the needs of all children in Wales.