

Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5 (Hybrid)

Meeting date: 24 April 2023

Meeting time: 13.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting registration (13:00–13:30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

13:30

2 Papers to note

13:30–13:35

2.1 Correspondence from the Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee to the Minister for Climate Change regarding building safety

(Pages 1 – 3)

2.2 Correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice regarding the proposed addition of new public bodies to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

(Pages 4 – 5)

2.3 Correspondence with the Minister for Social Justice regarding the EU Settlement Scheme

(Pages 6 – 9)

2.4 Correspondence from Citizens' Advice Cymru to the Minister for Social Justice regarding energy companies

(Pages 10 – 14)

2.5 Correspondence from the Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee regarding Audit Wales' report on Digital Inclusion

(Page 15)



- 2.6 Correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership regarding the Shadow Social Partnership Council**
(Pages 16 – 52)
- 2.7 Correspondence from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to Lord Bellamy regarding evidence relating to the justice system in Wales**
(Pages 53 – 56)
- 2.8 Welsh Government response to the Committee's report on women's experiences of the criminal justice system**
(Pages 57 – 68)
- 2.9 Correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2024–25 programme of engagement**
(Pages 69 – 71)
- 3 Motion under SO17.42 (vi) and (ix) to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting**
13:35
- 4 Debt and the impact of the rising cost of living: consideration of draft report**
13:35–14:50
- 5 Forward work programme: consideration of approach to Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan**
14:50–15:05 (Pages 72 – 83)
- 6 The public health approach to preventing gender-based violence: engagement approach**
15:05–15:20 (Pages 84 – 87)
- 7 EU Settlement Scheme: monitoring report**
15:20–15:30 (Pages 88 – 96)

Julie James MS,
Minister for Climate Change,
Welsh Government

24 March 2023

Dear Julie

Building safety

We write with regard to the ongoing building safety crisis. In our last letter to you, dated 25 November 2022, we referred to concerns raised by the Welsh Cladiators group about the pace and nature of the action the Welsh Government is taking to rectify the situation for leaseholders of affected buildings. Thank you for your response of 15 December 2022.

At our meeting on 1 March, we took evidence from the Welsh Cladiators group and from a panel of witnesses representing disabled leaseholders affected by the crisis. Their evidence demonstrated the understandable frustration felt by leaseholders at the lack of progress and action, and we found the evidence from both panels concerning.

We heard from the Welsh Cladiators group that investigations carried out on affected buildings have uncovered issues that go beyond fire safety alone, and that the situation is complex and ever changing. It's clear to us that several of the building defect issues pre-date the Grenfell tragedy. This raises questions around general building standards and the apparent lack of regulations for defects to be rectified.

We also heard from the group about the results of a recent freedom of information request it made in relation to the Welsh building fund. The group told us that the request showed that, as of the end of February this year, only £75,000 of the £375 million fund, had been committed to cover survey fees. We would be grateful for further information as to how this fund will be spent to resolve the ongoing building safety issues.

The Welsh Cladiators group also told us of their concerns around the surveys being carried out, in particular, that the reports can't be released until all of the surveys have been completed. We heard that group members have paid for detailed surveys, the results of which have been given to the Welsh Government. The members were concerned that these surveys were tailored more appropriately to their circumstances compared with the surveys carried out by Welsh Government. We understand that there have been delays in completing all surveys, and we understand the frustration of the group who are aware that the survey for their buildings have been completed but are unable to see the results. We would be grateful if you could provide a timescale for when the reports will be released for leaseholders to see.

We heard from CladDag members that remediation work can have a disproportionate impact on disabled leaseholders, both in terms of the remediation costs and the disruption. We heard that disabled leaseholders are disproportionately more likely to feel trapped in unsafe buildings, which lack suitable adaptations. For example, we heard of cases where disabled leaseholders had waited several years for available accessible properties to move into, to enable remediation works to be done, and in these instances the properties fell through, and so the leaseholders were not able to move in time for the works to be done.

We also heard that in an emergency situation, the support required by disabled leaseholders is not always considered by the relevant services, such as fire and rescue. We believe this should be addressed as a matter of urgency and that coordination between services to ensure support for disabled leaseholders must take place. We were disappointed to hear of a lack of advocacy for disabled leaseholders, and concerned by the inequality and additional barriers faced by disabled leaseholders as a result of the building safety crisis. We are concerned about the human cost of the ongoing situation while all leaseholders wait for solutions and ask what can be done to address the matters urgently.

The witnesses we heard from on 1 March all agreed that legislation is required to protect leaseholders and that voluntary arrangements have not worked effectively. We have previously emphasised the importance of the Welsh Government bringing forward legislation in this area as a matter of urgency and we ask for an update on the progress of a Welsh Building Safety Bill, which you have mentioned will be introduced before the end of the Sixth Senedd.

As mentioned, it is clear to us that there are issues surrounding building standards and regulations that go beyond building safety alone, and we will revisit these issues during our current inquiry on the right to adequate housing.

We will be grateful for a prompt response to this letter.

Cc. to the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely

John

John Griffiths MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 2.2

Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref PO/JH/0098/23

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

29 March 2023

Dear Jenny,

I am writing to update you on the Welsh Government's plans for the proposed addition of new public bodies to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG Act).

In 2022, we consulted on a proposal to add new public bodies to section 6 of the WFG Act. We published a summary of the consultation responses on 15 December. In January 2023, I wrote to existing public bodies to gather further insight on their experience of preparing for the well-being duty. This work has taken place alongside the development of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill (SPPP Bill). Following Royal Assent and commencement of relevant provisions, the SPPP Bill will place a social partnership duty on the public bodies listed in section 6 of the WFG Act, requiring them to work with their recognised trade unions or other representatives of staff on setting and delivering their well-being objectives. The SPPP Bill will also amend the words 'decent work' in the 'A prosperous Wales' well-being goal to 'fair work', which will trigger a review of well-being objectives by all public bodies listed in section 6 of the WFG Act.

The consultation responses we received from public bodies emphasised the importance of investing time to develop the knowledge and skills required to discharge the well-being duty effectively. The new public bodies will also need to prepare for discharging their duties under the SPPP Bill, post Royal Assent. Therefore, we now intend to add the new public bodies to section 6 of the WFG Act later than originally planned to allow further preparation and engagement. We will continue to hold knowledge exchange sessions with the proposed public bodies to support their preparations for the well-being duty. I will, in due course, confirm the final list of bodies to be added to the WFG Act and provide further details on timings.

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


Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@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 and for correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke above the first letter 'J'.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice

Copied to the Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, and the Auditor General for Wales.

Agenda Item 2.3

JANE HUTT MS
Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

31 March 2023

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your letter of 9 March including the Committee's latest report on EUSS.

I note the questions you have raised within your correspondence, and I provide a response to those questions below:

High Court ruling regarding the rights of pre-settled citizens

The Welsh Government welcomes the recent confirmation that the Home Office will not proceed with its appeal against the High Court judgment regarding the rights of citizens with Pre-Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS).

The Welsh Government continues to reach out to the UK Government to ask it to provide further clarity on what the High Court ruling means for Pre-Settled Status holders and to do this as soon as possible. In the interim, the UK Government has informed us that it will continue to encourage Pre-Settled Status holders to apply for Settled Status when they are eligible to do so, to ensure they secure their Indefinite Leave to Remain. We have called for the UK Government to involve all devolved governments in any decision making or further policy developments in this area.

Welsh Government funded EUSS Advice Services

Since 2019, the Welsh Government has provided over £2.7million to fund EUSS Immigration Advice Services in Wales. This funding has ensured that EU, EEA and Swiss citizens have been able to access free support to help them navigate the EUSS application process and secure their status, rights and entitlements. The EUSS Advice Services provided by Citizens Advice, Settled and Newfields Law have been invaluable to EU citizens

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0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
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in Wales and I am pleased that we were able to continue to extend the funding for almost two years past the original deadline for applications.

The Welsh Government has recently received comments from the Delegation of the European Union to the United Kingdom, and from visiting members of the EU's Economic and Social Committee, expressing gratitude for the generous support that has been provided to enable EU citizens to continue to reside in Wales.

I issued a [written statement](#) on 23 March to provide an update on the Welsh Government's EUSS Advice Services post-March 2023 and I am pleased to confirm that an additional £200k will be provided to Citizens Advice and Settled for the next financial year so they can continue to support EU citizens in Wales.

Number of EUSS applications from Ukrainians residing in Wales

The UK Government does not publish devolved level data on the number of Ukrainian nationals who have applied to the EUSS in the EU Settlement Scheme Quarterly Statistics. However, following a request for this information from the Welsh Government, the UK Government has confirmed that, up until December 23, there had been 80 applications to the EUSS from Ukrainians with a Welsh address.

The most recent statistics for the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme show that as of 21 March 2023, 8,832 visas have been issued. We do not receive devolved data for the Ukraine Family Scheme or the Ukraine Extension Scheme. However, each of these three Ukraine schemes gives three years leave to remain with access to work and public funds.

I hope this response provides detail and clarity on the points you have raised and reassures the Committee that the Welsh Government is doing its utmost to uphold its promise to EU, EEA and Swiss citizens and to support them with their settlement here in Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line above the first name.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol
Minister for Social Justice

Jane Hutt MS
Minister for Social Justice

9 March 2023

Dear Jane,

EU Settlement Scheme

Thank you for sharing the latest EUSS Co-Ordination Group meeting minutes.

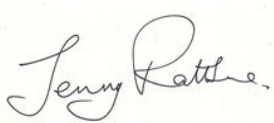
We have recently considered the latest available statistics on EUSS applications from European citizens living in Wales, and subsequently published our latest [monitoring report](#).

Our report raises a number of issues and we would be grateful if you could provide information on the following points:

- What is the Welsh Government's view on the High Court's decision on the rights of pre-settled citizens?
- What impact, if any, might the ruling have on the free advice and support services funded by the Welsh Government?
- What discussions have taken place between Welsh Government and UK Government in relation to the ruling?
- Will Welsh Government extend its free advice and support beyond the end of March 2023?
- Has Welsh Government been able to determine how many Ukrainian arrivals in Wales applied to the EUSS?

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Agenda Item 2.4



ebost/email: Luke.Young@citizensadvice.org.uk

31 March 2023

To: Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice

Dear Minister

RE: Ministerial meeting with energy companies

I write following your latest meeting with energy companies on 30 March 2023. I'm grateful for the invitation to listen to the companies as they explained the steps they are now taking following our shared concerns over the treatment of vulnerable people. As you made clear to those present, the scandal of forced installation of prepayment meters has shaken faith in the ability of suppliers to look after their customers. It has also raised serious questions around their regulation, licences and use of debt collectors.

It is our view that prepayment meter households have too often been treated as second class citizens within the energy market. Ofgem and suppliers have repeatedly failed to prioritise this group when rolling out sector wide improvements - even though they often have the most to gain. Ofgem has been too slow to step in to protect prepayment meter customers from harmful practices.

There is a clear disconnect between the stated policies of energy companies and the reality for the people we support through Citizens Advice Cymru. In the meeting, suppliers said that they had extensive safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. However a short review of cases through our service quickly identified that vulnerabilities are not being adequately assessed. These cases exist across suppliers and across Wales. I have included a series of case studies (Appendix A) to illustrate these points.

As it stands, suppliers work on the assumption there's no vulnerability in the household until proven otherwise. We believe this should be reversed. Suppliers should assume there is vulnerability in the household until they can be confident there isn't.

In seeking to redress the forced prepayment meter scandal, the current pause in forced prepayment installations should last as long as is needed until new protections are in place, and



ebost/email: Luke.Young@citizensadvice.org.uk

market conditions ensure no detriment to customers. Action should be taken swiftly to compensate people if they were wrongly moved onto prepay through their smart meters or by installation by warrant.

Households which remain on prepayment meters must be offered a quick and straightforward route to securing additional support (eg. emergency fuel vouchers, additional credit & practical debt remedies like debt holidays).

Ofgem and industry must go further to ensure that appropriate safeguards and support are in place to ensure disconnection - by whatever means - is kept in the past. Disconnection in water was banned two decades ago because of health and safety concerns. Disconnection of energy supply to households on credit meters is also effectively banned. But we know when people are struggling to afford to top-up their prepayment meters or are worried about energy costs, disconnecting themselves from an energy supply is commonplace. This simply passes off the responsibility for disconnection from energy suppliers to consumers - the impact is the same.

Considering action we could take in Wales specifically, it feels an opportune time to explore what can be done with the Welsh Government's housing-related powers to ensure tenants, particularly those who prepay for their energy, maintain the 'right to an energy supply'.

As you know, we remain concerned about energy and living costs continuing to remain high while government support is reduced throughout 2023. The Welsh Government's Wales Fuel Support Scheme assisted hundreds of thousands of households this past winter. We would urge the Welsh Government to begin preparations to offer support to low income households next winter. Addressing broader reform of the energy market to help low income households, we believe the UK Government should introduce an energy social tariff by Spring 2024, as part of a new policy framework to support people struggling in what could be a decade of high energy bills.

While we have pointed to areas above for exploration in Wales, many aspects are responsibilities that sit with the Ofgem, energy suppliers, and the UK Government. There are questions that remain unanswered by suppliers and the regulator. Your convening power to bring these parties together to answer questions on behalf of people in Wales is valuable, and appreciated.

We are determined to continue working with you and your colleagues in the Senedd to ensure



ebost/email: Luke.Young@citizensadvice.org.uk

lessons are learned.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Young

**Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol / Assistant Director
Citizens Advice Cymru**

CC:

Chair of Petitions Committee

Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

Party spokespeople for social justice and equalities

Chair CPG on Fuel Poverty

Appendix A

Stacey's Story

Stacey is a single parent of two young children. She lives in a housing association property in South Wales. Stacey is a young care leaver with little support from social services. She's reliant on benefit income and due to rising costs is struggling to keep up with bills. Her energy supplier wrote to her to say she owes £5,000 on her gas bill. She's unsure how this amount built up.

Stacey has smart meters and these have since been switched to prepay mode, she was unaware this was happening at the time. It appears **[Supplier] failed to carry out any of the required checks to ensure having her meters switched to prepay mode was an appropriate method of payment.** There is also a debt recovery rate of £18 per week being taken from the credit she puts on her meter. She's now finding it very difficult to top up. Our adviser gave her a fuel voucher and talked through other support she may be entitled to and steps she could take with her energy supplier to reduce the high debt recovery rate.

Liz's Story



ebost/email: Luke.Young@citizensadvice.org.uk

Liz is a single parent with a young child. She lives in a housing association property in South Wales. Her electricity smart meter was switched to prepay mode due to disputed arrears. Liz has anxiety and depression which can make it difficult for her to cope with everyday tasks. Her child also has significant health issues which means she needs to keep their room consistently warm. The only notice she received for the switch was a single text, sent just two days before the switch was made. **[Supplier] did not take the required steps to check for customer vulnerabilities.** Due to the minimal notice, Liz was unable to budget for the change to prepay mode. She has continued to have issues with this way of paying, which has caused her to lose supply for over 50 hours since the switch.

Mary's Story

Mary is widowed with adult children. She lives alone in a housing association property in South Wales. Her energy supplier has recently switched her smart meters to prepay mode for outstanding energy debts. Mary didn't realise any debt had accrued on her account. She cannot remember receiving any notification from her supplier that the switch was going to happen and said no other debt repayment options were discussed before they took this action.

Mary has multiple vulnerabilities, including physical and mental health conditions. She does not have access to the internet and isn't confident using the telephone to speak with their energy supplier. She is subsequently struggling to raise these issues independently. She is unsure how she will afford to top-up her meters and make debt repayments and is very worried this will mean she will be without gas or electricity.

Acting on Mary's behalf, one of our advisers emailed [supplier] to check the status of her energy accounts, whether debt repayment options were discussed prior to the switch and whether she is on their Priority Services Register (PSR). Over a month later they had still not received a reply. When our adviser was finally able to speak to someone at [supplier] they confirmed that Mary has been on their PSR since 2010. In spite of this it appears **they didn't take account of her vulnerabilities before making the switch to prepay.**

Sian's story



ebost/email: Luke.Young@citizensadvice.org.uk

Sian has multiple health conditions, both physical and mental. She struggles to manage her finances and has a number of debts including considerable arrears on her energy bills. Her energy supplier has attempted to install a PPM on a number of occasions in the past due to the outstanding debt, but this hasn't happened previously due to Sian's health. She is on their Priority Services Register.

In February she received a letter from [Supplier] once again **threatening to get a warrant to install a PPM if the debt wasn't paid, despite the temporary hold on the forced installations of PPMs being in place**. She contacted her supplier, who agreed to put a 30 day hold on the account but she is worried about what will happen once this is lifted. Our adviser contacted [supplier] who confirmed there are no plans to install a PPM at the property at this time. However, the whole experience just added to Sian's worries and anxiety.

Llyr Gruffydd MS

Chair, Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

6 April 2023

Dear both,

Audit Wales – Digital Inclusion in Wales

During the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee's meeting on 30 March 2023, the Committee received a briefing from Audit Wales on their report, [Digital Inclusion in Wales](#).

Having considered its contents, we felt it may be of interest to you and your Committees. As such, we suggest that your Committees consider the report as part of your ongoing and future work. I have attached the report for your information.

I look forward to receiving your response as soon as possible.

Regards,



Mark Isherwood MS

Chair of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

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



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

6 April 2023

Dear Jenny,

Further to my letter of the 15 December, please find attached the additional information requested by the Equality and Social Justice Committee in relation to the Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC).

As explained to the Committee, the Welsh Government accepted, in principle, recommendation 28 which asked for the publication of any work undertaken to evaluate and learn the lessons of the work of the SSPC at the earliest opportunity and no later than July 2023.

Attached is a summary report providing an overview of discussions held at the SSPC. This outlines how the advice of social partners informed the response to the pandemic at each stage as decisions were being made by Welsh Government. More broadly, it provided the opportunity for a mutual exchange of ideas on a range of subjects, allowing social partners to play an active role in shaping the guidance produced by the Welsh Government. Areas discussed included the retail and tourism sectors, support for businesses more generally, the Test, Trace and Protect programme, worker safety, the re-opening of schools and the Covid19 vaccination/booster roll-out.

I trust that the Committee will find this additional information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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

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

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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) Summary Report for the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – Background

- 1.1 The Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) played a key role in shaping the Welsh Government's response to the Covid19 pandemic. It brought together social partners (25 in total) from trade unions, devolved employers, the private sector as well as the Welsh Commissioners to better understand the challenges posed by Covid19. A number of senior Welsh Government officials also attended the SSPC either to act in support of a Minister or to update the Council directly on their areas of policy or operational responsibility.
- 1.2 Throughout the pandemic the SSPC met on a fortnightly basis, then in alignment with the three-week review cycle and sometimes at very short notice in reaction to emerging issues. Most meetings of the SSPC were chaired by the First Minister but on those occasions where he was unable to attend, another Minister chaired in his place.
- 1.3 The SSPC acted as a strategic discussion forum providing an important channel for sharing information and seeking advice. From these discussions Welsh Government officials met social partners outside of the SSPC to progress work across a range of policy areas in more detail. As an example, discussions at the SSPC covered:
- guidance on the re-opening of the retail and tourism sectors
 - support for businesses
 - development of the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) programme
 - worker safety
 - the re-opening of schools
 - the Covid19 vaccination/booster roll-out
 - post Covid19 recovery
- 1.4 Key to the operation of the SSPC was that it allowed social partners to play an active role in shaping the response to Covid19 as decisions were being made by the Welsh Government.
- 1.5 The following provides a synopsis of each meeting of the SSPC during the Covid19 pandemic. It captures key discussion points and actions from the first formal meeting of the SSPC to discuss the pandemic on the 14 May 2020 through to its termination on the 14 July 2022. All meetings were held virtually.
- 1.6 It should be noted that the SSPC also met on the 23 March 2020 to hold an unscheduled discussion about Covid19 as the pandemic first began to emerge. As an unscheduled emergency meeting the aim was to hear social partners initial thoughts on the developing crisis and no minute was taken by officials.

Meetings of the SSPC (14 May 2020 – 14 July 2022) Synopsis of Key Discussion Points

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 May 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19: Easing of Lockdown The First Minister outlined the arrangements for reviewing lockdown measures	First Minister	The FM confirmed that the Welsh Government would publish its road-map document outlining the planned approach to easing lockdown provisions in Wales. Partners supported the careful approach to easing lockdown provisions and the importance of social partnership working.
2.	Draft Covid19: Safe Return to Work Protocol	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	Members raised a need for the protocol to be drafted for employers and employees, with a particular focus on workers in the shielding category and stressed the importance of a phased re-opening of businesses in order to give them the time they needed to start operating safely and effectively.
3.	Covid19: Supporting Business, Public Services and Workers through the Recovery	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister outlined the extent of funding provided by the Welsh Government, including the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). Members generally supported the Welsh Government's approach though sought greater clarity regarding the social care sector.
4.	Covid19: Ongoing Role of Social Partnership	First Minister	There was general consensus that the broader range of membership at the SSPC had added value.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 May 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures	First Minister	The FM outlined rates of infection and the importance of stemming community transmission. He confirmed an imminent announcement would be made regarding lockdown provisions.
2.	Covid19: Update on Return-to-Work Guidance	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government's higher level workplace guidance had been shared with members as a reference point based on Welsh Law. He explained more tailored guidance would be developed for individual industries/sectors. The trade unions proposed establishing a National Health and Safety Forum to address Covid19; more details were requested. There was a commitment for further consideration to be given to the needs of vulnerable groups and equality law in guidance.
3.	Covid19: Test, Trace and Protect	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister outlined the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) approach. Discussions captured the importance of guidance being developed in the event of workplace outbreaks. The Minister confirmed that contact tracing would help move Wales out of lockdown until a vaccine was developed and that further briefings on TTP would be presented to the SSPC.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 11 June 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Priorities for the Next Review of Regulations	First Minister	Update provided by the FM including a forthcoming announcement on some easing of lockdown in response to decreased transmission rates but retaining the need to stay local. Concerns were expressed over the lack of progress in establishing the National Health and Safety Forum. The FM confirmed membership invites had been issued. The importance of clear messaging over easement measures was stressed and Welsh Government committed to issuing guidance for the retail sector by close.
2.	Covid19 – Next Phase of easement for schools	Minister for Education	The Minister referenced the phased return guidance that had been published. The trade unions expressed concern over re-opening. The scientific advice underpinning the approach was outlined and it was agreed the CMO would

			<p>speak directly with the unions about their concerns. The Minister stressed the importance of being flexible and confirmed a checklist of key safety issues had also been developed.</p>
3.	Update on Test, Trace and Protect	Minister for Health and Social Services	<p>The Minister confirmed TTP capacity had increased. Concerns were raised regarding pay conditions for workers needing to self-isolate, the length of time TTP would be in place and the alleged use of unlicensed Covid19 testing devices by some employers. The Minister for Health and Social Services confirmed he had written to the UK Government regarding pay, that TTP would be in place until a vaccine was developed and asked for more information on any potential use of unlicensed tests.</p>

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 25 June 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	<p>The FM updated on changes to lockdown restrictions for specific sectors and confirmed as much notice as possible would be provided for any re-openings. He confirmed an initial meeting to discuss the National Health and Safety Forum had been set and a foundation meeting for the Social Care Fair Work Forum. The need for clear guidance, timescales and caution were all stressed during discussions. The Minister for Health and Social Services emphasised that all guidance was live.</p>
2.	Covid19 - Economic Recovery – For Discussion	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	<p>The Minister outlined the 4 key areas of the Welsh Government's approach to rebuilding the economy. The private sector supported the approach. The importance of decarbonisation to recovery was stressed by partners. It was agreed the private sector and Welsh Government would work together to ensure there was consistent messaging to businesses on decarbonisation.</p>
3.	Covid19 – Welsh Government Supplementary Budget – For Information	Director of Finance (Welsh Government)	<p>The Welsh Government Finance Director confirmed the first supplementary budget of 2020-21 had been approved by the Senedd and that it set out how the Welsh Government would respond to the pandemic. He outlined the key areas of spending from the budget: Health and Public Services, the economy, the third sector/Communities and Transport.</p>

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 9 July 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed a decreased rate of infection would allow continued easing of restrictions. Welsh Government would continue to lobby the UK Government for additional support for infrastructure spending. The private sector stressed the need for specific dates regarding easement for indoor dining. The impact of lockdown on children and the need to consider reopening play facilities was emphasised. The trade unions called for greater clarity regarding the functions of the National Health and Safety Forum. The FM agreed to issue a statement in support of business.
2.	Covid19 – Tourism and Culture Guidance – For Information	(Wales TUC) and Director of Culture Sport and Tourism (Welsh Government)	The presenters highlighted the extent to which social partnership working had been used to develop guidance for the culture, sport and tourism sectors. It was emphasised that central to discussions at all levels had been openness and honesty, which had facilitated a more effective response to the pandemic.
3.	Covid19 – Housing Priorities - For Information	Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Minister emphasised the importance of housing to Covid19 recovery and highlighted the good partnership working in place with local authorities to provide accommodation for vulnerable groups. Discussions flagged the importance of developing accessible and sustainable homes and the need to develop suitable skills/apprenticeships to support the housing sector. The Minister welcomed further discussion within the different forums she chaired.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 20 July 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed future easements would focus on individual freedoms. School safety was raised by the trade unions in preparation for the new school term and concerns over transmission amongst children. The private sector stressed the importance of a unified approach across the UK for businesses and the need for

			clear messaging. The FM asked officials to provide data on transmission in children over the age of 12 to the SSPC.
2.	Covid19 - Economic Recovery – For Discussion	Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General outlined the dual impact of dealing with European Transition and the pandemic. He confirmed there had been limited discussions with the UK Government and emphasised the fundamental differences between the two administrations. Members were encouraged to respond to the UK Government’s consultation on the Internal Market.
3.	Covid19 – Welsh Government Supplementary Budget – For Information	– Welsh Government Deputy Director - Employability and Skills	The Deputy Director detailed the range of support being provided for skills and training development confirming an additional £40million of funding for catch up support for learners who have been detrimentally affected by the lockdown and employability and skills support. During discussions the needs of the most vulnerable were stressed and the importance of ensuring training would lead to good quality employment. The Deputy Director sought support of employers to create job opportunities.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 August 2020

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM emphasised continued caution and confirmed the next review period would focus on the safe re-opening of schools. The trade unions referenced non-compliance with safety measures by some employers and the impact on those shielding, as well as potential abuses of the Furlough Scheme. The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd confirmed she had written to the UK Government on abuses of the Furlough Scheme and asked trade unions to provide any further examples to her.
2.	UK Government Budget Announcements – Implications for the Welsh Government – For Information	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister emphasised the financial challenges facing Wales and detailed new funding allocations from the Welsh Government’s Budget. Support for manufacturing, aviation and aerospace industries was discussed and the Minister welcomed further engagement with partners regarding the Budget.
3.	Covid19 Update on Test, Trace and	The Minister for Health and	The Minister updated on contact tracing and confirmed additional resources were being committed to develop infrastructure ahead of

	Protect – For Information	Social Services	autumn and winter. The importance of flu vaccinations was discussed including the prohibitive cost for some workers. The Minister welcomed further discussion with partners regarding the flu programme.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 17 August 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM outlined the new powers granted to local authorities to enforce Covid 19 regulations. Trade unions raised concerns over the uneven collection of TTP information at hospitality venues and the FM confirmed TTP data should be collected at point of entry. The private sector stressed the importance of employees being able to work from an office where they wish to and the FM confirmed the Return-to-Work guidance offered flexibility.
2.	Support for the Manufacturing Sector – For Discussion	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister emphasised the importance of the manufacturing sector and outlined new funding from the Welsh Government including £500million for the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF). He confirmed the consultation on the Welsh Government's Manufacturing Plan would be launched on the 21 September. Concerns relating to the UK Government's Furlough scheme were covered and the Minister suggested the trade unions and the Future Generations Commissioner discuss a combined approach to mitigate the effects of the Furlough scheme ending.
3.	Influenza Vaccination Programme - For Information	The Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister supported the paper provided by the CBI promoting take-up of the winter flu vaccination in the private sector to mitigate the impact of Covid19. He confirmed the paper encouraged social partners to meet with officials to discuss a joint approach which was accepted by the SSPC.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 7 September 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed transmission rates were increasing, in part, due to non-observance of Covid19 safety measures. The trade unions stressed the importance of consistent enforcement and expressed concerns over large

			numbers of people returning to work. The private sector confirmed most employers favoured a small return to work. The FM confirmed a statement would be issued re-emphasising the need to work from home whenever possible.
2.	Covid19 – Re-opening of Schools – For Discussion	The Minister for Education	The Minister confirmed that schools had been taking a staggered approach to re-opening, that staff transmission was a big risk factor and that additional funding for face coverings had been provided. The trade unions referred to inconsistencies over the use of face coverings in schools and a lack of clarity regarding the administration of the School Cleaning Fund. The Minister confirmed the Fund would be administered by local authorities. Welsh Government officials confirmed the School Partnership Forum was producing a Covid Support Plan with social partners.
3.	Recovery – Post Covid19 – For Information	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General explained that Covid19 had exacerbated many existing challenges. He emphasised that recovery work required a longer-term focus and a joined-up approach. The Counsel General explained that an Advisory Group on Covid Reconstruction had been established as well as a Joint Recovery and Continuity Board to consider both Brexit and Covid19.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 23 September 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 – Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM outlined recent lockdown measures introduced in some areas of Wales. Discussions covered travel, free school meals and the £500 payment to low-income workers. Also raised were the concerns of staff working for UK Government bodies based in Wales regarding return-to-work policy. The FM emphasised that people should stay local and asked the trade unions to keep him informed of any issues relating to UK Government staff based in Wales.
2.	Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-22 – For Discussion	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister invited views on the Welsh Government’s budgetary proposals for 2021-22. She explained that there would be a focus on recovery and reconstruction and that discussions had been held with the other devolved governments regarding the UK Government’s Spending Review. The importance of fiscal flexibility, utilising existing EU money and equitable funding for those most in need were emphasised by members. The Minister invited the SSPC to submit further views to officials.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 8 October 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Update Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) and European Transition – Priorities for Business - For Discussion	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister outlined funding provisions under the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) and confirmed there would be discretion to enable higher levels of support for micro businesses. The administration of the ERF and eligibility for its use were discussed. The Minister highlighted the continuing impact of EU transition on businesses across Wales.
2.	The Voluntary Sector - Contribution to Social Partnership - For Discussion	The Chief Executive of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA)	The Chief Executive outlined the work of the voluntary sector in Wales. Concerns were raised by the trade unions that voluntary activity was being used by some employers to avoid providing paid work and the Future Generations Commissioner highlighted the importance of involving a broad range of people in this sector. The Chief Executive welcomed further discussions on the issues raised.
3.	Covid19: Review of Lockdown Measures – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM referenced growing concerns regarding people travelling into Wales from Covid19 hotspots in England. Discussions covered workplace safety, those in the shielding category and the needs of the hospitality sector. The FM confirmed shielding advice remained the same, that workplace safety guidance was proving effective and that there were no imminent plans to restrict the hospitality sector.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 15 October 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Escalating Position Covid19 - To Explore the Need for Further Interventions - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed increased transmission levels with the NHS having reached critical capacity. He explained that scientific advice recommended a short but significant fire break to give the NHS time to build capacity for the winter. The FM outlined some of the issues being considered by Cabinet and the types of support that would be offered for schools and businesses. Discussions covered a broad range of issues including job and business support, places of worship, the classification of essential workers, care homes and the needs of children during

			lockdown. The FM explained that businesses would continue accessing the UK Government's existing Job Retention Scheme and then switch to the new Job Support Scheme from the 1 November. The FM confirmed he would again approach the UK Government for a bespoke package of support and that he had asked them to participate in a UK wide approach to the firebreak.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 October 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	National Covid19 Firebreak - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM emphasised the extent of the on-going crisis. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales confirmed the Welsh Government had announced businesses affected by the firebreak would be supported with a new £300m fund. The private sector offered to lead in establishing a cross social partner group to discuss the needs of business. Moving forward the FM confirmed the Welsh Government would consider what additional support could be offered for workers falling outside of the current Job Retention Scheme. The FM confirmed the CMO would be writing to those in the shielding category outlining available support.
2.	Internal Market Bill - For Information	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Counsel General outlined concerns with the UK Government's Internal Market Bill. He stressed that the Bill went far beyond the structure needed to ensure economic co-operation between the UK nations and that the common framework that had been developed previously was more effective. He explained that consent to the Bill could not be recommended to the Senedd and that a suite of amendments were being proposed by the Welsh Government.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 October 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Managing Covid19 – Arrangements following the Firebreak Period - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed Cabinet had recently met and that there were 5 key areas being considered regarding lockdown: <u>National vs. Local Restriction Measures</u> – there was general support for a national approach which members felt was fairer and more consistent.

			<p><u>Transport Restrictions</u> – the importance of clear messaging and the needs of those in more isolated areas was stressed.</p> <p><u>Economy and Home Working</u> – home working was supported but the value of work hubs was stressed and the needs of specific sectors.</p> <p><u>Support for the Tourism, Sport and Culture Sectors</u> – it was agreed this was covered under previous discussions.</p> <p><u>Enforcement Regime</u> - general support was offered for the Welsh Government approach which favoured guidance over enforcement in the first instance.</p>
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 12 November 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	National Covid19 Firebreak - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM outlined Welsh Government priorities including different levels of restrictive measures, mass testing and the development of a useable vaccine. The FM confirmed additional guidance would be produced for the clinically vulnerable, that guidance for businesses was being reviewed and that the Health and Safety Forum would be discussing vaccinations when it next met.
2.	Update on the Socio-economic Duty – For Information	The Deputy Minister and Chief Whip	The Deputy Minister explained that the Socio-economic Duty would commence on the 31 March 2021. She thanked members for their involvement and confirmed the Welsh Government would continue to work with them to ensure public bodies were prepared for the commencement of the Duty.
3.	Know your Workforce Rights Campaign – For Information	The Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Deputy Minister thanked members for their involvement in developing the campaign and explained its purpose, asking members to promote it through their networks. The importance of clear messaging and alignment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 were all highlighted during discussions.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 26 November 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM confirmed variable rates of Covid19 transmission. He explained that four meetings had been held between the UK nations to agree a unified approach to the festive season. The trade unions raised concerns over advice to the shielding and frustration over the wording of specific parts of the Economic

			Contract. The FM confirmed the Chief Medical Officer would meet with them to discuss shielding advice and that relevant officials would consider the wording of the Economic Contract.
2.	Comprehensive Spending Review – First Implications for Wales - For Information	The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd	The Minister outlined the impact of the UK Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review on Wales including a real terms reduction in funding. She expressed disappointment over the public sector pay freeze that had been enacted by the UK Government and the lack of funding for job support. She welcomed the proposal that Sir David Henshaw, Natural Resources Wales, attend a future SSPC to provide an update on the work of the green recovery group he chaired.
3.	Covid19 Worst Case Scenario Preparedness – For Information	First Minister	Due to discussions overrunning the First Minister confirmed a note on Worst Case Scenario Preparedness would be circulated to members.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 December 2020 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Next Phase in Responding to Covid19 – For Discussion	First Minister	The FM set out the Welsh Government’s priorities for the next phase in responding to the pandemic. The Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Executive of the NHS outlined concerns regarding peoples’ behaviour on transmission and the NHS. The FM described the tiered approach that would be taken to lockdown throughout Wales. He explained that schools would move to on-line learning and that hospitality venues would have reduced opening hours. Discussions covered the tiered/local approach to lockdown, the need for clear and tailored messaging to specific groups and support for businesses, children and the vulnerable. The FM confirmed the issues raised would be discussed at Cabinet as part of the Welsh Government’s approach to the pandemic.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 December 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update (including Vaccination Programme and Behaviour Change Campaign) - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM advised that following discussions with the other UK nations Wales would enter Tier 4 lockdown after the festive period. The need to support both businesses and individuals was raised and the need for clarity over lockdown arrangements. Updates on the vaccination programme and the Welsh Government's Behaviour Change Campaign were provided by officials. The Counsel General and Minister for European Transition confirmed regulations would clearly describe each tier of the lockdown measures.
2.	Update European Transition – For Information	The Counsel General and Minister for European Transmission	The Counsel General advised that discussions were on-going between the UK Government and the EU with only 15 days remaining. The Minister explained the preference for a weak deal rather than no deal and outlined what this would mean for Wales. The impact of uncertainty on both businesses and individuals was discussed. The Counsel General advised that the Welsh Government was addressing the issues of EU Transition and the pandemic together to ensure a joined-up approach.
3.	Update Green Recovery Taskforce – For Information	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales outlined the role of the Green Recovery Taskforce and invited the Chair to provide an update on its work. Partners outlined some of their own initiatives regarding green recovery and offered their support for the Taskforce. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales emphasised the centrality of green recovery to the Welsh Government's work going forward.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 19 December 2020

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	New Variant Strain of Covid19	The Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport	The Deputy Minister emphasised the significance of a new variant strain of Covid19. He confirmed that the new strain was up to 70-80% more infectious and that Wales was facing an exponential rise in transmission. He explained that Wales would immediately be placed under Tier 4 restrictions and outlined what this would entail. Concerns were expressed over placing the whole of Wales

			under Tier 4 but the Minister explained that this would protect the NHS and outlined how quickly services could potentially be overrun. From discussions, the Minister confirmed that he would discuss the number of individual applications that could be made under the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) and explained that a press statement had been prepared covering the new restrictions that would come into force.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 January 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM provided an update on transmission, hospitalisation and vaccination. He confirmed that a workplace safety announcement would be made shortly. Conversations on the Self-Isolation Payment Scheme and the Discretionary Assistance Fund were held. Trade unions raised the need for renewed focus on workplace risk assessments and private sector stressed the importance of on-site testing of employees to strengthen workplace safety. Trade unions also raised concern about the pace of vaccination for teachers and stressed the importance of schools being safe before they are re-opened. The FM confirmed that a note on worst case scenario preparedness would be issued.
2.	Update European Transition	Counsel General and Minister for European Transition	The Minister outlined concerns with the transition agreement and confirmed a full analysis by the Welsh Government would be published. He outlined concerns with the UK Government's Future Relationship Bill and explained that legislative consent would not be recommended to the Senedd. The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government was developing urgent guidance for businesses.
3.	Update Vaccinations Programme	Senior Welsh Government Official	It was confirmed the Welsh Government's vaccination strategy had been published on the 11 January and that levels of vaccine rollout had increased. It was explained that discussions surrounding the definition of key workers were being held between Welsh Government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation ahead of phase 2 of the vaccine rollout.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 January 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM provided an update on NHS capacity, vaccination and restriction levels. He acknowledged the need to give clear notice to businesses regarding restrictions. The trade unions felt the development of a shared set of principles around vaccination roll out and workplace vaccination should be developed. It was agreed the National Health and Safety Forum would develop a shared understanding of workplace safety issues including the use of lateral flow devices. The Children's Commissioner for Wales highlighted the importance of positive and reassuring messaging to children regarding the lockdown restrictions.
2.	Impact of Welsh Government Financial Support Programmes	Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government	The Deputy Minister outlined the purpose of the Self-isolation Support Scheme and confirmed it would be reviewed to clarify eligibility and raise awareness. The Minister also outlined the Discretionary Assistance Fund and explained that work would be carried out to better assess whether people are accessing the full range of support available across different support schemes.
3.	Initial Impact of Moving Guidance to Regulation: Safe Operation of Essential Retail and Businesses Undertaking Covid19 Risk Assessments	Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales	The Minister explained the new regulatory duty placed on employers including the need to carry out a specific on-site Covid19 risk assessment. He confirmed the extent of funding provided to specific business sectors and thanked members for ensuring this had been allocated effectively.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 February 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM updated on transmission and vaccination rates urging continued caution. He emphasised the prioritisation of children returning to school and

			confirmed the National Health and Safety Forum had discussed the vaccination roll out and would consider a set of agreed protocols on workplace testing.
2.	Long Term Impact of Covid19 and Mitigating Factors for the Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery in the NHS • Recovery in the Economy 	First Minister Minister for Health and Social Services Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport	Recovery in the NHS The Minister outlined the challenges facing the NHS and how services could be redesigned in social partnership to be more sustainable. Mental health support for staff was stressed by members and the Minister welcomed further discussion on this. He emphasised that central to reforms will be the patient experience in healthcare. Recovery in the Economy The Deputy Minister explained some of the long-term impacts of the pandemic and outlined the Welsh Government's economic recovery plan. The Future Generations Commissioner emphasised the importance of skills development. The Deputy Minister offered to discuss this further and explained that many of the levers for change were non-devolved and that it would be important to focus on what could be directly influenced in Wales.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 25 February 2021

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM confirmed downward transmission and the continued success of the vaccination programme but still stressed caution. The FM also confirmed an extension of the Self-isolation Payment Scheme and an increase in funding to the Discretionary Assistance Fund. He discussed proposals for easing restrictions and the commitment to returning children to school, in a phased approach, as a priority. This was welcomed by the Children's Commissioner who suggested check-in days for those who would return later. The First Minister confirmed the draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill would be published for consultation on the 26 February and outlined some of its main provisions.
2.	Ethical Issues Workplace Vaccination – Developing an Agreed Approach	Senior Welsh Government Official	An overview was provided of the Covid19 Moral and Ethical Advisory Group for Wales' work. A discussion was held regarding workplace vaccination. The Minister for Health and Social Services confirmed a paper on vaccination take-up by different socio-economic and ethnic groups would be provided to the SSPC.

3.	Refreshed Testing Strategy	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed publication of the Welsh Government's refreshed testing strategy and outlined its key provisions. Testing in the workplace and the use of lateral flow devices was discussed. There was a commitment for the Welsh Government to clarify on-line guidance for accessing a PCR test upon testing positive from a lateral flow device in the workplace.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 March 2021

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM confirmed the Welsh Government would be considering schools' transmission data from England as part of its return to school policy and would also provide information on transmission amongst the under 25s. The trade unions asked for data on the spread of Covid19 within deprived communities, recognising the link between living conditions and transmission. In response to the UK Government's budget, the First Minister explained that he had taken the decision to make a number of short-term investments to address the immediacy of the pandemic.
2.	Covid19 Proposed Easement of Lockdown Measures	First Minister	The FM shared details of the next stage of easement announcements. There was cross partner support for the cautious approach being adopted and the private sector confirmed the Welsh Government's retail re-opening checklist had been shared widely. The FM outlined funding priorities and arrangements for addressing the pandemic during the election period.
3.	Race Equality Action Plan	Deputy Minister and Chief Whip	The Deputy Minister explained the Race Equality Action Plan had been created in partnership, that continued engagement would be key to delivery, and that consultation on the plan would commence shortly. She emphasised the deepening impact of inequality and thanked members for their involvement in co-producing guidance for the Socio-economic Duty.

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM announced the launch of the NHS recovery plan <i>Health and Social Care in Wales Covid19: Looking Forward</i> and set out plans for further easing of restrictions. Members agreed to reinforce workplace safety messaging by amplifying messaging through social partner networks.
2.	Workplace Mental Health Support	Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language	The Minister provided details on the Welsh Government’s approach to mental health support in the workplace which was supported by all partners. The voluntary sector stressed their role in developing the broader social model of mental health. The private sector highlighted the cumulative impact of debt on people’s mental health. The Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales explained that the Economic Contract was being strengthened to take account of the importance of mental health and wellbeing and urged the SSPC to use their networks to encourage sign-up.
3.	Vaccination Programme: Differential Take-up across Socio-economic and Ethnic Groups	Public Health Wales	Public Health Wales presented data highlighting differential vaccine take-up across socio-economic groups and communities and the disproportionate impact of Covid. PHW offered assurances that extensive engagement work with these groups was on-going to ensure vaccination take-up was maximised.
4.	Vaccination Certificates	Senior Welsh Government Official	The official explained the issues relating to vaccination certificates. Partners raised potential problems of vaccination passports for businesses. Trade unions emphasised the importance of educating people about vaccine take-up rather than making it mandatory and allowing paid leave for staff to be vaccinated.
5.	AOB: Paper to Note – Support for the Blind and Partially Sighted	First Minister	The FM drew attention to the paper to note that had been provided regarding support for the blind and partially sighted.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 31 March 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM confirmed the vaccination programme remained on track despite challenges to supply and that transmission levels were declining although there were some regional variations.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	First Minister	The FM outlined future easement proposals. The trade unions emphasised the continued importance of workplace safety both as easements progress and raised concerns regarding the application of the Self-isolation Support Scheme. The FM confirmed that further work on the scheme was ongoing. The private sector relayed confusion over the current guidance for those in the shielding category. Differential vaccine take-up was discussed and it was confirmed Welsh Government officials would consider the specific issue of vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority students.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 April 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister warned of the dangers presented by new Covid19 variants. The private sector welcomed the devolved employers' initiative to provide lateral flow tests directly to businesses. It was agreed further discussions would take place to explore the potential incorporation of this scheme into the national approach. The unions raised concerns about the support schemes in place which they agreed to follow up in writing. The Minister asked officials to discuss concerns raised over the provision of lateral flow tests to social care workers.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle – Update	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister outlined the key points of the easement announcement that would be made the following day and financial support for businesses. The trade unions expressed concerns over risk assessment compliance and suggested using the review announcements to promote safety messaging. Members were encouraged to provide ideas over how the Welsh Government could clarify

			employer and employee expectations regarding agile and safe working guidance.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 May 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	Welsh Government – Technical Advisory Cell (TAC)	Senior Welsh Government officials provided an overview of transmission rates and concerns regarding a new variant. Discussion followed on a lack of clarity and consultation regarding the use of face coverings in schools. Officials confirmed members would be consulted fully on this issue once a new Education Minister had been appointed following the election.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official detailed the next stage of the easement process. Members felt there was a lack of clarity over the wording used in some easement announcements. Officials explained the complexities of trying to communicate clearly the connection of various risk factors within different social settings and asked for any other issues in this area to be followed up outside the meeting. Discussions were held on the challenges of the social distancing rules and further support for businesses was outlined.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 June 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM warned of the threat posed by the Delta Variant and misleading media reporting over its level of transmissibility. He urged continued caution.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	First Minister	The FM outlined phased easement proposals and that protecting the NHS would remain a priority. The complexities of international travel were discussed as were the needs of specific business sectors. Following conversations, the FM confirmed officials would supply a note to members ahead of the next meeting of the SSPC on the capital funding implications of ventilation across the NHS

			estate and the lifting of the moratorium on the non-payment of rent for commercial tenancies.
3.	Covid19 Workplace Testing – Lessons Learnt	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister stressed the importance of consistent workplace testing and outlined the refreshed Test, Trace and Protect strategy. The Minister asked members for their views on the continuation of workplace testing following the UK Government decision to end it on the 30 June. A commitment was made for Welsh Government to explore the quality of data being collated regarding non-workplace use of lateral flow tests by individuals and the potential impact of this on lateral flow data as a whole.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 17 June 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	First Minister	The FM confirmed the dominance of the Delta Variant and its impact. The FM confirmed he would provide an update on risk assessments at his press announcement the following day. He stressed the importance of continuing to work from home where possible.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	First Minister	The FM provided details of the next review cycle announcement. He confirmed the Welsh Government's position on face coverings in schools had not changed which was welcomed by the trade unions and that work was underway with the education sector to develop a more flexible set of arrangements for the new term.
3.	Covid19 – Update on Support for Business	Senior Welsh Government Official	A Welsh Government official provided details on the financial support being offered to businesses following a recent announcement by the Economy Minister. She confirmed discussions on future support were ongoing at Ministerial level. She also confirmed discussions were taking place with the UK Government regarding the furlough scheme, including the need for more data on its use.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 1 July 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 General Update (including the 21 Day Review Cycle)	First Minister	The FM confirmed increased transmission of the Delta Variant but that the lifting of restrictions remained on course for the summer period. He confirmed the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) had advised an autumn booster campaign. He confirmed that lateral flow tests in the workplace would remain free in Wales. All members stressed the importance of clear messaging surrounding restrictions.
2.	Covid19 Subject Update	Welsh Government Senior Policy Leads	Welsh Government officials provided verbal updates on post Alert Level 1, advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), vaccination, self-isolation, foreign travel, business support and the NHS. There was a commitment to ensure the next round of the Economic Resilience Fund (ERF), including proposals for future funding were explored at a future meeting of the SSPC as well as the long-term impact of Covid19.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 July 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 General Update	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed a doubling of transmission rates and that data showed a greater reluctance amongst young people to get vaccinated.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister emphasised caution over easement and outlined the different stages that were being proposed based on current transmission levels. She confirmed people who had been double vaccinated would not be required to self-isolate. The importance of clear messaging was emphasised by members and a commitment was made to provide forecasted hospitalisation admission rates to

			the SSPC as well as a copy of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI) report regarding the vaccination of children.
3.	Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) – Proposals for Future Funding	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined a final package of emergency support for businesses based on further restrictions being unnecessary. It was agreed Welsh Government would engage with social partners in designing guidance to support people transitioning back into work. The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government would be considering where existing programmes could be utilised to further support individuals and confirmed partners would be consulted on this. It was also agreed officials would discuss how COP26 could be used as an opportunity to progress the green agenda further with businesses.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 5 August 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Update: Health Position Across Wales	Chief Medical Officer (CMO)	The CMO confirmed transmission rates were stabilising and stressed the importance of the autumn booster campaign. The significance of communicating the importance of vaccination to younger people was agreed. An announcement on the vaccine booster campaign was being formulated with health boards and local authorities.
2.	NHS General Update	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official provided details on the impact of the pandemic on the NHS including capacity, staffing levels as well as emergency and social care. The Trade unions requested similar data for the social care sector as well as the potential impact on staffing levels of former NHS staff returning to the EU.
3.	21 Day Review Cycle	First Minister	The FM discussed plans to move Wales to Alert Level Zero and explained the implications of this whilst also stressing the importance of basic safety measures. Following discussions, the FM confirmed the Welsh Government was developing further guidance regarding ventilation, with social partners. He also confirmed the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership would be calling a special meeting of the Health and Social Care Forum to discuss a reasonable measures regime for Wales regarding risk assessments.

4.	Self-Isolation	First Minister	The FM confirmed that from the 7 August people who had been double vaccinated would no longer be required to self-isolate, that the TTP system would now act as more of a process to warn and inform people and that the Self-isolation Support Scheme pilots had revealed a need for other areas of support beyond financial assistance.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 September 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed high levels of transmission but emphasised the positive impact of the vaccination programme. Following discussions, the CMO explained that regional variations in transmission were normal and stressed the importance of partners promoting vaccination through their networks. Officials confirmed issues regarding schools would be discussed at the next Schools' Partnership Forum.
2.	Covid19 – 21 Day Review Cycle - Update	First Minister	The FM outlined key priorities including the autumn booster campaign and vaccinating 12–15-year-olds. He confirmed Cabinet had decided to implement a Covid19 pass approach as opposed to a certification system and that a press statement would list all the high-risk venues covered by this. The FM explained discussions were on-going with the UK Government over the Comprehensive Spending Review which would cover a number of the concerns raised by trade unions relating to support for individuals. He confirmed the Counsel General would meet with trade unions to investigate claims that some workers were being pressurised into getting vaccinated.
3.	Covid19 – Autumn Booster Campaign – Including the Approach to the Clinically Vulnerable and Unvaccinated	Senior Welsh Government Official	A senior Welsh Government official explained the complexities of the vaccination programme and shared details relating to the autumn booster campaign. She outlined the measures being taken to protect the most vulnerable and vaccinate children.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 7 October 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Remote Working - Update	Deputy Minister for Climate Change	The Deputy Minister outlined the Welsh Government’s strategy for remote working and the engagement on this that had taken place. Officials confirmed there would be continued engagement with social partners to ensure flexible working was delivered fairly. The private sector reported mixed feedback from the business community regarding flexible working and trade unions acknowledged the benefits of home working but also emphasised that it would not suit all workers.
2.	Covid19 Update	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed high transmission levels were being mitigated by the vaccination programme. He explained that a revised vaccination strategy was being prepared for publication and stressed the importance of the autumn booster campaign. Addressing concerns raised by the trade unions regarding schools the Minister for Education confirmed a number of the issues had already been addressed at the Schools’ Partnership Forum and other concerns remained the subject of on-going discussions.
3.	21 Day Review Cycle	First Minister	The FM confirmed Wales would remain at Alert Level Zero for a further three weeks and explained that the updated Coronavirus Control Plan would be published shortly; he thanked members for their contributions. The FM confirmed a proportionate approach would be adopted in the early days of launching the Covid19 pass system to allow businesses to adapt. He explained that the pass system had been designed to support businesses so they could continue to operate.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 28 October 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO explained transmission levels remained high but were showing early signs of decreasing. He outlined some of the factors behind this and explained that the recent sub variant of the Delta strain was likely to be more transmissible. Social partners called for safety messaging to be strengthened and simplified.
2.	Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information	Minister for Education and Welsh Language	The Minister confirmed that compliance with safety measures, face coverings and working from home had all been discussed by the Cabinet. The Minister emphasised the importance of developing the vaccination programme, that schools’ guidance was being developed and that he could not rule out the reintroduction of restrictions. Social partners outlined some of the challenges facing workers in different settings. The Minister confirmed that the advice expressed would be built into on-going communications work.
3.	Net Zero Wales Plan – For Information	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister confirmed that the Net Zero Wales Plan had just been launched and thanked social partners for their involvement. The private sector requested further engagement with officials to better understand the requirements of the Plan and the trade unions called for the SSPC to be involved in delivery. The Deputy Minister emphasised the importance of continuing to work in social partnership.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) - 18 November 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed community transmission rates remained high and that transmission in the over 60s was of particular concern. He confirmed a new wave of the Delta variant was being closely monitored and that further guidance on the vaccination of different groups was being developed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. The First Minister

			confirmed he had taken part in discussions with the other UK governments the previous evening and the situation was one of high volatility.
2.	Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information	First Minister	The FM confirmed Wales would remain at Alert Level Zero. The trade unions offered to be involved in developing work from home and self-isolation guidance and called for terms and conditions in the social care sector to be reconsidered. The private sector emphasised the concerns of small businesses including the use of hospitality passes. The FM explained that the pass system had been designed to allow businesses to continue operating and that following advice from the Social Care Forum the Deputy Minister for Social Services would be re-considering terms and conditions of employment in the sector.
3.	Business Support Update – For Information	Economy Minister	The Minister provided details on the financial support being held in reserve for businesses. He explained that the next phase of support would run until April and provide £70 million. The Minister confirmed business support for the next financial year formed part of on-going budget discussions. The trade unions requested earlier involvement in discussions. The importance of funding flexibility was stressed by devolved employers and clear messaging by the private sector. The Minister emphasised the Welsh Government's commitment to Fair Work and the decarbonisation agenda for business.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) - 9 December 2021

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Welsh Government Draft Budget – For Discussion	Minister for Finance and Local Government	The Minister outlined the priorities of the 2021 Welsh Spending Review and 2022-23 Draft Budget. She explained that challenging decisions would need to be made due to the on-going pressures of Covid19 and the loss of EU funding. The Minister confirmed the Wales Infrastructure Investment Strategy (WIIS) would be published alongside the draft budget and outlined its content. The trade unions asked for further details on the budgetary process so they could better understand the Welsh Government's priorities. The private sector highlighted pressures facing businesses regarding next year's energy cap review and rising national insurance contributions. The voluntary sector raised

			concerns regarding the loss of EU funding and its impact on the most vulnerable. The Minister referred members to the Budget Improvement Plan for further information and outlined future priorities.
2.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed that the Delta variant remained stable across Wales but that cases of the new Omicron variant, whilst small, were transmitting at a significant rate. He estimated this would shortly be the most dominant strand of Covid19. He highlighted the significance of the booster programme, the need to strengthen protections in closed settings and ensuring the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) system remained flexible.
3.	Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information	First Minister	The FM confirmed the Welsh Government would move to a weekly cycle of decision making due to the severity of the current situation and that the next review announcement would strengthen safety measures. The trade unions raised issues on sick pay in social care and the differential impact of transmission on specific ethnic groups. The private sector offered to develop a joint statement with the trade unions supporting paid time off for workers to get vaccinated. The devolved employers emphasised the importance of the testing system to ensure public services could continue to operate. The FM confirmed issues raised regarding social care and safety guidance would be considered by officials and that more work was needed on the impact of transmission by ethnicity.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 16 December 2021 (Extraordinary Meeting)

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information	Minister for Health and Social Services	The CMO confirmed Omicron transmission was doubling every two days and stressed the importance of the booster programme as a means of stemming transmission. The Minister emphasised that the severity of Omicron was unknown at this time but was likely to peak in January and February. She explained that Cabinet would be meeting to discuss what measures would be put in place but that these would escalate in the new year. The Human Rights Commissioner raised concerns over care home residents accessing vaccinations. The trade unions called for further funding of the Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) and devolved employers

			outlined the pressures of self-isolation on staffing levels. The private sector confirmed a joint statement had been issued by the business sector and Wales TUC over the importance of staff being allowed to get vaccinated. The pressures facing businesses, social care and schools were acknowledged by Ministers. It was confirmed that an additional £14.7 million had been made available for the DAF and that business support remained a priority.
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Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 22 December 2021

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister for Health and Social Services explained that this meeting had been called to provide an update on the pressures facing the NHS due to the rising Omicron variant and the measures being taken to stem its transmission.
2.	Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information	Minister for Health and Social Services	Due to the severity of the situation the Minister outlined the additional measures to be introduced. The private sector asked for greater clarity over the potential to fine people for travelling to work unnecessarily. The trade unions supported this call and felt that restrictions would focus on workers rather than employers. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership explained that the focus would remain on employers and the Counsel General said the fining system would be used on an exceptional basis and would empower and protect employees and their representatives in resisting unreasonable demands to come into work. The devolved employers called for greater clarity in the future regarding home working and the testing of close contacts. It was confirmed the issues raised would be discussed with the FM and progressed further.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 January 2022

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	No set Agenda	Minister for Health and Social Services	The CMO explained that transmission figures were moving in a positive direction but that community transmission remained high. He outlined the on-going impact on the NHS. The Minister emphasised the need for continued caution and outlined the restrictions that would be announced the following day by the FM. The private sector supported the clarity offered by the Welsh Government and asked what conditions would trigger an easing of the self-isolation period. The trade unions supported the maintenance of restrictions underpinned by scientific evidence. The Minister stressed that more analysis would be required before any reduction in self-isolation periods could be made. The trade unions referenced concerns discussed at the Schools Partnership Forum but generally supported the approach taken by Welsh Government. The Counsel General explained that the plans outlined had been based on transmission continuing to decline.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 20 January 2022

Item		Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed transmission levels were significant but declining. The trade unions asked about confidence levels in the booster campaign and whether a fourth jab would be required. The Human Rights Commissioner asked if data was available for vaccination take up in ethnic minority communities. The CMO confirmed high levels of confidence in the booster campaign and explained that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) felt that a fourth booster was not required at this point. The CMO confirmed he would provide data on vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority and disabled groups.

2.	Covid19 - 21 Day Review Cycle – Update – For Information	First Minister	The FM outlined the detail of the review announcement he would make the following day. He reiterated that the current position was based on the effectiveness of the vaccination programme and that Wales had the lowest levels of transmission in the UK. The trade unions and the Children’s Commissioner for Wales expressed concern over the lifting of restrictions in schools and the FM acknowledged the importance of being cautious and following scientific advice.
3.	Business Support Update – For Information	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined previous funding that had been provided for businesses and explained that a discretionary fund would also be delivered by local authorities. He outlined some of the details of this and the impact of UK Government decisions on Welsh Government funding. The private sector emphasised the importance of positive messaging in building business confidence and the trade unions asked what funding would be made available for the cultural sector. The Minister acknowledged the importance of positive messaging and confirmed discussions were on-going with the cultural sector. The Minister mentioned the anticipated levelling up White Paper from the UK Government and the likely limitations on any replacement funding but welcomed further discussion with members. The trade unions highlighted the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the Minister and the FM outlined the Welsh Government’s approach but stressed the impact of financial decisions being made by the UK Government.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 10 February 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	First Minister	The FM explained that the next few meetings of the SSPC would have a designated item addressing the long-term impact of Covid 19 across key portfolio areas. The CMO confirmed transmission and hospital admission levels remained high but stable and that there were no new variants of concern. The devolved employers asked if it was likely an annual booster programme would be implemented. The CMO confirmed advice was anticipated shortly from the Joint Council on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI) but that this was unlikely to be implemented immediately.

2.	Covid19 Review Cycle Update – For Information	First Minister	The FM confirmed discussions at Cabinet had focussed on moving beyond Alert Level Zero and were changing from a mandatory to an advisory approach to restrictions. The FM provided more detail on specific areas. Social partners asked for clarity regarding the work from home requirement. The FM explained this would now be advice but remained one of the most powerful methods of stemming transmission. The trade unions explained that some UK Government offices in Wales were pressurising staff to come into work. The FM confirmed he had written on this matter and that UK Government departments in Wales must follow Welsh regulations.
3.	Long Term Impact of Covid19 – NHS - For Discussion	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister emphasised that the longer-term harms of Covid19 had been monitored by the Welsh Government alongside reacting to the immediate pandemic. She emphasised the scale of the challenge ahead including the need to reduce the NHS treatment backlog. The Minister stressed the importance of addressing health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic through the newly established Health Inequalities Group and outlined future funding for health. The voluntary sector stressed the important role they could play going forward which was acknowledged by the Minister who also highlighted the need to join up social care and the NHS which she was discussing with the Deputy Minister for Social Services.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 3 March 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion
1.	Minister for Health and Social Services and Dr Fu-Meng Khaw, National Director of	The Minister highlighted the importance of the vaccination programme in stemming transmission moving towards Alert Level Zero and confirmed the Welsh Government's Vaccination Strategy had been published on the 24 February. Dr Fu-Meng Khaw confirmed that transmission and hospitalisation rates had continued to fall across Wales and that Omicron was now the dominant variant. He outlined the impact on the NHS as well as planning for moving from pandemic to the endemic stage. The private sector stressed the effectiveness of Lateral Flow Tests and the need to continue their free provision. The devolved employers stressed the need to build vaccination surge capacity in the event of new variants of concern. Dr Fu-Meng Khaw

		Health Protection and Screening Services, Public Health Wales (PHW)	outlined on-going work to ensure testing capacity was maintained and supported the Lateral Flow Tests.
2.	Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information	Minister for Health and Social Services	The Minister confirmed the Welsh Government would, the following day, publish its transition plan setting out the approach to the endemic stage of Covid19. She explained this would offer 2 scenarios – Stable and Urgent. The Minister emphasised the significance of protecting the vulnerable and the vaccination programme. She confirmed both spring and autumn booster campaigns would be offered for specific groups and outlined details for testing going forward. The Minister confirmed that on the 24 March the majority of the devolved provisions in the Coronavirus Act would expire. The trade unions asked when the work from home advice would be lifted and raised concerns about the haste with which the transition plan had been developed. The Minister explained the reasons for this and offered assurances that social partners views had been considered.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 24 March 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO explained that as anticipated, levels of transmission remained high and were rising. He outlined the key reasons and explained there had been a steep increase in hospital admissions but that this had not impacted on intensive care. The CMO confirmed an autumn booster campaign was likely. The private sector asked if the spring and summer periods had been factored into future transmission projections. The CMO explained that a decrease in

			transmission throughout the summer was anticipated ahead of a resurgence later in the year. The CMO then outlined on-going Covid19 surveillance work.
2.	Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information	First Minister	The FM confirmed Cabinet had met earlier and explained that whilst transmission was manageable the impact on the NHS was significant. He confirmed that face coverings in health and social care settings would be retained and that Covid19 workplace risk assessments would continue for the next 3 weeks. The private sector emphasised their on-going commitment to workplace safety. Devolved employers emphasised the impact of self-isolation absence on local government services. The trade unions outlined concerns over workplace guidance and asked what advice would be provided to employers when restrictions were lifted. The FM outlined provisions post the 28 March and stressed the increased threat posed by flu during the winter period following prolonged periods of isolation.
3.	Long Term Impact of Covid19 – Economy - For Discussion	Minister for Economy	The Minister outlined the current impact of the pandemic, departure from the European Union, the cost-of-living crisis and the UK Government's settlement on the Welsh economy. He emphasised the importance of skills development for Wales including an increase in apprenticeships. The private sector outlined their commitment to supporting staff and suggested best practice examples could be developed. The trade unions highlighted the negative practices of some employers and the needs of vulnerable workers. The Minister supported proposals to develop best practice examples to address the cost-of-living crisis and stressed Welsh Government opposition to unethical work practices.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 13 April 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Covid19 Update - For Discussion	Chief Medical Officer	The CMO confirmed transmission remained high reflecting levels across the UK but due to the vaccination programme this had not impacted further on the NHS. He explained that there may be a need for a further booster campaign later in the year but this would depend on advice issued by the Joint Council on Immunisation and Vaccination (JCVI). The CMO outlined 3 key priorities including the Covid19 surveillance work that was being developed. The Human Rights Commissioner highlighted the priority needs of the over 75s and the

			vulnerable. The CMO confirmed Wales would follow JCVI guidance on vaccination prioritisation.
2.	Covid19 - Review Cycle – Update – For Information	Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution	The Minister explained that Cabinet had decided to continue with the mandatory use of face coverings in health and social care settings but to no longer apply the requirement for a mandatory Covid19 workplace risk assessment. Moving forward the Minister stressed that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities would be the main bodies for ensuring compliance with workplace regulations.
3.	Long Term Impact of Covid19 – Social Services - For Discussion	Deputy Minister for Social Services	The Deputy Minister explained that the pandemic had exacerbated existing fragilities within social care. She referenced staff shortages and attempts to recruit into the sector and the Welsh Government's commitment to introduce the real living wage for social care. The Deputy Minister outlined funding and increased on-line support for social care workers. She confirmed that children's services had remained relatively stable throughout the pandemic and emphasised her commitment to ensuring adult care homes swiftly return to normal. The trade unions stressed the importance of unionising the social care workforce and the Deputy Minister confirmed she would discuss further with them. The Children's Commissioner asked if the use of face coverings in children's homes had been considered and the Deputy Minister explained this would be addressed in on-going engagement with social partners.

Shadow Social Partnership Council (SSPC) – 14 July 2022

Item	Ministerial Lead	Discussion	
1.	Achievements of the SSPC and Lessons Learnt – For Discussion	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister explained that this would be the last meeting of the SSPC in its current form designed to address the challenge of Covid19 and thanked members for their advice throughout the pandemic. The trade unions acknowledged that the regularity of meetings throughout the pandemic, the ability to have very open discussions and to feed in advice had been helpful. However, they felt there had not always been enough time to do this. They felt relationships with employers had been strengthened by the SSPC. The Deputy Minister explained that there had not always been time to fully consult with social partners. The voluntary sector stressed the importance of continuing to

			work in social partnership to address the challenges ahead. The private sector felt relationships had been strengthened, commended the speed of decision making but felt there needed to be a refreshed strategic focus for any repurposed forum. The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales also supported the view of strengthened partnership relations but stressed that a more detailed analysis of long-term challenges was needed.
2.	SSPC Transition and Next Steps – For Information	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister reiterated the importance of the SSPC transitioning to a new mode of operation following the pandemic. Whilst not wishing to pre-empt the Senedd, the Deputy Minister explained that it would be important to have a body in place that could discuss key aspects of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) (SPPP) Bill. She confirmed that a new body called the Social Partnership Forum would be established for the autumn and that officials would provide further details in due course.
3.	Covid19 Transmission - For Information	Deputy Chief Medical Officer	The DCMO confirmed that infection rates had been increasing but there had been relatively low levels of severe harm recorded. He explained that the Omicron variant was more transmissible than previous variants but that it was unclear when it would peak. The Deputy Minister warned against complacency and asked members to continue promoting health and safety messaging through their networks. The trade unions asked for more information on Covid19 and flu vaccination programmes heading towards the autumn. The DCMO explained that a booster vaccination would likely be offered for the over 50s and those with chronic conditions to be administered with other seasonal vaccines.
4.	Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill Update – For Information	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	The Deputy Minister confirmed that the SPPP Bill had been introduced to the Senedd on the 7 June. She reiterated its aim to put social partnership on a statutory footing and outlined the evidence she had provided to various Senedd committees. The Deputy Minister confirmed that from the evidence presented there appeared to be clear support from social partners over the need for legislation and that they were already engaging in the work of a new Programme Board established by officials to oversee the creation of the new statutory SPC and implementation of the duties set out in the Bill. The Deputy Minister put on record the appreciation of the Welsh Government for the advice and contributions made by members throughout the Covid19 pandemic.

Lord Bellamy KC
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice

11 April 2023

Dear Lord Bellamy,

Evidence to the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Thank you for your letter of 14 March 2023 in response to my letter of 16 December 2022 which followed your appearance before my Committee on 5 December 2022.

As I explained in my previous letter, we sought the evidence of our stakeholders who have an interest in or work within the justice system in Wales on the evidence you provided; I have used the evidence we received within my response below.

I am grateful to you for providing an outline of the Ministry of Justice's progress towards responding to the Thomas Commission's recommendations. With regard to the accessibility of digital court services, Race Council Cymru brought to our attention research which suggests that the movement to online advice services during the Covid-19 pandemic potentially disadvantages groups that are digitally excluded. I would therefore be grateful if you could provide further information on the steps you are taking to ensure that movement towards such services does not disadvantage digitally-excluded groups.

Although it is encouraging that you note the importance of data for underpinning decisions about the justice system, the committee is disappointed to hear you say that you are not aware of any areas in which further disaggregation of data is required to improve outcomes. Since the Thomas Commission reported, the issue of the limited disaggregation of data about the justice system in Wales has been raised by the Welsh Government, academics at Cardiff University and in a recent Westminster Hall debate. It is clear that this remains an issue of concern. We would therefore be grateful if you could

share the list the Welsh Government has shared with you of areas in which Wales-specific data is not published, and explain which barriers prevent you from publishing such data routinely.

Race Council Cymru also raised evidence of barriers facing disabled people seeking to access justice, and evidence that court modernisation – including the rapid roll-out of remote hearings – might negatively affect participation for certain groups. I would be grateful to hear if you have undertaken, or if you are you planning to undertake, research to investigate these issues in further detail.

Race Council Cymru also shared with us its assessment that barriers remain to the recruitment, retention and the career development of individuals from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups within the legal profession, and lower levels of staff wellbeing exist among those groups. It also remarked about levels of trust in the criminal justice system:

"... mistrust among Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities often stems from the evidence and/or experience of unequal treatment in the CJS. Trust should therefore be (re)built as outcomes improve, with the entire programme of work to tackle race disparity trained on this objective. However, given the systemic nature of the reforms and the need to unpick historical relationships with the CJS, it may take some time for improved outcomes to have the desired impact on trust."

In addition, it notes that "there is evidence that Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic and foreign national women can have distinctly different experiences or outcomes at some stages of the Criminal Justice System in comparison to other offenders, and that these may differ between faiths and cultures."

I would therefore be grateful if you could also set out the steps you are taking:

- to help individuals from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to overcome barriers to recruitment, retention and career development within the legal profession;
- to increase levels of trust in the criminal justice system, especially among Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities; and
- to reduce any disparities in experiences of those communities of the criminal justice system, in comparison to the experiences of other communities.

It is encouraging to hear that you are investigating options to improve the experience of those who use and work in the Cardiff Civil and Family Justice Centre, in light of repeated concerns we have heard about the condition of the centre. We would be grateful if you could provide us with timely updates on how this work progresses. Stakeholders, including participants in our engagement work, have raised concerns about the accessibility and deterioration of court buildings, in addition to a mixed experience of remote justice. In the same vein, Race Council Cymru is calling for adequate funding across the justice system and a greater focus on early intervention and "diverting people away from the system".

Race Council Cymru also notes that the Legal Aid Agency monitors capacity in the legal aid market and the provision of services, and takes action when gaps appear. It has asked us to seek clarity from you on how this monitoring work is undertaken, and what measures are being put in place “to ensure consistency across the board”; I would be very interested to hear your response.

Finally, Professor Emyr Lewis from Aberystwyth University shared with us his view of the comments you made during the evidence session in respect of what has been described as the “jagged edge” of the Welsh criminal justice system. He argues:

“One cannot make a comparison between the difficulties of working across (1) on the one hand, the boundary between the operational departments of a central Government and those of a devolved Government, and (2) on the other, the boundary between the various operational departments of a central Government alone. When all is said and done, the departments of the central Government are all accountable to and under the ultimate executive control of the same authority – the Prime Minister and Cabinet in London – and they have the same power and the same locus standi as each other. That enables policy and operational co-ordination, and it also ensures that any disputes can be easily resolved. On the other hand, devolved departments are accountable to and under the executive control of the First Minister of Wales and the Cabinet in Wales. They do not have any power centrally except to try and influence and persuade. This lack of symmetry in terms of power is one of the main sources of practical difficulties created by the jagged edge. Furthermore, of course, the London Government, ultimately, is democratically accountable to the Parliament of the United Kingdom, while the Cardiff Government is accountable to Senedd Cymru.”

As a Committee, we believe much more needs to be done to overcome the practical difficulties created by the jagged edge which exists within the justice system in Wales. These difficulties have been expertly and eloquently analysed by Professor Lewis and other distinguished and learned observers of the operation of the justice system. We therefore impress on you the importance of continuing to engage with the Welsh Government, and to proactively work with the Treasury, to find ways in which resources can be more effectively shared to ensure a constructive joint approach to overcome these barriers which currently detract from the beneficial outcomes we would all want to see within the justice system in Wales.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Huw Irranca-Davies

Huw Irranca-Davies

Chair



Agenda Item 2.8

Written Response by the Welsh Government to the report Equality and Social Justice committee concerning Women's Experiences in the Criminal Justice System

In the Welsh Government we remain committed to doing everything we can to support women in the justice system and those who may be at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

In 2019 we published our Women's Justice and Youth Justice Blueprints, a programme that was developed jointly in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and the Youth Justice Board. The collaborative approach continues to this day and has enabled us to deliver a diverse range of services for women in Wales to help keep women and communities safe and free from crime. I was pleased to see references to these in the report, such as the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and the Visiting Mums service; and the recognition of the positive impact these services are continuing to have.

However, we know that women in the criminal justice system face many challenges, such as unnecessary and disruptive custodial sentences which can have a profound impact on their children and families and a knock-on effect on housing and employment. I am pleased that the Blueprints has helped mitigate some of those challenges and can assure you that officials are continuing to work closely with our justice partners to ensure women have access to the support they need.

I would like to thank the members of the Equality and Social Justice Committee for their report on the experiences of women in the criminal justice system. My officials are currently considering future priorities for the Women's Justice Blueprint in collaboration with our wider justice partners such as the Ministry of Justice and HM Prison and Probation Service, and I can reassure members of the committee that the recommendations will help inform this important agenda going forwards.

I have set out my response to the Report's individual recommendations below.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should map out the cost of the services it provides to identify those that it is responsible for as part of the current devolution settlement and those that currently fall within the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. This work should be carried out by June 2023 and the Welsh Government should keep us informed of progress.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government welcomes this opportunity to ensure there is full clarity on funding for justice services in Wales, and we will work with the Ministry of Justice to fulfil the recommendation. Given the complexity of the mapping exercise and the importance of ensuring we provide a fully transparent picture thoroughly we anticipate this work will be completed by the Autumn.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should endeavour to obtain devolved responsibility for women's involvement in the criminal justice system.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government remains committed to the devolution of justice in Wales, and we agree that outcomes for women in the criminal justice system in Wales could be significantly improved through devolution. Notwithstanding the achievements of the Women's Justice Blueprint, we note and recognise Dr Robert Jones's description that the ability of devolved government to act as an effective policy maker is constrained and, ultimately, undermined by the fact that the UK Government controls most of the key criminal justice policy levers.

[Delivering Justice for Wales](#) sets out some of the core components of the Welsh Government's approach to designing a devolved criminal justice system that focuses on prevention. For example, it sets out ambitions to reduce the size of the prison population, including pursuing alternatives to custody and reducing the use of short sentences, and to ensure all practice across the system is trauma informed, based on our understanding of the potential impact of adverse child experiences on a person's future. While these aspirations apply to men as well as women, they are likely to be particularly important in relation to women in the criminal justice system.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25. Should justice become devolved in the future there may be financial implications. We will consider this as part of future budget rounds.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

To ensure the Women's Justice Blueprint is embedded, the Welsh Government should build on its visual explanation of the work of the Blueprint and provide an in-depth overview of all on-going schemes and pilots, setting out who is responsible for delivery, timelines, actions taken and reports, to ensure that all organisations with an interest in supporting women in the criminal justice system are aware of what is happening on the ground. This work should be concluded by June 2023

Response: Accept

In collaboration with justice partners, we will seek to build on the Women's Justice visual tool to ensure it reflects support available for women in Wales. The Welsh

Government recognises the importance of this work and the time that will be needed to capture the breadth of support comprehensively. It is proposed that a more in-depth visual explanation of the work of the Blueprints will be developed following the confirmation on next steps for the Blueprints in the Autumn.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should publish implementation updates on an annual basis, which include:

- a more detailed account of progress against the stated aims of the Blueprint; and
- the status and timelines of the pilots that are being carried out including next steps.

Response: Accept

Committee members will be aware of the annual publication of our Implementation Plans as a means of highlighting progress and achievements to date. We will continue with this approach and are seeking to build on current reporting mechanisms as part of the ongoing discussions to determine the next steps for the Blueprints.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should set out how it plans to work with partners to scale up its Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach activity on early intervention and prevention so that it reaches all parts of Wales.

Response: Accept

Diversion schemes for women have been in place across all police forces in Wales since 2019. In South Wales and Gwent, the early intervention pathway has been delivered as part of a broader whole system approach service for women, which has been jointly commissioned by Welsh Government, the South Wales and Gwent Police and Crime Commissioners and HMPPS.

Commissioners including Welsh Government, the South Wales and Gwent Police and Crime Commissioners and HMPPS (in consultation with the Police and Crime Commissioners in Dyfed-Powys and North Wales) have recently designed the next generation of integrated women's services across Wales. The new Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach Specification seeks to build on the significant evidence and learning gathered through the Blueprint to date, to further integrate and join-up key women's services and provide greater opportunity for women to access end to end support, in line with the whole system vision of the Women's Justice Blueprint. As such, Welsh Government has extended its funding to support the development of whole system approaches for women across the whole of Wales.

The new Specification will also provide a mechanism for driving forward delivery of a number of key national partnership priorities including work to:

- Tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence against women and girls.
- Prevent and mitigate impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Ensure an anti-racist criminal justice system in Wales.

The Specification is due to go out to tender in April/May 2023 and expected to go live across Wales by January 2024.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work closely with HMPPS and local partners to identify where further Women's Centres should be developed. Further, the Welsh Government should set out the plans it and other partners have to develop sustainable funding streams to support the creation and work of these Centres.

Response: Accept

The Women's Justice Blueprint is committed to creating safe environments in which children and women are protected from harm and supported to thrive. The Women's Blueprint is working with partners to strengthen the network of women's centres/hubs and safe spaces for women across Wales, working towards the vision of a women's centre/hub in each local authority area of Wales: The following specific activities are being progressed:

- Development of evidence-base in relation to demand and need, alongside mapping of current provision and gaps at local authority level.
- Design (through co-production approach) of a core specification outlining the hallmarks of good practice for women's centres in Wales.
- Engagement with providers of existing women's centres, commissioners and local forums (PSBs, Community Safety Boards, Regional Partnership Boards and Area Planning Boards) to identify sustainable funding pathways, and to

promote and raise awareness of the individual and system-wide benefits of women's centres, and the role of key services within this.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS to identify gaps and to ensure there are sufficient community-based alternatives to custody available specifically for women across Wales.

Response: Accept

The Women's Blueprint Community Solutions workstream aims to develop, improve, and raise awareness of the community-based alternatives to custody by working within HMPPS and with partners, providers and sentencers to ensure robust and effective community options for women appearing in Court. This involves improving the use and delivery of Unpaid Work projects for women, developing Accredited Programmes and structured interventions for women, and increasing the use and range of Electronic Monitoring options and ensuring that all staff delivering community options are trained and skilled in working with women. HMPPS is also working with Welsh Government and Local Authorities to improve access to health and accommodation whilst women are serving community sentences to increase their ability to comply and avoid short term custodial sentences as a result of breaching community sentences.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must work with counterparts in the Ministry of Justice and with HMPPS to more clearly articulate the purpose and services the proposed Residential Women's Centre will offer.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government recognises the benefits of providing accommodation for vulnerable women with complex needs who would otherwise be sentenced to custody. The planning application is currently with Planning and Environment Decisions Wales. This will be picked up through work on the Residential Women's Centre once the current planning concludes.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that Wales is represented in the development of the operational instructions and guidance relating to Residential Women's Centres

Response: Accept

Should the Residential Women's Centre go ahead we will work with HMPPS and Ministry of Justice colleagues to ensure that the operational instructions and guidance for the Residential Women's Centre in Wales meet the needs of women and are aligned with service delivery in Wales.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should set out what financial contribution it will be expected to make to supporting women at the pilot centre, should it go ahead, and what the funding implications might be for the City and County of Swansea and the Local Health Board

Response: Accept in principle

This will be picked up through work on the Residential Women's Centre once the current planning concludes.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with HMPPS to monitor the use of Pre-Sentencing Reports and identify inconsistencies, including on the impact on children's welfare. The Welsh Government, with HMPPS, should set out how it plans to ensure a more consistent and improved use of Pre-Sentencing Reports across Wales.

Response: Accept in principle

The Women's Justice Blueprint Project monitors Pre-Sentence Reports (PSR) and sentencing data on a quarterly basis, to support an evidence-led approach to project delivery, reporting progress back to the Welsh Government Blueprints Programme Board through the collation of highlight reports.

HMPPS and HMCTS have jointly designed an enhanced, evidence-led multi-tiered court engagement model, which is currently being implemented across Wales. Specific guidance has been produced to support delivery of quality PSRs that consider the distinct needs and complexities relating to women. Significant sentencer liaison has also been undertaken to raise awareness of the impact of short custodial sentences and to promote alternative community approaches. Gender-informed training for sentencers and other court professionals will also be rolled out during 2023. A deep dive analysis of work in relation to specific court areas with outlying trends of custodial sentencing for women is underway, with learning and recommendations informing practice development both within target court areas and across Wales.

HMPPS will also be taking forward recommendations from the recent PSR pilot, which will draw together the learning to inform future Court design work. Learning will be shared and utilised to ensure we continue to be persuasive and request adjournments when required to provide a quality assessment and better understand needs of the individual. Processes for early identification of cases that would benefit from a PSR will continue in line with the national operational court strategy. There will continue to be close monitoring of PSR volumes on priority cohorts (women being one of the priority cohorts) within performance, with findings being shared with the Welsh Government through Blueprints governance.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should liaise with PACT to ensure prisoners are made aware of the support available to them, including how to contact elected Members from their home constituencies, to ensure people have equitable access to services they are entitled to.

Response: Accept in principle

Responsibility for information in prisons sits with HMPPS. We will work with HMPPS to ensure that information about how to contact elected Members in Wales is available to women from Wales.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS to:

- carry out a formal evaluation of the Visiting Mum project.
- assess whether there are sufficient resources in place to facilitate work that enable families to stay connected such as the 'purple visits'.

Response: Accept

An independent evaluation of the Pact Visiting Mum Service was undertaken by Cardiff University and Cascade in 2017. The Evaluation highlighted a number of positive findings for both the women and for their children and carers. A copy of the report can be found below:

[Final-PACT-report-Final-version.-12.7.17.pdf \(cardiff.ac.uk\)](#)

We will continue to monitor the delivery of Visiting Mums, and Welsh Government jointly chairs the Family Connect group to both monitor work on helping families to stay connected and identify areas for potential improvement and expansion of this work.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should create tailored guidance for local authorities to ensure that women are reunited with their children in a child-focused way following a custodial sentence.

Response: Accept

As is noted within the publication of the Committee's report, there is no specific guidance presently in place relating to reuniting women and children after a custodial sentence. However, there are duties to promote contact and the relationship between a Child Looked After Child and their family is considered within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 ("the Act") which is noted and also highlighted within the Code of Practice (Looked After and Accommodated Children) in support of at Part 6 of the Act. The Code of Practice stipulates the importance of Local Authorities working collaboratively with families to enable a reunification with the family where it is considered to be in line with the child's well-being. This would also encompass the needs of children who become Looked After by virtue of their parent serving a custodial sentence.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should set out what residential detoxification provision is available for women in the criminal justice system, and how it is delivered.

Response: Accept in Principle

Welsh Government provides a range of support services including in patient de-tox and residential rehabilitation are available across Wales. Our Rehab Cymru Framework offers a range of residential treatment settings, including detoxification services, in both Wales and England. Responsibility for women in prisons sits with HMPPS. We will continue work with HMPPS to ensure that information on accessing detoxification and residential rehabilitation services are improved and available to women in the criminal justice system, including those who are released from prison.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should share its view on the forthcoming NHS England review once it is published and set out any action it plans to take as a result of its findings.

Response: Accept

Once the review is published the Welsh Government will outline its response.

Financial Implications: We anticipate that the immediate costs of the recommendations can be met from existing programme budgets in BEL 1267 which has a budget of £1.075m in 2023-24 and an indicative budget of £1.075m in 2024-25.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should work with HMPPS and local authorities to obtain Service Level Agreements with the remaining 16 local authorities, explore options for supported accommodation for low-risk women who are vulnerable and work with HMPPS to provide approved premises for high-risk women. This work should be carried out before Autumn 2023.

Response: Accept

Welsh Government recognises the value and importance of partnership working in ensuring positive housing outcomes for people leaving custody. As outlined by HMPPS in their evidence to the Committee, work is currently underway, led by HMPPS, to develop Service Level Agreements with all local authorities across Wales to provide initial accommodation. There are benefits with HMPPS and local authorities working together to consider all housing options available for women, taking into account their individual needs. Through the use of a person-centred approach women can be supported into housing solutions that provide suitable homes and help to break repeat cycles of homelessness and provide them with safe spaces to begin to rebuild their lives safely within communities.

The Welsh Government will continue to support HMPPS and local authorities, as delivery organisations, to establish and strengthen partnership working in this area. The specific details of Service Level Agreements and operational working arrangements do however need to be agreed between the signatory parties, and whilst we will support and encourage these steps, both of these parties must be proactive in their engagement to develop solutions that are deliverable by both. The timing of the delivery of these formal agreements will also be dependent on both signatory parties, and we will continue to encourage and urge local authorities and HMPPS alike to make this a priority.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should look at examples of best practice and innovation to see what accommodation solutions could be developed in Wales.

Response: Accept

Welsh Government recognises the pressures on housing across Wales, with the number of people presenting as homeless continuing to be high, including people leaving custody. Whilst this demonstrates the wider pressures in the system, it also gives us the opportunity to draw on the wide range of policies and systems in place to support those who are homeless, to identify best practice and creative solutions that could be extended to people leaving custody. Progress updates on this area are regularly shared during the Strategic Accommodation Board which is jointly chaired with HMPPS and Welsh Government.

Across Wales, we fund seven Housing First projects and a number of local authorities also fund their own projects, all aimed at supporting people with highly complex needs into accommodation. In these projects, tenants are provided with wrap around support to assist them in maintaining their tenancies and to promote their individual wellbeing and standard of living. There are several case studies which demonstrate how this service works for individuals with a high level of need in multiple areas, and in particular those who may struggle to trust service providers.

These programmes build trust between individuals and case workers and wider partners, empowering them to take control of their lives in a supported environment, with the security of a safe home to take these steps in. Data is increasingly promising of the efficacy of this approach in Wales, with the Housing First Network reporting a sustainment rate of tenancies of 90% for people who have historically struggled to maintain any form of engagement with services, let alone retain a tenancy.

Equally, all local authorities have, or are working towards developing, a Rapid Rehousing Transition plan, to assist them in their transition to fully embed the concept of rapid rehousing, of which Housing First and support are key elements in supporting people access and maintain settled housing. This concept is dependent on a trauma-informed, person-centred approach to work with individuals to identify their specific needs to assist them into housing quickly. This provides the initial foundation for the support and housing services those individuals need who are leaving custody, and who may be vulnerable or at risk due to other risk factors. Rapid Rehousing is developed and based on the requirement that the needs of the individual are understood and met when providing them with housing solutions.

Whilst Rapid Rehousing is in its infancy at this time and will take time for local authorities to fully transition and embed it throughout their entire services, I have commissioned research to evaluate and assess some of the most innovative homeless interventions in Wales, including our Housing First projects. The purpose of this research will be to support homelessness and wider services across local authorities in their transition out of the crisis that was the pandemic. The evidence generated will also inform future policy and legislation development. This research is based on a case study approach and will include engagement of those with lived experience of current services. The findings of this report will assist us in identifying best practice, and in the implementation of creative and innovative solutions to assist those leaving custody into suitable settled homes.

Financial Implications: Although no short-term costs are anticipated this work could lead to further costs in the future (for instance costs linked to policy work on progressing the devolution of justice to Wales). It is not possible to scope the costs of this work at this early stage, but these are likely to be in excess of the baseline budget that is available. Further consideration will be given to the feasibility of the delivery of this work in the context of the funding available through future budget rounds.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Jane Hutt MS

Minister for Social Justice

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

19 April 2023

Dear Committee Chairs,

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25: Engagement

At our meeting on 23 March 2023, the Finance Committee (the Committee) considered its programme of engagement for the forthcoming Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2024-25, ahead of the Committee's annual Plenary debate on spending priorities, provisionally scheduled for 12 July. I am writing to Chairs of subject committees to share our thinking. The Committee has agreed to undertake a number of engagement activities prior to the publication of the Draft Budget, in the autumn. These include, a stakeholder event, focus groups held with the general public, and a workshop with Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament.

Stakeholder Event: Wrexham

This year's stakeholder event will take place at the Glyndwr University Campus (Catrin Finch Centre) in Wrexham on the morning of Thursday 15 June. This will be an opportunity for the Committee to hear directly from interested organisations/individuals on the expected draft budget proposals, as well as their views on the Welsh Government's approach to setting the budget and prioritising resources. As cross-Committee engagement with stakeholders on the budget is crucial to effective scrutiny, I would like to invite Committee Chairs or a Member of your Committee to join the event. If Chairs or

Members are interested in attending, please contact the clerking team seneddfinance@senedd.wales by 22 May.

Citizen engagement focus groups with the Welsh public

On behalf of the Committee, the Senedd's Citizens Engagement Team will be holding a series of focus groups on the Draft Budget with the Welsh public. The team has undertaken similar exercises over the past few years and the aim of this work is to form a longitudinal study to allow the Committee to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time. Participants will be sourced through similar partner organisations to cover the same demographics as last year, and groups will be organised to focus on particular policy areas. The Citizens Engagement Team will circulate the dates of sessions to all Committees, should any Members wish to participate. This will allow an opportunity for Members to hear first-hand from the citizens of Wales where spending should be prioritised.

Welsh Youth Parliament

Last year to further complement our engagement work, the Committee held a workshop with Members of the Youth Parliament. It was extremely informative to hear openly from these young Members about the issues concerning and directly affecting them. We are keen to continue building on this invaluable work and will be inviting the youth Members to participate in a workshop again this year.

Finance Committee Plenary Debate on the Welsh Government spending priorities

As mentioned above, the Committee intends to hold a Plenary debate on Wednesday 12 July on the Welsh Government's spending priorities for 2024-25. The outcomes of our engagement work will inform and feed into this debate, which will provide the best opportunity to influence the Welsh Government spending priorities before the Draft Budget is formulated in the autumn. As ever, we would very much welcome the participation of Committee Chairs, as well as other Members, as part of this debate, to ensure that the Welsh Government's spending plans are informed by the views and priorities of Senedd Committees.

Approach to budget scrutiny

I will shortly be writing to Chairs, with regard to the Committee's approach to budget scrutiny, including information on the consultation and timetable once the Trefnydd has notified the Business Committee of the Draft Budget publication dates.

The Finance Committee has tried to ensure that the profile and effectiveness of budget scrutiny in the Senedd is continually improved and that the Welsh public are able to engage fully with the process. As you are aware, we are currently discussing proposals with the Minister for Finance and Local Government to amend the [Budget Process Protocol](#), which sets out an understanding between the

Welsh Government and the Senedd on the administrative arrangements for the scrutiny of the annual draft budget and other related budgetary matters.

In addition, during last year's budget round the Committee agreed to consult with Committees on the documentation provided by the Welsh Government alongside its Draft Budget proposals, with a view to seeking improvements to the information provided. I wrote to [Chair on this issue on 8 March](#) and I am grateful to the Committees that have responded. As this work progresses, I will continue to provide updates to Committees on developments.

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.

Agenda Item 5

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

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 6

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

Document is Restricted

Agenda Item 7

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

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