

Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 2, Senedd

Meeting date: 5 February 2024

Meeting time: 11.00 – 13.00

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan, Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting registration (10:45 – 11:00)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(11:00)

2 Papers to note

(11:00)

2.1 Correspondence from the Wales Women's Budget Group regarding the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2024–2025

(Pages 1 – 5)

2.2 Correspondence from CWMPAS to the Chair regarding the Draft Budget 2024/2025

(Pages 6 – 8)

2.3 Correspondence between the Chair and the Deputy Minister for Social Service regarding the Equality and Social Justice Committee's follow up inquiry on childcare

(Pages 9 – 13)

2.4 Correspondence from Oxfam to the Chair regarding the Little Steps, Big Struggles: Childcare in Wales report

(Page 14)

2.5 Correspondence from the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee regarding the Inter –Institutional Relations Agreement: Safety, Security and Migration Inter-ministerial group

(Page 15)



- 2.6 Correspondence from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and the Constitution Committee to the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding the Agreement for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants**
(Pages 16 – 17)
- 2.7 Correspondence from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to the Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding UK–Portugal Mutual Recognition for the Purpose of Driving and Exchange of Licences**
(Page 18)
- 3 Motion under SO17.42 (vi) and (ix) to exclude the public for the remainder of today's meeting**
(11:00)
- 4 Draft Budget 2024–25: consideration of draft report**
(11:00–12:30) (Pages 19 – 34)
- 5 Forward work programme: consideration of scoping paper**
(12:30–13:00) (Pages 35 – 38)

Briefing: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25

January 2024

Introduction

The Wales Women's Budget Group and the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales have jointly analysed the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25 from a gender equality perspective. This briefing highlights some key points and recommendations. Further detail and background information can be found in our [joint written response](#), which was produced prior to the publication of the draft budget.

1. Childcare

While we welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to protect frontline services in the 2024-25 Draft Budget, we are extremely disappointed that childcare is not included amongst the services to be protected. We are particularly alarmed that alongside this omission, childcare funding in Wales is being cut. In addition to the £16million of cuts announced in the Welsh Government's in-year spending changes in October 2023, last month's Draft Budget included a further £11.2million of cuts to childcare.

- 1.1. In both cases, cuts to the childcare budget have been justified on the basis of lower-than-expected uptake forecasts of the Welsh Childcare Offer. It is well-evidenced that the need for affordable and accessible childcare remains critical in Wales, as high childcare costs are compounding financial pressures and pushing families into debt and poverty. A recent report published by Oxfam Cymru highlighted that 43% of parents and guardians in Wales have not been able to pay other essential costs after paying for childcare, and that over two-thirds had to reduce their working hours due to a lack of childcare.¹ These pressures are being felt most acutely by single parents – 86% of whom are women – who face the highest risk of relative income poverty in Wales.²
- 1.2. As rising costs of childcare continue to push women into unemployment and their families into poverty, lower-than-expected uptake forecasts are likely indicative of a mismatch between what families need and what is available through the Offer. There are several possible reasons for this, for example, the Offer is only available to parents of three and four-year-olds, and its eligibility criteria excludes families on the lowest incomes. There are also significant gaps in provisions for parents working atypical hours, for disabled children and for those living in rural areas.
- 1.3. In this context, the Welsh Government's decision to reprioritise childcare funding, instead of using it to accelerate work towards ensuring childcare is available to those who need it most, is highly regrettable. We would urge the Welsh Government to thoroughly investigate the reasons for lower uptake levels and consider whether any aspect of the design or operation of the Offer prevents families who would benefit most from funded childcare from accessing it. These issues should be tackled and resolved before any financial reprioritizations or cuts are made to the childcare budget.

¹ Oxfam Cymru (2023), Little steps, big struggles: Childcare in Wales
<https://oxfamapps.org/cymru/wpcontent/uploads/2023/11/Little-Steps-Big-Struggles.pdf>

² WEN Wales (2023), Make Care Fair Briefing. <https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Make-Care-Fair.WenWales.3.pdf>

Recommendations:

- (1) The Welsh Government should refrain from making any cuts to the childcare budget until the reasons for lower uptake levels of the Childcare Offer are fully understood.
- (2) If this analysis identifies any aspects of the design or operation of the Childcare Offer that prevents parents from accessing it, any savings from lower forecast demand should be put toward resolving these issues, starting with those that would have the biggest impact on families on the lowest incomes.

2. Public Services

Rising costs have put unprecedented pressure on Wales' public services, endangering their quality of provision and ability to meet demand. This will disproportionately impact women, who are more likely to work in public services, to rely on public services and to become providers of last resort when services are cut.³ While we welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to protect frontline public services in its in-year spending changes and in the 2024-25 Draft Budget, we are concerned that the allocated funding is not sufficient to keep pace with the cost pressures. We are particularly concerned that the public services most critical to women, such as social care, childcare, and housing, will face real-term and actual funding cuts as a result.

2.1. Local Government: Local authorities in Wales provide many of the vital public services that women use and need, including childcare, social care, and housing support. As noted by Wales Fiscal Analysis, Wales' local authorities are facing a £354million shortfall in 2024-2025⁴, which will require difficult decisions regarding service provision cuts. To avoid exacerbating gender inequality, these decisions must be informed by robust equalities evaluation and impact assessment using gender disaggregated data to understand their impact on women in Wales. These evaluations should be reported to and monitored by the Welsh Government who must take necessary action to mitigate any inequitable impacts. By embedding gender budgeting into their budgetary processes, both the Welsh Government and local authorities can ensure that their spending decisions and cuts are not disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable in society. The Gender Equality Review, *Deeds Not Words* (2019) provides a clear, well-evidenced framework through which to do this.⁵ The Welsh Government should expediate the full implementation of the review recommendations as a matter of urgency. The Wales Women's Budget Group would be pleased to work with officials in progressing this important piece of work.

2.2. Council Tax: In the absence of additional funding, local authorities in Wales are likely to resort to council tax rises to meet cost pressures. As council tax is not based on income, it can have inequitable effects on low-earning tenants and homeowners, especially in the context of other cost pressures. Rises in regressive council taxes are therefore likely to disproportionately impact single parents in Wales – 86% of whom are women⁶ – who

³ UK Women's Budget Group (2022), The gendered impact of the cost-of-living crisis on public services <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Gendered-impact-of-cost-of-living-crisis-on-public-services1.pdf>.

⁴ Wales Fiscal Analysis (2023), The medium-term fiscal outlook for local government in Wales, https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2779342/The-medium-term-fiscal-outlook-for-local.pdf

⁵ Chwarae Teg (2019), *Deeds Not Words, Review of Gender Equality in Wales*.

⁶ Oxfam Cymru (2023), *Little steps, big struggles: Childcare in Wales*.

rely on a single income. To mitigate these inequitable impacts, the Welsh Government must accelerate its current work to establish a more fair and progressive council tax system in Wales.

Recommendations

- (1) Funding cuts to public services must be informed by robust equalities evaluation and impact assessment using gender disaggregated data to understand their impact on women in Wales. The Welsh Government should monitor these impacts and take necessary action to mitigate any inequitable consequences.
- (2) To avoid further entrenching gender inequality through spending decisions, the Welsh Government should progress the full implementation of the Gender Equality Review and roll out gender budgeting approaches across Government.
- (3) The Welsh Government should accelerate its ongoing work to establish a more fair and progressive council tax system in Wales as a matter of urgency.

3. Cost of Living Support

The Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing cost of living crisis have not impacted all households in Wales equally. Due to deep-rooted gender inequality and a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities, women in Wales – particularly ethnic minority, racialised, disabled women and single mothers – occupy an unequal position in the Welsh economy and are being hit hardest by the impacts of the crisis. In this context, we are concerned that government support measures do not go far enough to protect women from falling deeper into debt and poverty.

3.1. Hardship Payments: Support measures such as the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF), are welcome interventions which can help to reduce pressure on women's incomes as the costs of essentials remain high. We therefore welcome the Welsh Government's continued funding of the DAF in the 2024-25 Draft Budget. However, a lack of gender disaggregated data and analysis makes it difficult to ascertain the impact of this support on women in Wales. The Welsh Government should produce a disaggregated DAF analysis to better understand the demographics of those accessing the fund.

3.1.1. From a gendered perspective, the fact that hardship payments are made at household level can undermine women's access to an independent income and increases the opportunities for financial abuse and financial dependency on an abuser.⁷ The Welsh Government should therefore consider splitting DAF payments for households with more than one individual.

3.2. Winter Fuel Support Scheme: In the context of rising energy costs and colder weather, current levels of governmental fuel support are insufficient. While some emergency support is available through the Fuel Bank Foundation, this does not go far enough to protect the numerous households in Wales facing fuel poverty this Winter. To do so, the Welsh Government must progress the implementation of the delayed Warm Homes Programme as a matter of urgency.

3.3. Long-term measures: While hardship payments and support schemes are essential, they are short-term measures that do little to address the underlying causes of the crisis and help households cope in the longer term. It is therefore vital that these measures go

⁷ Chwarae Teg (2019), *Trapped: Poverty amongst Women in Wales today*.

hand in hand with the longer-term work to tackle the structural causes of poverty and inequality in Wales. This should include full implementation of the recommendations of the Gender Equality Review, including gender budgeting.

Recommendations:

- (1) The Welsh Government should provide a breakdown of the Discretionary Assistance Fund analysis by gender and other protected characteristics.
- (2) The Welsh Government should consider splitting DAF payments for households with more than one individual to safeguard women's access to hardship payments.
- (3) The Welsh Government should progress the implementation of the Warm Homes Programme without further delay.
- (4) The Welsh Government should tackle gender inequality at its root by progressing the full implementation of the Gender Equality Review recommendations as a matter of urgency.

4. Gender Budgeting

In the current context of unprecedented budgetary pressures, gender budgeting remains a key tool at the Welsh Government's disposal to both safeguard and advance equality in Wales. It provides the tools to restructure spending decisions by taking account of their gendered impacts and redistributing resources in a way that eliminates inequitable outcomes. We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment and ongoing work to implement gender budgeting but are concerned that the pace of progress remains slow.

4.1. Gender Budgeting Pilots: Each of the Welsh Government's gender budgeting pilots – Personal Learning Accounts, Young Persons Guarantee and E-Move – were scheduled to conclude by 2022-23. After some delay, the external evaluation of the Personal Learning Accounts pilot was published in June 2023. The evaluation identified several important learnings and recommendations on how to apply gender budgeting in a practical context, including the timing of the implementation and building up staff expertise. However, it remains unclear if and how these findings were used to inform the development of the other two pilots and how the implementation of gender budgeting has been refined throughout.

- 4.1.1. To prevent pilots becoming siloed and to ensure steady progress towards the wider rollout of gender budgeting, information on progress throughout the pilots must be clarified without delay. It can then be used to inform plans for mainstreaming gender budgeting across the Welsh Government, in order support better policymaking and budget allocation. The Wales Women's Budget Group would be pleased to work with officials to progress this important piece of work.

Recommendations

- (1) The Welsh Government should provide without delay a progress update on the Young Persons Guarantee and E-Move gender budgeting pilots, and, if the pilots have concluded, publish their evaluations. This information should then be used to developing plans to mainstream gender budgeting tools across the Welsh Government.

5. Social Justice and Third Sector Funding

5.1. Precarity of the Welsh third sector: Third sector organisations in Wales play an indispensable role in scrutinising policies and advocating for the most disadvantaged in our society. The Welsh third sector is facing unprecedented challenges due to the loss of

EU funding and rising costs pressures. Recent research published by the Wales Council of Voluntary Action showed that 43% of the over 300 organisations surveyed had to actively reduce staff numbers.⁸ The impact on the women's sector is especially severe, as it is already seriously underfunded. Research by the Rosa Foundation showed that only 1.8% of the total grants awarded to charities in the UK in 2021 went to women and girls focused activity.⁹ The incredibly sad loss of Chwarae Teg is symptomatic of these pressures and representative of an alarming loss of capacity and expertise in the Welsh third sector, whose workforce is predominantly female.

5.2. Equalities, Inclusion and Human Rights: In this context, the Welsh Government's decision to rationalise funding for Equalities, Inclusion and Human budget within the draft budget is deeply concerning.

5.2.1. This decision follows an in-year spending change to cut the Social Justice budget by £7million. Despite making up just 13% of the total Social Justice Budget, 60% (£4.2 million) of these savings fall under the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights expenditure group, which funds a number of important equality and human rights programmes and third sector organisations in Wales. Since the announcement in October 2023, it remains unclear which particular programmes will be postponed or downgraded as part of this savings exercise. To facilitate proper scrutiny of these impacts, the Welsh Government must clarify the details of the in-year re-prioritisation without delay.

5.2.2. The cuts to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget come at a time when we need to be especially vigilant about protecting equality and human rights. To prevent further loss of expertise, safeguard the delivery of long-term equality and human rights objectives, and protect disadvantaged groups, the Welsh Government should take urgent action to protect the sustainability of a rapidly contracting third sector in Wales.

Recommendations

- (1) The Welsh Government should clarify without delay what programmes will be affected by the in-year spending change to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights.
- (2) The Welsh Government should take urgent action to protect the sustainability of the third sector in Wales to prevent further loss of expertise, safeguard the delivery of long-term equality and human rights objectives, and protect disadvantaged groups.

For more information please contact:

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⁸ WCVA (2023), The Aftermath of an afterthought, <https://wcva.cymru/views/the-aftermath-of-an-afterthought/>

⁹ Rosa (2023), Mapping the UK Women and Girls Sector and its Funding: Where Does the Money Go? <https://rosauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Women-and-Girls-Sector-Research-Mapping-ReportAmended.pdf>

Agenda Item 2.2

Welsh Government Draft Budget 24/25 – impact on Digital Communities Wales

We are writing to give evidence as part of your scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2024-25 and to raise awareness of the implications within it for the ambition to create a fair and equal Wales. In an increasingly online world it's imperative that everyone has a fair opportunity to gain the skills, access and motivation to be a confident user of digital technology. 7% of adults in Wales today remain offline, many of them the most vulnerable and excluded in our communities.

The budget proposes a 50% cut, equivalent to £1m, to the Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being programme which aims to reduce digital exclusion in Wales. The programme helps a range of organisations that provide critical services to be more digitally inclusive by working with them to support people to gain basic digital skills. As more and more vital public services are being delivered online, these people – often already marginalised – are in danger of being left behind. Key bodies providing support services, particularly in the health and care sector, must be digitally inclusive so that everyone in Wales has equal access to the support and services they need to live well. The impact of the work of Digital Communities Wales has been widely commended. In the 22-23 Impact Report, we noted that 40,201 people had been supported to get online, with 2,741 members of staff or volunteers being trained in digital skills.

Those most likely to be digitally excluded include older adults, people with disabilities or long-term health conditions, those with lower educational attainment, lower income individuals or families, people in rural areas, Welsh speakers, lonely or isolated people, or homeless. They are often also the heaviest users of health and social care services. As pressures on these services intensify at a time of high demand, set against a challenging financial climate, most are looking to digital transformation as a solution. During the pandemic we saw these already marginalised groups disproportionately affected, and in the current cost-of-living crisis they are at increased risk of experiencing data poverty – having to choose between data, devices and feeding themselves or their families. Increasingly we are seeing the gap widen for these groups of people.

Just this week, the Older People's Commissioner in Wales has published '[Access denied](#)' which highlights older people's experiences of digital exclusion and the impact this has on people's lives. It shows that it is increasingly difficult to undertake day to day activities if you are not online and that digital exclusion is now resulting in social exclusion.

Importance of digital inclusion

The Welsh Government has previously stated its understanding of the importance of digital inclusion - the Digital Strategy for Wales states that:

"When people are confident and motivated to engage with digital, they can enjoy the wider benefits of health, well-being, reduced loneliness and being financially better off..."

We know the Welsh Government itself believes in the potential of digital transformation to deliver more effective and efficient public services. The Digital Strategy states that the Welsh Government will “ensure **no one is left behind** as we embrace a digital first approach, keeping digital inclusion at the heart of all we do”.

Mission 6 of the Welsh Government’s Digital and data strategy for health and social care in Wales focuses on Digital Inclusion and specifically makes the following commitment:

*“Our ambition is to give everyone in Wales the opportunity, motivation, skills, and confidence to engage with health and social care services digitally. To achieve that, we will continue to work closely with delivery partners and across government to support a cross-cutting policy which improves connectivity, digital literacy, and confidence. For example, **we will maintain our investment in the Digital Communities Wales programme**, and we will work closely with the economy and digital portfolios in Welsh Government.”*

The business case for the digital transformation of health and public services is reliant on people being able to use the new services. The improvements in the quality and greater efficiencies of the services will be significantly impeded by people not being able to access them – especially so when we know that those with the greatest needs are among those most likely to be digitally-excluded.

In addition, last year Audit Wales published its research into digital inclusion in Wales. It noted that:

“The Welsh Government has invested heavily in improving broadband infrastructure and the past few years have shown how reliant many of us have become on good quality internet access. However, spending on infrastructure needs to be balanced with work to tackle the root causes of digital exclusion to manage the risk of creating a two-tier society when it comes to access to public and other services.”

The DCW programme is a key enabler for other services to ensure people are included and not left behind. If patients cannot access digital services confidently and securely the pressures on the health service will increase, in turn placing greater pressure on future Welsh Government budgets.

Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales

Our colleagues in the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales, a network of organisations that are working together to make Wales a digitally inclusive nation, have also stated their concern over the proposed cut.

With over 90 members, the Alliance comprises public and third sector organisations, private sector companies and academia, all focused on ensuring that everyone who wants to in Wales is able to access and use digital tools and technologies in their everyday lives and has the confidence to do so.

They are deeply shocked and saddened to see the proposed cut at a time when the programme has a vital role to play.

The impact of spending reprioritisation

Our work on digital inclusion is longstanding but remains more important than ever, especially in light of the current financial pressures across sectors where increasingly organisations are turning to digital means of delivery to make efficiencies themselves.

The announcement in the Draft Budget for 24/25 will have a catastrophic impact on the service we can offer, the communities we can support, and Cwmpas as an organisation itself. Ultimately it will result in more people in some of our most marginalised communities unable to access the support they need, increasing the digital divide and inequalities that already exist.

We are passionate about creating a fairer, more resilient Wales and a truly digitally-inclusive nation. If this is to be achieved then investing in key enabling support to ensure we are a digitally inclusive nation is vital at a time when services are increasingly moving online in response to their own budget pressures. Failure to invest now will see a significant proportion of our most vulnerable and marginalised communities further excluded.

Ask of Committee Members

We urge the committee to note the devastating impact this proposed funding cut will have on the programme and communities across Wales and seek your support in reversing this decision at a time when the programme is needed more than ever.

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair
Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

30 January 2024

Dear Jenny,

Many thanks for your letter as Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee in which you set out your plans to hold a follow-up inquiry into childcare and parental employment.

Your letter provides a helpful structure for the evidence paper which I will forward separately to support the oral evidence that I shall provide to the Committee on 11 March.

Childcare and parental employment have long been key issues for the Welsh Government. By way of background information to assist the Committee, you might wish to note recent progress.

Commitment to expand 12.5 hours free childcare per week to all two-year-olds, with an emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.

- Delivery of Phase 2 began in April 2023. In total, Phase 2 of the expansion will allow more than 9,500 more two-year-olds to access FS childcare once the expansion is running at full capacity.
- By the end of November 2023 (the most recent figures) an additional 4,195 2-year-old childcare places have been offered to parents in Wales. This equates to 85% of the 2023-24 target.
- In 2024-25, the target for Phase 2 is to support 5,522 additional 2-year olds with access to high quality childcare.

Childcare Offer - General Take-Up

- There were 12,873 children taking up the Childcare Offer in October 2023. This represents a take-up rate of 57% of estimated eligible parents. The Autumn term take-up rate of 57% does represent a slightly higher than usual rate (on average 55%) and we will be monitoring levels to understand whether this is indicative of an overall trend during the Spring and Summer terms.

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

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Correspondence.Julie.Morgan@gov.wales

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

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

Childcare Offer - Expansion to parents in education and training

- By the end of the academic year 22/23, 675 additional families were supported because of the expansion of the Offer to include eligible parents in education/training.
- The success of the promotion work has so far seen the number of parents in education and training, supported by the Offer jump to 1,100 during the first term of this new academic term – compared to just under 200 during the Autumn term for 2022/23.

Childcare Offer Impact

- The latest independent evaluation findings, published in March 2023, once again found the scheme has been supporting parental employment. Parents surveyed reported a range of positive impacts from accessing the Offer:
 - 75% of parents reported that the Offer had made it easier for them to undertake their work;
 - 37% of parents reported that they would be working fewer hours had the Offer not been available to them – this impact was greater for parents earning under £26,000 per year (42% reported that they would be working fewer hours without the Offer);
 - 10% of parents said they would be in a job with fewer career progression opportunities, and a further 10% said they would not be working at all, if the Offer had not been available to them.

I am hoping that prior to my attendance at Committee, I will be in a position to share with you copies of the Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care (ECPLC) Plan in Wales (High level and detailed versions). The Plan has been developed around the themes of quality of provision, access to provision and supporting and developing the workforce. By focussing on these themes, the plan aims to support the development and delivery of a consistent approach to nurturing, learning and development, through the provision of high-quality, inclusive, play-based childcare and education opportunities.

I hope that you find the above useful and I look forward to being able to help the Committee take forward its inquiry into this important area of work.

Yours sincerely,



Julie Morgan AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Deputy Minister for Social Services

Julie Morgan

Deputy Minister for Social Services

3 January 2024

Dear Julie,

Follow-up inquiry into childcare and parental employment

The Equality and Social Justice Committee plans to hold a follow-up inquiry into childcare and parental employment in February/March 2024. As part of this work we hope to look at progress with implementation of the Committee's 2022 report: 'Minding the future: the childcare barrier facing working parents'. See the full terms of reference below in the Annex.

We plan to broaden our new inquiry to the extent to which childcare meets the varying needs of families; and how inequalities in accessing childcare faced by particular demographic groups could be addressed.

We would welcome an update from the Welsh Government regarding the current situation and outlook for childcare policy and. If possible we would be grateful if you could provide us with a paper setting out your views by 5 February 2024.

We would also like to invite you to give oral evidence to the Committee in the afternoon of 11 March 2024. Given the clear links between childcare provision and equality and social justice matters, I am copying this letter to the Minister for Social Justice.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Annex A

- What progress has been made in implementing the recommendations in the Committee's report from early 2022 - **Minding the future – the childcare barrier facing working parents**.
- The extent to which childcare provision in Wales provides high-quality provision which supports child development, tackles child poverty and supports parental employment. What changes might be needed to deliver these outcomes.
- What progress is being made towards achieving the Co-Operation Agreement commitment to expand 12.5 hours free childcare per week to all two-year-olds, with an emphasis on strengthening Welsh-medium provision.
- To what extent there is sufficient childcare available to meet the varying needs of families across Wales, and how inequalities in access to childcare faced by particular demographic groups and across different parts of Wales can be addressed.
- What approaches exist to integrate delivery of childcare provision in Wales, and how can best practice be spread widely.
- How childcare providers and the workforce have been impacted by cost-of-living pressures, and what effects these have had on the sector.
- What lessons can be learnt from other parts of the UK and international best practice to improve childcare policy in Wales.
- How financial and practical barriers need to be considered in developing future childcare policy.

Annex B

Guidance

Submissions should be no longer than five sides of A4, with numbered paragraphs, and should focus on the terms of reference.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please provide a brief description of the role of your organisation.

Please see the [**guidance for those providing evidence for committees**](#).

Bilingual Policy

The Committee welcomes contributions in both or either of our official languages, English and Welsh. Information not submitted bilingually will not be translated and will be published in the language of submission only. We expect organisations to implement their own standards and schemes and to comply with their statutory obligations.

How we use your information

We will usually publish correspondence or written evidence on our website. If you have responded in a personal capacity, your name will be published along with your contribution, unless you have asked for your contribution to be anonymised. If you have responded in a professional capacity, the published version of your response will include your name, your job title/role, if relevant, and the name of your organisation.

Contact details

If you wish to speak to someone regarding this consultation, please use the following contact details:

Email: [**SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales**](mailto:SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales)

Telephone: 0300 200 6565

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Agenda Item 2.4



For the attention of Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee.

I am writing with regard to the Equality and Social Justice Committee consultation on childcare and parental employment. Oxfam Cymru's strategy makes a strong commitment to sharing our platform, amplifying the voices of partners, and ensuring a diverse range of perspectives are duly acknowledged and heard. As part of this commitment, we are keen to extend our platform to grassroots organisations, (and the working parents they support), with whom we work closely. Our mission is to support and mentor them to become confident to contribute substantively to the consultation process.

We are encouraged by the positive feedback we received thus far regarding our collaborative approach. Notably, during the recent launch of our research, [Little Steps, Big Struggles: Childcare in Wales](#) you may have had the pleasure of meeting representatives from Mother's Matter CIC. They informed us that it was the first time they had visited the Senedd or participated in a campaign of this nature. The feedback we received underscores the importance of our support in nurturing their understanding of political processes and advocacy efforts.

With due respect, we kindly request your consideration in allowing us to present oral evidence to the committee, alongside our grassroots partners. Given the dynamic nature of the subject matter and the rapid developments therein, we believe that our insights could offer valuable nuances and recent updates to inform your inquiry.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and considering the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to your vital work.

Kind regards

Sarah Rees

Head of Oxfam Cymru

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip

Agenda Item 2.5


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: Safety, Security and Migration IMG

Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru
SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

26 January 2024

Dear Huw,

**Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement: Safety, Security and Migration
Interministerial Group**

I am writing in accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement to inform you that a meeting of the Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration will be held on Monday 5th February from 10am to 11.15 am. The meeting will take place in Queen Elizabeth House in Edinburgh and will be chaired by The Lord Sharpe of Epsom OBE. I will be joining the meeting virtually.

It has been agreed that the meeting will focus on the UK Government's Illegal Migration Bill, asylum dispersal, and the recent report published on the cap on safe and legal migration routes. There will also be a discussion on the Ukrainian Scheme, the Israel/Hamas conflict and recent net migration reforms.

A communique will be published after the meeting, and I will notify you of this in due course.

I am copying this letter to Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Hutt AS/MS
Gweinidog Cyfiawnder Cymdeithasol a'r Prif Chwip
Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip

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

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

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

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

26 January 2024

Dear Jenny,

UK/Rwanda: Agreement for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants

As you are aware, the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of non-trade international agreements in the Sixth Senedd.

During our meeting on 8 January 2024, we considered the UK/Rwanda: Agreement for the Provision of an Asylum Partnership to Strengthen Shared International Commitments on the Protection of Refugees and Migrants. This agreement provides for the creation, maintenance and enforcement of a UK-Rwanda partnership for dealing with individuals relocated from the United Kingdom to Rwanda, including considering and determining claims for refugee status.

As noted in our report, the Explanatory Memorandum details the domestic legislation that will be used to give legal effect to the agreement in the UK and confirmed the Prime Minister's intention to bring forward new legislation to confirm the safety of Rwanda as a safe third country. The *Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill* was subsequently introduced in the UK Parliament on 7 December 2023.

Although this agreement relates to reserved matters, we agreed to draw it, and the *Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill*, to the attention of your Committee, to highlight their potential implications on individuals living in Wales who are relocated to Rwanda.

Our latest report, which was laid on 16 January 2024, is available [here](#).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huw Irranca-Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Huw Irranca-Davies

Chair

Agenda Item 2.7

Y Cymraeg yn Ffwrdd yr Iaith, Cyfiawnder a'r Cyfansoddiad

Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

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Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

18 January 2024

Dear Jenny,

UK-Portugal Mutual Recognition for the Purpose of Driving and Exchange of Licences

As you are aware, the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of non-trade international agreements in the Sixth Senedd.

During our meeting on 4 December 2023, we considered the UK-Portugal Mutual Recognition for the Purpose of Driving and Exchange of Licences. This agreement provides for reciprocal mutual recognition of driving licences for the purpose of driving and exchanging licences in the UK and Portugal.

During our consideration of the agreement, we agreed to draw the agreement to the attention of your Committee, as it monitors the rights of European citizens living in Wales under the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Our latest report is available here.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies

Chair



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