

Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 (Senedd)

Meeting date: 13 January 2025

Meeting time: 13.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Private pre-meeting

(13.00–13.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.30)

2 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Budget 2025–2026

(13.30–15.00)

(Pages 1 – 87)

Jane Hutt, MS, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Amelia John, Director, Communities & Social Justice

Claire Germain, Deputy Director, Tackling Poverty & Supporting Families

Lorna Hall, Deputy Director, Equality & Human Rights, Welsh Government

Andrew Charles, Deputy Director, Cohesive Communities, Welsh Government

3 Papers to note

(15.00)

3.1 Correspondence from the Department for Work and Pensions regarding the Committee's inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap

(Pages 88 – 96)

3.2 Correspondence from the Chair of the Senedd's Cross Party Group on Human Rights to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip regarding advancing Human Rights in Wales

(Pages 97 – 98)



- 3.3 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair regarding Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence**
(Pages 99 – 101)
- 3.4 Correspondence from British Gas to the Equality and Social Justice Committee regarding further information concerning the follow- up inquiry into Fuel Poverty in Wales**
(Pages 102 – 106)
- 3.5 Correspondence from Tenovus Cancer Care to the Chair regarding the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions**
(Pages 107 – 108)
- 3.6 Correspondence between the Chair and the Ministry of Justice regarding speech, language and communication needs of young people**
(Pages 109 – 111)
- 3.7 Correspondence to the Chair from the Llywydd regarding the Chair's Forum decision on inter-parliamentary bodies**
(Pages 112 – 113)
- 3.8 Correspondence to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and the Constitution Committee from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip regarding the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement**
(Pages 114 – 115)
- 3.9 Correspondence to the Chair from Cardiff County Council regarding the Committee's inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap**
(Pages 116 – 119)
- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42(iv) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**
(15.00)

Private meeting (15.00–15.30)

**5 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Budget 2025–2026:
consideration of evidence (15.00 –15.30)**

Document is Restricted



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Draft Budget scrutiny 2025-26

13 January 2025

Evidence in respect of the budget allocations made through the Social Justice MEG; including evidence of how equality and social justice are driving priority-setting and budget allocations across Welsh Government.

Contents

1. Budget Overview.....	3
Previous recommendations of the Committee.....	5
2. Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units	7
3. Tackling poverty, cost of living and reducing inequality.....	8
4. Equality and Community Cohesion.....	11
5. Gypsy and Traveller sites	15
6. Female and youth justice.....	16
7. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	17
8. Advice Services	19
9. Third Sector.....	20
10. Preventative spending.....	21
11. Well-being of future generations.....	23

1. Budget Overview

This chapter provides an overview of allocations made through the 2025-26 Draft Budget to the Social Justice MEG.

1. I have taken decisive action to allocate my budgets in areas that will address inequalities and tackle poverty to support individuals and families across Wales who are most in need. Alongside the **£6.8m of additional revenue** funding received through the 2025-26 Draft Budget, I have also **repurposed a further £9.2m revenue** within my portfolio, allowing me to make **revenue allocations of £16m** in total. Allocations have been made in line with our many Programme for Government commitments which aim to address and reduce inequalities. Comparatively, these are small investments, but their impact will be far reaching and significant on the individuals who require support most.
2. In addition to these revenue allocations, a **further £3m capital** has been allocated to my portfolio, **increasing my capital budget by 20%** compared to the 2024-25 Restated Final Budget. A further **£750k has been repurposed** within the MEG which has allowed me to make substantial budget increases to both the Community Facilities Programme budget and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget. A further **£1.5m of Financial Transaction Capital** has also been allocated to my portfolio which will provide additional support to the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's Community Asset Loan Fund.
3. The table below provides high level information on changes made to the Social Justice MEG through the 2025-26 Draft Budget. A breakdown at BEL level is provided at Annex A. Annex B includes explanations at BEL level of changes made through the 2025-26 Draft Budget as well as the changes that were made as part of the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25. Changes made at the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25 were not baselined.
4. 2025-26 baseline adjustments will baseline allocations due to be made at the Second Supplementary Budget of 2024-25 to provide additional financial support to meet the impacts of the 2024-25 pay award and the additional costs as a result of the changes to the SCAPE discount rates which have impacted unfunded public sector pension schemes since the change was enacted in April 2024. A baseline adjustment has also been made to the Fuel Poverty budget to regularise a change required due to the portfolio restructure that took place earlier this year.

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Near Cash	133,354	-596	132,758	6,279	139,037	4,559	138,417
Non Cash	213	0	213	294	507	420	633
Resource	133,567	-596	132,971	6,573	139,544	4,979	139,050
Capital	14,540	0	14,540	3,350	17,890	128	14,668
FT Capital	-42	42	0	1,461	1,461	0	-42
Total Capital	14,498	42	14,540	4,811	19,351	128	14,626
Total	148,065	-554	147,511	11,384	158,895	5,107	153,676
AME	226	0	226	0	226	0	226

- Near cash budgets have increased by £6.3m as a result of this Draft Budget. This is the result of an allocation of £6.8m from reserves as well as the transfers in and out of the MEG to other areas, these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Non-cash budgets have increased by £0.3m as a result of changing requirements in year, again these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Capital budgets have increased by £3.35m as a result of the allocation from reserves of £3m as well as the transfer of £0.35m into the MEG from the Housing and Local Government MEG, these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Financial Transaction capital budgets have increased by £1.5m following the allocation of budgets from reserves; other smaller changes are due to profiled repayments on this loan capital. Again, these are detailed in Annex A and B.

How equality and social justice is driving priority setting

- Our Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) of the 2025-26 Draft Budget outlines the evidence which was considered and informed our decisions. The SIIA identifies key trends and reflects the strategic and cumulative impacts of decisions across a range of areas, including giving due consideration to the statutory requirements. This helped to reduce any disproportionate effect on any one specific group as well as identifying opportunities to maximise positive impacts to reduce inequalities across our society.
- The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units undertook a review of recent evidence (including the Wellbeing of Wales report, the National Survey for Wales and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to better understand who would be the most impacted by budgetary changes. It explored a range of key policy areas including poverty and socio-economic status, health, education, housing, employment and the environment. This involved drawing out where people who belonged to equality groups / those with protected characteristics had multiple intersecting characteristics that meant they would be more susceptible to negative impacts from cuts to certain services compared to people without multiple intersecting equality characteristics. This evidence underpinned Cabinet discussions and decisions when considering budget allocations and making spending decisions.
- Equality and social justice considerations are integral to the priorities the Government has set for the rest of this Senedd term. The priorities were shaped by the listening exercise carried out over the summer months and announced by the First Minister in September. The four key priority areas are:

- **lechyd da** – Cut NHS waiting times, including for mental health; better access to social care and improve services for women’s health.
- **Green jobs and growth** – Green jobs to make families better off, tackle the climate crisis and restore nature; accelerate planning decisions to grow our Welsh economy.
- **Opportunity for every family** – Boost standards in our schools and colleges; provide more homes for social rent.
- **Connecting communities** – Transform our railway and deliver a better bus network; fix our roads; local choice on 20mph.

12. These are existing policy areas. Delivery is ongoing and is being undertaken in accordance with the relevant statutory and impact assessment requirements.

Previous recommendations of the Committee

13. Your letter specifically requested an update in relation to recommendations 2, 4 and 7 of your 2024-25; the updates are set out below.

Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment

14. We have extended the engagement period for the review of the SIIA to ensure that we gain evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and now anticipate it will conclude in 2025. In addition to our ongoing discussions with the Welsh Government Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) we are engaging with other Governments including Iceland, Canada, Scotland and Northern Ireland to draw on experience and best practice from around the world. We have also engaged with key groups such as the Women’s Equality Network in Wales. Over the next few months, we will be accelerating this engagement and seeking wider views from across Wales before discussing emerging recommendations with BIIAG members.

Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group

15. We have continued to work with the BIIAG to further develop our approach to embedding prevention and preventative spending into the budget process. The BIIAG decided to establish a bespoke workstream to consider how it might apply to biodiversity and to test new approaches which could later be applied to other policy areas. The group are specifically exploring a biodiversity toolkit which has been developed and are considering the outcomes and learning that has taken place in using this tool. The group will continue this work stream over the coming months, and we hope will bring forward recommendations on how a whole budget approach to preventative activity could be effectively introduced. Further embedding of the preventative approach will also be key to the Welsh Spending Review work being undertaken.

Police Community Support Officers

16. Work is ongoing against the Committee's recommendation last year, and officials are working on a report which will bring together a review of the current literature on PCSOs and some high-level primary research with frontline policing staff. The approach has been developed with policing leads so it can be delivered in partnership.
17. Taking additional time for the work has supported this partnership approach and allowed us to ensure outcomes and findings are considered in more detail. I will ensure the Committee is sighted on the work, which is likely to be relatively high level, as soon as it is completed and ready to share.

2. Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units

Additional revenue of £0.3m has been allocated to the Data Units as part of the 2025-26 Draft Budget to meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.

Informing budget decisions

18. The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units provided a macro-level summary of the evidence on equality to highlight who would be the most impacted by spend in order to inform Cabinet decisions. This involved synthesising a range of available evidence in relation to the First Minister's four key priorities (a healthier Wales; green jobs and growth; opportunity for every family; and connecting communities). People belonging to equality groups with multiple intersecting characteristics are more likely to face negative impacts from budget decisions on certain policy areas and services compared to those without such characteristics. This evidence is shown in the Strategic Context of the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment of the 2025-26 Draft Budget.
19. The main role of the Evidence Units is developing the evidence base so others can consider and negate the equality impacts more effectively for their policy areas. The Evidence Units have produced several key pieces of evidence that are used in policy decisions and budget decisions as part of the macro-level evidence summary. For example, the analysis for the Well-Being of Wales 2024: More Equal Wales chapter, and the Census analysis on differences in outcomes such as health, education and economic status by equality characteristics. The development of measurement frameworks for the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the Disability Rights Taskforce will further enhance the available evidence.
20. Through this Draft Budget I have allocated an additional £0.3m to this budget to ensure the published workplan can be delivered and to allow the Units to fill evidence gaps and meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.
21. Key priorities for 2025-26 for the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units are to meet emerging evidence needs in the areas of
 - Cross-cutting: for example, measuring the impact of equality action plans, developing granular equality pay gaps, options for boosting the National Survey for Wales.
 - Disability: for example, barriers to employment for disabled people, incorporating the social model of disability into data collection.
 - Race: for example, lived experience research projects including one to, understanding Gypsy, Roma, Traveller evidence needs.
 - Equality: understanding needs around sex/gender data collection, developing advice and guidance for mainstreaming equalities data collection across government.

3. Tackling poverty, cost of living and reducing inequality

A key priority within my portfolio has been to use all levers available to reduce inequalities and tackle poverty supporting as many individuals and families as possible.

Tackling poverty

22. Despite the rate of price increases falling, lower income groups are likely to continue to struggle with the impact of higher price levels on their living standards. On average households in the bottom two income quintiles spend a greater proportion of their income on food, rent and energy. Through this Draft Budget I have made a number of allocations to tackle poverty.
23. The **Financial Inclusion** budget offers direct crisis support to individuals experiencing financial crisis with no other means of support. I have allocated an **additional £1m** to the **Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)**, increasing the financial inclusion budget in 2025-26 to just over £40m. Around 50% of the DAF applicants are now families with children and therefore the DAF is a key mechanism to help the most disadvantaged children in Wales alongside wider support through this portfolio and across Welsh Government. I have also allocated a further £120k revenue to the Financial Inclusion budget in 2025-26 to support research into financial exclusion in Wales. Access to this new evidence on the most disadvantaged, and therefore potentially vulnerable in society will enable design of better targeted interventions.
24. Through my **Supporting Communities** budget, I support the co-ordination of cross-government activity and enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the **root causes of poverty**. This funding is used to provide direct emergency support to the poorest in our communities and to help to tackle the drivers of poverty in the long term. This has included emergency food aid, funding to support individuals with the cost of energy, and funding to support the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy.
25. In this Draft Budget I have allocated a **further £2.5m** revenue from the wider £5m allocation to the Supporting Communities budget to fund Local Food Partnerships and to provide further support around **tackling food poverty**, enabling local projects to help tackle the root causes of food poverty. This will take the overall allocation delivering support for those experiencing food poverty across Wales for 2025-26 to nearly £4.5m (revenue and capital). This vital support facilitates community food organisations to purchase additional supplies of good quality food and essential goods, boosting their capacity to meet the needs of their customers. Funding also supports Local Food Partnerships and community organisations to deliver food related projects linked to the work of the local food partnerships, including those which help tackle the root causes of food poverty.
26. I have also allocated **£0.5m** revenue from the Supporting Communities budget to provide emergency fuel support through the Fuel Bank Foundation for those in **fuel poverty** and at risk of disconnection who have a prepayment meter or require off-grid support through our Heat Fund. Off- gas-grid households may receive help with bulk fuel purchase and heated throws can be distributed to disadvantaged people who need a safe and warm environment to get through the winter.

27. **£1.5m** of the additional revenue will be used to continue to support and expand the provisions of **Warm Hubs** in 2025-26, providing safe and warm places within local communities.
28. The **period dignity** budget also specifically targets the impacts of the costs of period products on those with low incomes and, again, this budget has been protected in full in 25-26 providing support to every school and college in Wales as well as being widely available across a range of community venues, including food banks and pantries, libraries, youth centres and community hubs.
29. Poverty is also associated with an increased risk of **domestic violence** and increases have also been made to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget which are described in chapter 7.
30. I have also allocated an **additional £1.4m** revenue to the **Digital Inclusion** budget in 2025-26 to restore the budget to support digital inclusion activity across Wales and fund the next phase of digital inclusion support, post the Digital Communities Wales (DCW) programme coming to an end next year. Support for digital inclusion will benefit the most disadvantaged in society and key sections of the population with additional challenges. Research by the Older Peoples Commissioner and the National Survey for Wales indicate that digital exclusion is higher within particular groups that already experience additional barriers in everyday life.

Child Poverty Strategy

31. In addition to the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment and the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group activity, scrutiny at Cabinet level has provided assurance that Child Poverty remains a key cross cutting theme throughout budget considerations and decision making. For example, in the Social Justice MEG through this Draft Budget I have allocated a further £1m revenue from the wider additional £5m allocation to the Supporting Communities budget to support the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy and to increase the funding available through the future Child Poverty Grant funding to facilitate more innovative provision of services.

Supporting households with cost of living pressures

32. The **Discretionary Assistance Fund** has been allocated an **additional £1m**, increasing the financial inclusion budget in 2025-26 to just over £40m. This crisis fund is a vital support mechanism for those with no other means of support. The DAF provides emergency cash payments and access to essential household goods to assist both in an immediate crisis and to assist in moving to a more settled way of life following a crisis. The DAF also includes access to help with off grid fuel payments – gas and oil – available throughout the year. Financial support for credit unions is included in the overall financial inclusion budget allocation and will be used to increase resilience of the sector and increase the range of services offered
33. Through the **Single Advice Fund**, I have put in place across Wales a framework of social welfare information and advice services that are accessible to people from our most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. In the last financial year 77% of people accessing a Single Advice Fund service came from a Welsh Government priority group including: people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, older people, carers of older people and low-income families with children.

34. As set out above, through the **Supporting Communities** budget, I support the co-ordination of cross-government activity and enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the root causes of poverty. This funding is used to provide direct emergency support to those who are poorest in our communities and to help to tackle the drivers of poverty in the long term. This has included emergency food aid, and funding to support individuals with the cost of energy.

Welsh Benefits Charter

35. The work on streamlining the administration of Welsh benefits will make it easier for people to access the financial support to which they are entitled.
36. A Streamlining Welsh Benefits Phase One route map outlining the high-level priorities and outputs that are expected to be achieved by April 2026 will be published in January 2025. This includes activities such as discovering and disseminating best practice, research, and communication, and I have allocated an additional £0.5m revenue in 2025-26 to support this work - ensuring these outputs can be met in a timely manner.

4. Equality and Community Cohesion

The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget has been increased by £0.7m through the 2025-26 Draft Budget; the Community Cohesion budget has also been increased by £0.9m¹.

37. The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget directly support the groups who face the greatest disadvantage and are often those most impacted by the current financial context. In 2025-26 these budgets have been protected in full, with key areas provided uplifts to recognise current inflationary pressures as far as possible. We know that people that are disabled, LGBTQ+ and/or from ethnic minority communities are more likely to experience hate crime, and along with people from lower income households are at greater risk of poor mental health and loneliness. The LGBTQ+ budgets directly support these communities and our Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) budgets also directly support work to tackle hate crime.
38. I have allocated an additional **£450k** to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget to support efforts to address and reduce inequalities and advance human rights. This funding will be used to target action aimed at tackling inequality and advancing human rights, reflecting the challenging context still felt by those with protected characteristics facing inequality and discrimination, and the third sector organisations that support them. This will help organisations to support delivery of our cross-government plans including the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and forthcoming disability rights plan. This is in addition to support for our partners working on Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights in the third sector with a budget uplift of 3%, alongside providing an additional £0.2m revenue to support work to break down barriers and improve access to service for those in the Deaf community.
39. **Migrants and sanctuary seekers, including Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, will often fall under one or more of these protected characteristics and are therefore more likely to benefit from our work to eliminate inequalities. The Cohesive Communities budget helps to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to equality and the Public Sector Equality Duty by providing support to migrants including people from Ukraine. In 2025-26, an additional £0.9m revenue will be allocated to support our Wales Sanctuary Service and the Cohesion Programme.
40. The **race and Gypsy Roma Traveller** revenue budget focusses on the protected characteristic of race, including Gypsy Roma Traveller communities. This budget will allow for delivery of the outstanding ArWAP actions. This will contribute positively to the Public Sector Equality Duties, positively impact communities who are economically disadvantaged and improve access to UNCRC rights for children, particularly of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community. This will support work to address housing inequalities for this group, one of the most disadvantaged in Wales. We have also maintained support for the capital sites budget at 2024-25 levels.

¹ Allocation of £0.9m has been made, however a transfer of £0.7m has also been made out of the BEL therefore the uplift will show as £0.2m in the BEL tables

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

- The draft budget supports the continued delivery of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) by prioritising resources to tackle systemic racism through a cross-government approach. This complements funding in other portfolios for the delivery of the cross-government actions contained in the refreshed ArWAP published in November 2024. Funding within the MEG includes initiatives such as support for community leadership development and increasing representation of ethnic minority people, particularly women, in public appointments and entry to the public service workforce.
- The External Accountability Group (EAG) continues to support the implementation of the plan, providing support and challenge, drawing on the EAG's expertise and lived experience.

Nation of Sanctuary

41. Allocations enable the continued pursuit of the Nation of Sanctuary vision. Commitments are contained within the Nation of Sanctuary chapter of the updated Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. £2.12m will be provided for a range of dedicated interventions, as outlined below, as well as investment through mainstream wider interventions to support the integration of sanctuary seekers.
42. The **Wales Sanctuary Service is increased to £0.9m** to ensure sanctuary seekers can provide advice and advocacy support on a pan-Wales basis. This support changes to the UK Government's asylum dispersal process and the need to ensure an equitable service across Wales.
43. I will also continue to allocate £0.7m funding for implementation of the Welcome Ticket and to facilitate internet access for asylum seekers living in Wales. Access to language tuition will continue to be facilitated through £0.4m for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Hubs.
44. We will continue to provide training for local authorities regarding those with No Recourse to Public Funds, as well as providing access to shelter and legal advice for those left without immigration status but a realistic prospect of obtaining it.
45. I will continue to allocate funding to support newly granted refugees to find alternative accommodation and register for key services during the move on phase. Funding will enable: increased capacity of immigration legal advice services for those most in need; continued provision of and updates to the Sanctuary website; support for the employability of refugees; and placing those with lived experience at the heart of our policy-making and decision-making.
46. We continue to support Ukrainians who come to Wales, as well as Ukrainians already in Wales under the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor route. Whilst maintaining £3.8m to support those arriving from Ukraine and to provide support for any increase in arrivals, we are reprioritising £1.2m from the Ukraine programme due to the reduced number of new arrivals alongside the success of our programme to move people on from their initial accommodation. By taking this action we can still deliver some of the key elements of the programme and continue to support Ukrainian people to move to longer term accommodation and integrate into their local communities. We continue to monitor arrivals from Ukraine under the Super Sponsor route following recent changes to the immigration rules, announced by the UK Government.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women

47. My budgets remain focused on how we can ensure human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled so that everyone in Wales can live with dignity, freedom, security, and without discrimination. This includes the actions being taken forward to incorporate both the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into Welsh law. As outlined in the letter to the committee on 8th November, this work is being taken forward by the independent Legislative Options Working Group (LOWG) which was established in September 2022 to advise the Welsh Government on next steps to progress recommendations 1 & 25 i.e. incorporation of international human rights treaties into Welsh law.
48. The LOWG has indicated the need to focus more broadly on viable recommendations to advance human rights in Wales. This is complex and detailed work, and I am actively considering the extent to which funding will be required in support of this work as this work evolves.

Disabled People's Equality

49. My budget will focus on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of our cross-Government forthcoming Disability Action Plan.
50. I will continue to fund Disability Wales to embed the Social Model of Disability within Welsh society, support disabled people in understanding and accessing their rights, and work with the Welsh Government to create more inclusive policies. This work supports the Government's commitment to a more equal Wales.
51. I will continue to ensure that all our stakeholder meetings and engagements are fully accessible by commissioning British Sign Language interpreters and captioners, among other measures to ensure full accessibility.

LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

52. This budget will focus on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of our LGBTQ+ Action Plan. We are supporting research that will address the data gaps in relation to LGBTQ+ lives. Ensuring that our plan is robustly evaluated in relation to its aims and objectives will be key to measuring the impact of the plan on the quality of LGBTQ+ lives of all ages in Wales. It will take an intersectional approach to ensuring LGBTQ+ people thrive in all aspects of their lives, including education, sport, work and public life.
53. I will continue to fund Stonewall Cymru to advance the human rights of LGBTQ+ people in all areas of Welsh life. This work supports the Government's commitment to a more equal Wales.

Community Cohesion

54. The allocations I have made in this Draft Budget will enable the enhancement of our Community Cohesion Programme by retaining the grassroots small grants fund we initiated in 2024-25 and increasing funding. A total of £1.6m would be allocated to the Programme delivery across Wales via the eight regions.

55. I have also allocated **£0.3m** to continue and enhance the **Hate Hurts Wales** campaign to address hate and encourage victim reporting. The Wales Hate Support Centre will be allocated £0.47m extended for 2025-2027 with an increased budget to address inflationary pressures.
56. I have also allocated a further **£0.35m** to support us in commemorating key events which demonstrate common humanity (such as Holocaust Memorial Day, Holodomor and Refugee Week) to combat hate through innovative approaches, and to support community recovery which fosters good relations.
57. Wider allocations relating to those with protected characteristics, as reflected elsewhere in this briefing, also supports our community cohesion work. Other mainstreamed work funded by teams across Welsh Government also aims to build cohesive communities and a globally responsible Wales.

5. Gypsy and Traveller sites

I am pleased with the progress made during the 2024-25 financial year; we now have a strong pipeline of approved projects to deliver outcomes over the next few financial years.

58. To improve the quality of public Local Authority run sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, £3.44 million was made available for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant in 2024-25. This funding allocated to these projects will support Local Authorities to meet the need identified in their GTAAs, providing sites and pitches within a safe and secure environment whilst improving accessibility, energy efficiency, digital inclusion and improving well-being in the community for residents. In total, we have made 19 awards totalling £4.62m, to 10 Local Authorities. Some bids are multi-years to enable Local Authorities meet their accommodation needs.
59. To complement this grant funding, my officials have invited local authorities with a local authority run site to submit applications for small capital bids. This scheme will be for small projects that can be delivered in this financial year, with a cap of up to £50,000.
60. Local authorities are expected to utilise the capital funding available for 2024-25 to address Gypsy, and Traveller needs as identified by local authority GTAAs. This year, officials have extended the criteria for bids to include land acquisition, which will help local authorities to develop new pitches. All applications are expected to explain how the development will align with the Welsh Government's 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites' guidance.
61. As of November 2024, we have made 19 awards totalling £1.50m, to 10 local authorities. To attempt to fully utilise the 2024-25 budget, officials are running small capital grants scheme aimed at local authority run Gypsy and Traveller sites inviting small project bids, with a cap of up to £50,000. Bids of £0.74m are currently being assessed.
62. The budget for 2025-26 will remain at the same level as 2024-25 (£3.44m). Some bids received in 2024-25 have been multi-year bids and to date we have committed £2.49m in 2025-26 and £623k in 2026-27. My officials will continue to work with local authorities to fully commit these budgets over the next few years.

6. Female and youth justice

I am pleased to allocate an additional £0.2 to the Female and Youth Justice Blueprints budget in 2025-26.

63. This additional funding will help to address some of the most intractable and complex issues with the youth justice system, building on the existing achievements of the Women's Justice and Youth Justice Blueprints. It will also support research activity to help us understand the impact of the Blueprints, building on the Evaluability Assessment published in October 2022.
64. The budget will also continue to support funding for:
- The One Wales scheme, providing trauma-informed support to women and young people in contact with the justice system across Wales to help them access help and transform their lives. This includes holistic, gender-informed one-on-one support for women.
 - The Visiting Mum service, which helps children in Wales visit their mothers in custody in prison and which is delivered through the One Wales scheme.
 - An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor role for Welsh women in custody, recognising the prevalence of women in prison who are victims and survivors of VAWDASV.
 - Our membership contribution to the Wales Safer Communities Network, the strategic voice that champions and connects everyone involved in community safety in Wales so they can create safer communities.
 - Resourcing to continue improvement activity for the women's justice and youth justice system, delivered through the Youth Justice Board, HM Prison and Probation Service in Wales and internally within Welsh Government.
 - Contributions to the work of Integrated Offender Management Cymru and the Criminal Justice Board for Wales.

Women's Centres

65. The One Wales scheme, which the Welsh Government jointly fund and commission with criminal justice partners, supports a network of non-residential women's centres across Wales. As well as direct provision of services for women throughout their justice journey, these centres provide support with clothing, food and toiletries to all who need them.
66. Additionally, and as set out above, the budget will continue to fund resource in the Youth Justice Board, HM Prison and Probation Service and Welsh Government to take forward improvement work on youth justice and women's justice in Wales. This work will focus on the areas where we can work together to make the greatest additional impact on the lives of children and women in Wales. We are developing plans with partners to set out the full detail of this improvement work, which will build on the existing work and achievements delivered under the Blueprints and include continuing to work with the UK Government on a pilot Residential Women's Centre.

7. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

I am pleased to allocate an additional £1.3m revenue and £0.9m capital to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget in 2025-26. This will help to improve the support to victims of serious sexual and domestic violence and to increase levels of funding available for early intervention and preventative activities.

67. Through this budget I have made an additional allocation of **£0.5m** to support the delivery of Objective 6 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26 to provide all victims with equal access to appropriate resources, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales. This funding will be allocated through the existing Regional Grant Funding process to support the delivery of victim and survivor support and address pressures faced in year. This additional allocation will allow greater flexibility for regions, which may include additional financial support for regions to maintain existing levels of provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs). This uplift will allow more flexibility to regions through our core grant funding arrangements to supplement the existing arrangements for IDVAs and ISVAs. It will also allow critical services who have extensive waiting lists of survivors waiting support to access that support much sooner and in a more individually tailored way that is currently available. It will also allow regions to be more innovative in their approach to tackling VAWDASV including commissioning new ways of working through pilot schemes and promoting new initiatives, for example, in their responses to stalking, or low risk of harm interventions.
68. I have also made an additional allocation of **£0.7m** for further support to deliver Objective 4 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 to make early intervention and prevention a priority. This funding will include piloting a helpline for engaging boys and men building on the learning and recommendations from the successful Sound campaign. The Sound campaign, which has worked with men and boys across Wales in the past 18 months has identified a gap in service provision for those men and boys who want to seek support in respect of their relationship difficulties. We have seen a huge response on social media to asking men to join in the solution to tackling violence against women, but this has some way to go. One recommendation from the evaluation conducted in September 2024, shows that there is a need across Wales for a support service, which could be either a telephone helpline, or an online 'chat-bot' support service which will allow 24-7 advice and support to be offered to those who most need it. This additional £0.7 million will enable the development of such a scheme to be piloted and evaluated.
69. This additional funding will also support work on stalking in response to the findings of the super complaint and continued work to address the data gaps that exists on VAWDASV across Wales. This will enable us to work in partnership with UK Government and Policing in Wales to develop better data and robust information in respect of VAWDASV across the whole sector, including specialist services, health, education policing and many more. It will help provide better evidence for regional needs assessments and strategies under the VAWDASV Act; it will enable Wales to effectively monitor and measure the extent of VAWDASV across Wales including national indicators and emerging trends and acute concerns that need a rapid response.

70. In addition to these revenue allocations, I have also uplifted the **VAWDASV Capital Grants** scheme by **£0.9m** in 2025-26. This grant scheme provides small and large grants to support the delivery of the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26. This includes funding of properties, refurbishment, service improvement, victim safety projects and improving and upgrading service- user spaces and equipment. The additional allocation will provide additional headroom for projects where the cost of properties has increased, enabling VAWDASV services and organisations to develop and provide better facilities for survivors, and address the needs of disabled people and neurodivergent people.

8. Advice Services

As part of this Draft Budget I have been pleased to make additional revenue allocations of £2.7m to the Advice Services budget to increase funding available to the Single Advice Fund and to support work on streamlining Welsh benefits which are also described above.

Advice and support services budget

71. Through the Single Advice Fund, we have put in place across Wales a framework of social welfare information and advice services that are accessible to people from our most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. In the last financial year 77% of people accessing a Single Advice Fund service came from a Welsh Government priority group including: people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, older people, carers of older people and low-income families with children.
72. Income maximisation is a key activity delivered through the Single Advice Fund and we know the services are making a real difference. Between January 2020 and September 2024, services helped people to claim additional income of £160 million and have debts totalling £38.5million written off.
73. I have protected this £12m revenue budget in 2025-26 and alongside the additional £1.9m from the share of the Debt Levy this will enable us to continue to invest in information and advice services. Our offer of three-year grant funding awards for providers to deliver the Single Advice Fund services from April 2025 is a clear demonstration of our ongoing commitment to the provision of information and advice services.

EU Settlement Scheme

74. Since 2019 the Welsh Government has provided nearly £3 million worth of funding to support EU citizens, in Wales, with applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to ensure they maintain their legal right to remain in Wales post Brexit and continue to access the services and rights that that residency entitles them to. Since 2019, this funding has complemented the funding provided by the UK Government to support collective efforts in this area.
75. The Welsh Government recognises that necessary support services must remain in place for EU citizens applying to the EU Settlement Scheme and over coming weeks we will be working closely with partners, members of the EU Citizens Forum and the UK Government to consider what those services look like over the next financial year and subsequent years. We have budgeted £150k for 2025-26.

9. Third Sector

An additional £2m revenue and £2.9m capital will be provided to support Third Sector activity across Wales recognising and valuing the role the Third sector organisations and volunteers play in supporting our communities thrive and improve Wales' well-being.

76. To acknowledge the valued support of our partners in the third sector and recognising their role in tackling inequality and poverty, and supporting those with protected characteristics facing inequality and discrimination, I have provided a 3% uplift to all of our third sector grants in 2025-26 at a cost of **£1m** revenue across various budgets in the Social Justice MEG to attempt to alleviate their budget pressures.
77. In recognition of the important role both the third sector infrastructure and volunteering play in supporting communities in Wales and in delivering on government priorities I am also providing a **further £1m** revenue to the Volunteering Wales Grant to promote and improve volunteering in Wales and to provide an uplift to the funding to Third Sector Support Wales.
78. As part of this targeted provision of support for the Third Sector, I have also allocated an additional **£2.9m** capital to the **Community Facilities Programme**, increasing the baseline budget to £10m. This will allow more projects that support the purchase and improvement of essential community facilities across Wales. The focus of the programme is on increasing opportunity and developing resilient communities where people are engaged and empowered, and projects that can demonstrate community involvement and benefit, collaboration, tackling inequality and the climate and nature emergencies are supported. To build on the success of the **Community Asset Loan Fund**, I have also allocated an additional **£1.5m** in Financial Transaction Loan capital in 2025-26. This funding for some organisations can be used to complement our Community Facilities Programme which is seeing an increased demand.

10. Preventative spending

I am committed to supporting preventative measures as far as possible.

Preventative approach to spending

79. I recognise the on-going need to make hard choices. The continuing pressure on public finances and on the level of funding available to this MEG, more specifically, mean we are under no illusions on the challenges we face.
80. These budget proposals reflect my continuing commitment to protect and prioritise investment that supports preventative measures as far as possible. The spending decisions have not only considered how best to meet the current demand for services but have also focused on supporting interventions that are able to prevent problems arising in the future. This preventative approach is an important part of our planning for public services, both now and in the future.
81. From the outset of my Budget preparations, I have focused on how best to meet the growing needs of key service areas within the MEG in the face of another challenging budget. Over successive years, prioritising preventative spending has been a way of avoiding more costly interventions at a future point and improving the quality of people's lives over the long term.

Balancing preventative spending and spending to meet immediate needs

82. Support for those experiencing food poverty across Wales at almost £4.5m (revenue and capital) facilitates community food organisations to purchase additional supplies of good quality food and essential goods, boosting their capacity to meet the needs of their customers. However, the funding allocation also supports Local Food Partnerships and community organisations to deliver food related projects tackling the root causes of food poverty – balancing the need to provide immediate support with a focus on enabling longer term preventative action.
83. If left unresolved social welfare problems can push people into poverty, act as a barrier to employment, result in homelessness and negatively affect physical and mental health. It is important therefore that people get the social welfare advice they need as soon as possible. The Single Advice Fund has proven effective at reaching people earlier, with more than half of the people accessing services in the last financial year doing so before they are in a crisis situation.
84. Where someone finds themselves in crisis the **Discretionary Assistance Fund** continues to provide a vital support mechanism to those with no other means of support – and we have allocated an additional £1m which will enable us to continue to provide emergency support to those most in need.
85. The **One Wales Scheme** supported by the **Female and youth justice budget** is jointly funded and commissioned with criminal justice partners with the aim of preventing women and young adults coming into contact with the justice system, as well as providing support to women and young adults in contact with the criminal justice system to prevent reoffending. The scheme aims to address the underlying drivers of offending behaviour,

empowering people to live successful, crime-free lives and prevent the damage that arises to people and communities through criminal behaviour.

86. The prioritisation of early intervention and prevention is embedded across our **VAWDASV** National strategy and Blueprint workstreams. The strategy commits to maintaining a focus on survivor support and services, whilst at the same time shifting from symptom to cause through a public health approach. We supported the conclusions of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report published in January 2024 on How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence that a public health approach is needed to tackle the causes as well as the effects of gender-based violence. Specific preventative action across the workstreams includes our 'Sound' campaign. The campaign engaged with men and boys between the ages of 18 to 34 across Wales to play a part in supporting early intervention and prevention of violence amongst women and girls. As set out in section 4, I have also made an additional allocation of **£0.7m** for further support to deliver Objective 4 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 to make early intervention and prevention a priority which includes building on the successful Sound campaign.

11. Well-being of future generations

Next March will mark ten years since the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was passed into law, and the anniversary will be marked throughout 2025-26. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in the last ten years and to commit to the next phase of work to build on our progress.

Future Generations Commissioner

87. Prior to the publication of Welsh Government's budget, the Commissioner is required to submit a statutory estimate of their funding requirements for the next financial year. The Commissioner's request is based on the 2024-25 baseline budget, plus an additional £17,500 to recognise the impact of the better-than-expected pay award for 2024-25. This revised baseline will be increased by 3% to allow for inflation and pay awards in 2025-26 which results in a total of £1,676,325 for 2025-26. This budget fulfils this request, which will ensure that the Commissioner will be able to fulfil their planned activity for the year ahead.

How the Well-being of Future Generations Act has influenced budget allocations

88. The Welsh Government continues to seek improved ways of embedding the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the budget process. More information about these changes can be found in Action 2.10 in the [Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan Progress Update](#) published in May 2024 and the [Budget Improvement Plan 2024-2025](#).

89. The Budget Improvement Plan sets out short- and medium-term ambitions over the next five years, to improve the budget process using the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the five ways of working to drive continuous improvement. We have committed to publishing the Plan annually, to recognise the ongoing nature of driving and sustaining longer term change. Our overall aim is to demonstrate how the Act has influenced budget decisions.

90. We continue to develop the [Chief Economist's report](#) to provide a fuller account of Welsh economic developments and prospects and complement the [Well-being of Wales Report](#). We have expanded coverage of fiscal issues and prospects within the Chief Economist's report and continue to advise on the application of Green Book principles in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

91. To support us in this we continue to work in partnership with the [Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group \(BIAG\)](#) which advises Welsh Government from an equalities and inclusion perspective. The aim of this group is to engage and stimulate improvements to our budget and tax processes, in turn supporting the delivery of the Budget Improvement Plan. Welsh Treasury officials have worked with officials in the Future Generations Commissioner's office to consider how we can more clearly reflect how the five ways of working as a central part of our decision making in the future and will be taking the range of evidence provided in the Well-being of Wales report 2024 into consideration in developing this draft Budget.

92. All Cabinet Secretaries are committed to using the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act to improve how we make decisions about the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Our goal is to embed the sustainable development principle and our spending plans aim to achieve a balance between short- and long-term priorities.
93. We recognise the need to collaborate with our partners and to use our collective resources effectively to plan for the tough choices ahead.
94. Our work on **VAWDASV** is a clear example of how a WFG approach supports and enables a more sustainable approach to tackling generational challenges. The UN Sustainable Development Goals which Wales' Well-being Goals contribute to include a specific goal and target to eliminate violence against women and girls. Our work to tackle VAWDASV in Wales, underpinned by the VAWDASV Act continues to be a clear demonstration of the five ways of working in the sustainable development principle. In this budget we are increasing funding for early intervention and *prevention*,; continuing to support *collaboration* through the Blueprint which includes a survivor panel that *involves* survivors into decision making; *integrates* the work of Local Authorities and Local Health Boards through their respective duties in the VAWDASV Act; and increases funding to develop better data, including *future* trends to support better decision making to tackle VAWDASV across Wales.
95. More broadly, all of our **equality and tackling poverty** work embeds the five ways of working and take a long-term and preventative approach to what is often intergenerational inequity. For example, the Anti-racist Action Plan has the long-term goal of an anti-racist Wales by 2030, with prevention reflected in actions such as the DARPL approach in education and childcare. The plan was developed through involvement and co-production, with lived experience central to its development and delivery. This co-productive approach was taken in the Disability Rights Taskforce and development of the forthcoming disability action plan. A cross-government and integrated approach underpins the ArWAP, as the LBTQ+ Action Plan, with collaboration across the public sector integral to their delivery.
96. I recognise the importance and role **community assets** play in ensuring we have safe, connected and resilient communities. This is why working in partnership with the third sector we have developed the Community Asset Loan Fund, which offers loans over a maximum term of 25 years to third sector organisations seeking to take ownership of community assets such as land or buildings. In doing so we are helping to protect the community infrastructure which plays a critical role when responding to natural disasters, such as the recent floods, but also ensuring they are there for future generations.

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Near Cash	133,354	-596	132,758	6,279	139,037	4,559	138,417
Non Cash	213	0	213	294	507	420	633
Resource	133,567	-596	132,971	6,573	139,544	4,979	139,050
Capital	14,540	0	14,540	3,350	17,890	128	14,668
FT Capital	-42	42	0	1,461	1,461	0	-42
Total Capital	14,498	42	14,540	4,811	19,351	128	14,626
Total	148,065	-554	147,511	11,384	158,895	5,107	153,676
AME	226	0	226	0	226	0	226

SOCIAL JUSTICE								
Budget Expenditure Line	Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26					Changes at First Supplementary Budget 2024-25		
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 **not baselined**	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget	
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)	
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Basic Income	10,700	2	10,702	-9,200	1,502	0	10,700	
Financial Inclusion	39,002	5	39,007	1,133	40,140	0	39,002	
Digital Inclusion	750	3	753	1,375	2,128	1,500	2,250	
Supporting Communities	2,664	57	2,721	5,029	7,750	480	3,144	
Action: Total Supporting Communities	53,116	67	53,183	-1,663	51,520	1,980	55,096	
Older People Commissioner	1,616	34	1,650	48	1,698	-14	1,602	
Children's Commissioner	1,591	37	1,628	98	1,726	-29	1,562	
Public Appointments	152	0	152	0	152	0	152	
Future Generations Commissioner Wales	1,610	32	1,642	48	1,690	0	1,610	
Public Services Boards	530	0	530	105	635	0	530	
Action: Total Commissioners	5,499	103	5,602	299	5,901	-43	5,456	
Citizen Voice Body	7,603	231	7,834	228	8,062	-243	7,360	
Action: Total Citizen Voice Body	7,603	231	7,834	228	8,062	-243	7,360	
Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	7,913	10	7,923	1,280	9,203	139	8,052	
Action: Total Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	7,913	10	7,923	1,280	9,203	139	8,052	
Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	9,773	72	9,845	700	10,545	0	9,773	
Cohesive Communities	9,210	124	9,334	231	9,565	2,590	12,304	
Equalities, Poverty and Children's Evidence & Support	1,636	50	1,686	312	1,998	0	1,636	
Action: Total Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	20,619	246	20,865	1,243	22,108	2,590	23,713	
Advice Services	11,675	0	11,675	2,737	14,412	1,391	13,066	
Action: Total Advice Services	11,675	0	11,675	2,737	14,412	1,391	13,066	
Support for the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering	8,454	0	8,454	1,440	9,894	0	8,454	
Action: Total Support for the Voluntary Sector and Volunteering	8,454	0	8,454	1,440	9,894	0	8,454	
Community Support and Safety	15,488	0	15,488	515	16,003	0	15,488	
Action: Total Community Support and Safety	15,488	0	15,488	515	16,003	0	15,488	
Women's Justice & Youth Justice Blueprints	1,092	2	1,094	200	1,294	0	1,092	
Action: Total Women's Justice & Youth Justice Prints	1,092	2	1,094	200	1,294	0	1,092	
Fuel Poverty	1,895	-1,255	640	0	640	-1,255	640	
Action: Total Fuel Poverty Programme	1,895	-1,255	640	0	640	-1,255	640	
TOTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEG	133,354	-596	132,758	6,279	139,037	4,559	138,417	

*2025-26 Baseline Adjustments relate to allocations made during 2024-25 in respect of the public sector pay award and to meet the costs associated with the change in SCAPE discount rate which impacted unfunded public sector pensions.

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
Budget Expenditure Line	Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26					Changes at First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 **not baselined**	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Digital Inclusion - Non-cash	149	0	149	-124	25	0	149
Action: Total Supporting Communities	149	0	149	-124	25	0	149
Older People Commissioner - Non-cash	9	0	9	43	52	43	52
Children's Commissioner - Non cash	52	0	52	0	52	0	52
Future Generations Commissioner Wales - Non-cash	0	0	0	10	10	10	10
Action: Total Commissioners	61	0	61	53	114	53	114
Citizen Voice Body - Non-cash	0	0	0	367	367	367	367
Action: Total Citizen Voice Body	0	0	0	367	367	367	367
Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights - Non cash	3	0	3	-2	1	0	3
Action: Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights	3	0	3	-2	1	0	3
TOTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEG	213	0	213	294	507	420	633

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
Budget Expenditure Line	Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26					Changes at First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Financial Inclusion	80	0	80	-80	0	0	80
Community Bank	50	0	50	-50	0	-10	40
Digital Inclusion	50	0	50	0	50	0	50
Supporting Communities	1,300	0	1,300	0	1,300	0	1,300
Action: Total Supporting Communities	1,480	0	1,480	-130	1,350	-10	1,470
Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	2,200	0	2,200	900	3,100	0	2,200
Action: Total Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence	2,200	0	2,200	900	3,100	0	2,200
Gypsy Traveller Sites	3,440	0	3,440	0	3,440	0	3,440
Action; Total Gypsy Traveller Sites	3,440	0	3,440	0	3,440	0	3,440
Older People Commissioner	100	0	100	-100	0	0	100
Children's Commissioner	20	0	20	-20	0	-20	0
Future Generations Commissioner Wales	0	0	0	0	0	30	30
Action: Total Commissioners	120	0	120	-120	0	10	130
Citizen Advice Body	0	0	0	0	0	128	128
Action: Citizen Advice Body	0	0	0	0	0	128	128
Women's Justice & Youth Justice Blueprints	200	0	200	-200	0	0	200
Action: Total Women's Justice adn Youth Justice Prints	200	0	200	-200	0	0	200
Community Facilities Programme	7,100	0	7,100	2,900	10,000	0	7,100
Action: Total Community Facilities	7,100	0	7,100	2,900	10,000	0	7,100
TOTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEG	14,540	0	14,540	3,350	17,890	128	14,668

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
Budget Expenditure Line	Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26					Changes at First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Financial Inclusion - Reapayments	-42	42	0	-39	-39	0	-42
Community Facilities Programme	0	0	0	1,500	1,500	0	0
Action: Total Supporting Communities	-42	42	0	1,461	1,461	0	-42
TOTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEG	-42	42	0	1,461	1,461	0	-42

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Budget Expenditure Line	Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26					Changes at First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Bad Debt Provision - AME	226	0	226	0	226	0	226
Action: Total Bad Debt Provision	226	0	226	0	226	0	226
TOTAL SOCIAL JUSTICE MEG	226	0	226	0	226	0	226

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

This Annex provides an explanation of:

- changes made between the 2024-25 Final Budget (Restated in September 2024) and the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25 published in October 2004. These changes do not form part of the baseline for the purposes of the 2025-26 Draft Budget. The tables below provide some narrative around the allocations made at the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25.
- changes made between the 2024-25 Final Budget (Restated in September 2024) and the Draft Budget for 2025-26. These include two types of changes:
 1. **baseline adjustments** made to the 2024-25 Final Budget (restated). These are predominantly due to allocations made in respect of the 2024-25 pay award and to meet the costs associated with the change in the SCAPE discount rate which impacts unfunded public sector pensions. A baseline adjustment as also been made to the Fuel Poverty BEL to transfer £1.255m to the Housing and Local Government MEG. This is a correction to budgets following the portfolio changes that took place earlier in the year.
 2. **Draft Budget allocations and transfers**; the descriptions of which are set out in the tables below.

Near-Cash

BEL	1089: Basic Income
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	The budget has been reduced by £9.2m from a baselined budget of £10.7m. Only £1.5m is required in 2025-26 to continue to make final payments to recipients of the Basic Income and to undertake an evaluation of the pilot.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	1694: Financial Inclusion
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	<p>Additional funding provided £1.33m An allocation of £1m to provide additional funding for the Discretionary Assistance Fund to provide emergency support to those most in need and respond to potential increased demand during 2025-26.</p> <p>An allocation of £120k to fund Wales specific financial inclusion research to understand Welsh focussed characteristics / trends and cross cutting areas with digital inclusion.</p> <p>£13k is allocated to provide an uplift of 3% to Credit Unions in line with uplifts to stakeholders in the public sector.</p>

BEL	1084: Digital Inclusion
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	<p>Two transfers totalling £1.5m; both non-recurrent with no impact on the budget baseline.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A transfer in of £500k from the Healthier Wales BEL (H&SC MEG) to support the Digital Communities Wales programme. 2. A transfer in of £1m from Reserves to support the Digital Communities Wales programme.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	<p>Additional funding provided £1.375m An allocation of £1.375m will increase total funding in 25-26 to £2.125m for the Digital Communities Wales programme (in line with 24-25 levels post one-off transfers).</p>

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	1086: Supporting Communities
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer in of £480k from Reserves to continue to support the Local Food Partnerships in Wales. Funding was non-recurrent. It did not impact the budget baseline.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	<p>Additional funding provided £5.029m</p> <p>An allocation of £960k to support Local Food Partnerships.</p> <p>An allocation of £450k in relation to the Future Child Poverty grant funding. The additional allocation will bolster the existing funding of £1m.</p> <p>An allocation of £250k in relation to the National Child Poverty Strategy Community of Practice.</p> <p>An allocation of £295k to ensure progress monitoring on the Child Poverty Strategy is contributed to and influenced by those with lived experience.</p> <p>£1.5m to support Warm Hubs in 2025-26 to enable them to continue to support and expand the provision of safe and warm places within local communities.</p> <p>£1.5m for further support around tackling food poverty, enabling local projects to help tackle the root causes of food poverty.</p> <p>A budget uplift of 3% in line with that provided to the public sector bodies will provide an uplift of £74k to uplift allocations to the Fuel Bank Foundation and the WLGA and Food Sense Wales to deliver the Food Poverty programme.</p>
BEL	662: Older People's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Budget reduction of -£14k which was non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. The transfer to reserves was due to adjustments as a result of the reclassification of budgets associated with the implementation of the new accounting standard for leases, IFRS 16, which was adopted by the public sector from 1 April 2022.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A budget uplift of 3% (£48k)

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	480: Children's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Budget reduction of -£29k which was non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. The transfer to reserves was due to adjustments as a result of the reclassification of budgets associated with the implementation of the new accounting standard for leases, IFRS 16, which was adopted by the public sector from 1 April 2022.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Additional funding provided £98k A budget uplift of 3% (£48k). Further allocation of £50k (one-off) to support the Commissioner's participation as a core participant in the module on Children and Young People in the Covid Inquiry.

BEL	470: Public Appointments
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	None

BEL	6400: Future Generation's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A budget uplift of 3% (£48k)

BEL	1575: Public Service Boards
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Transfer in of £105k from the Housing & Local Government MEG (BEL 887) as part of the MEG restructures to cover staff costs.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	220: Citizens Voice Body
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Budget reduction of -£243k which was non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. The transfer to reserves was due to adjustments as a result of the reclassification of budgets associated with the implementation of the new accounting standard for leases, IFRS 16, which was adopted by the public sector from 1 April 2022.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A budget uplift of 3% (£228k)

BEL	541: VAWDASV
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer in of £139k from the Homelessness BEL (H&LG MEG) to support the continued delivery of the Refugee Well Housing project in 2024-25. Budget transfer was non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Budget increased by £1.280m An additional allocation of £500k to support the delivery of Objective 6 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26 to <i>provide all victims with equal access to appropriate resources, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales.</i> An allocation of £700k for further support to deliver Objective 4 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 to <i>Make early intervention and prevention a priority.</i> A budget uplift of 3% in line with that provided to the public sector bodies will provide an uplift of £80k to this BEL to uplift allocations to partners in the Third Sector.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	7060: Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	<p>Additional budget allocations of £700k</p> <p>An allocation of £450k to target action aimed and tackling inequality and advancing human rights, reflecting the challenging context still felt by those with protected characteristics facing inequality and discrimination and the third sector organisations that support them. This will help organisations to support delivery of our cross-government plans including the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and forthcoming disability rights plan.</p> <p>An allocation of £200k to support work to break down barriers for the deaf community improving access to services.</p> <p>A budget uplift of 3% in line with that provided to the public sector bodies will provide an uplift of £50k to uplift allocations to organisations like Stonewall Cymru, Disability Wales, Women's Equality Network Wales and Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales.</p>

BEL	7062: Cohesive Communities
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	<p>Budget uplifts totalling £3.094m that were non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline.</p> <p>A transfer in of £304k from the Homelessness BEL (H&LG MEG) to support the continued delivery of the Street Life projects in 2024-25.</p> <p>A transfer in of £200k from the Post-16 Provision BEL 4763 (Education MEG) to strengthen and expand delivery of REACH+, set up to reduce waiting times for migrants to access ESOL provision.</p> <p>A transfer in of £2.59m from Reserves to fund local authorities to provide move on, settlement and integration support to our Ukrainian arrivals in 24-25.</p>
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	<p>Budget uplift totalling £231k</p> <p>An allocation of £870k to increase activity under the Wales Sanctuary Service which helps Asylum Seekers understand their rights, the Cohesion Programme; and provide new funding for the Talent Beyond Boundaries programme which supports refugees to migrate for work with dignity and purpose and benefit from skilled migration.</p>

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	7062: Cohesive Communities
	A budget uplift of 3% in line with that provided to the public sector bodies will provide an uplift of £61k to uplift allocations to partners in the Third Sector. Transfer out of the MEG of -£700k to the Housing and Local Government MEG; representing staff costs working on the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme. Staff are now part of the Housing Directorate.
BEL	7063: Equality, Poverty & Children's Evidence & Support
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Budget uplift totalling £312k to meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.
BEL	5334: Advice Services
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Budget uplifts totalling £1.391m which were non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. A transfer in of £1.291m from Reserves in relation to the WG share of the annual UK financial levy for provision of debt advice in Wales in 24-25. A transfer in of £0.1m from Reserves to fund the Welsh Government's Cost of Living campaign, Here to Help.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Budget uplifts totalling £2.73m Specific ring-fenced allocation of £1.874m from the UK Government from the Debt Levy. £0.5m to support the work on streamlining Welsh benefits. A budget uplift of 3% in line with that provided to the public sector bodies will provide an uplift of £363k to uplift allocations to third sector organisations including Shelter.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	1695: Support for the Voluntary Sector
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Budget uplifts totalling £1.44m to support third sector infrastructure and volunteering and to provide a budget uplift of 3% to partners in the third sector in line with that provided to the public sector bodies.

BEL	830: Community Support and Safety
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Totalling £515k A one-off, non-recurrent allocation of £50k to undertake an evaluation of Police Community Support Officers. A budget uplift of 3% in line with other public sector bodies (£465k).

BEL	1267: Women's Justice & Youth Justice Blueprints
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	None
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Additional funding to expand work on Youth and Women's Justice Blueprints £200k to address some of the most intractable and complex issues with the youth justice system and to better support vulnerable children away from crime.

BEL	1270: Fuel Poverty
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer out of -£1.255m to the Housing and Local Government MEG in relation to the MEG re-structure. Non-recurrent. This transfer was baselined by through a baseline adjustment.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	None

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

Non-Cash

BEL	1084: Digital Inclusion
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer to reserves of -£124k due to a reduction in non-cash required.

BEL	662: Older People's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Total transfers in of £43k that were non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. A transfer from reserves of £16k due to adjustments as a result of the reclassification of budgets associated with the implementation of the new accounting standard for leases, IFRS 16, which was adopted by the public sector from 1 April 2022. A transfer from reserves of £27k to provide non-cash cover (non IFRS16) in 2024-25.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Repeated transfers as above of £43k due to non-recurrent nature of transfers at the First Supplementary budget.

BEL	6400: Future Generations Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer from reserves of £10k to provide non-cash cover (non IFRS16) in 2024-25.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer from reserves of £10k to provide non-cash cover (non IFRS16) in 2024-25.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	220: Citizens Voice Body
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Total transfers of £367k that were non-recurrent and did not impact the budget baseline. A transfer from reserves of £242k due to adjustments as a result of the reclassification of budgets associated with the implementation of the new accounting standard for leases, IFRS 16, which was adopted by the public sector from 1 April 2022. A transfer from reserves of £125k to provide non-cash cover (non IFRS16) in 2024-25.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Transfers of £367k as set out above due to non-recurrent nature of transfers at the First Supplementary budget.

BEL	7060: Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer to reserves of -£2k due to a reduction in non-cash required.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

Capital

BEL	1694: Financial Inclusion
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer within the MEG to repurpose -£80k provided at the 24-25 Draft Budget on a one-off non-recurrent basis.

BEL	1088: Community Bank
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer of -£10k to the Future Generation Commissioner BEL 6400 to redesign the Future Generations Commissioner's website.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer within the MEG to repurpose -£50k , there are no plans to take forward activity during 25-26.

BEL	541: VAWDASV
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Allocation of £900k to the VAWDASV Capital Grants scheme which provides small and large grants to support the delivery of the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26. This includes funding of properties, refurbishment, service improvement, victim safety projects and improving and upgrading service user spaces and equipment.

BEL	662: Older People's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer within the MEG to repurpose -£100k provided at the 24-25 Draft Budget on a one-off non-recurrent basis.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

BEL	480: Children's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Repurposed -£20k from this budget in year as the funding could not be used as planned.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	A transfer within the MEG to repurpose -£20k provided at the 24-25 Draft Budget on a one-off non-recurrent basis.

BEL	6400: Future Generation's Commissioner
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	Allocated £30k in year on a one-off non-recurrent basis to support the re-design of the Commissioner's website.
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	No changes

BEL	220: Citizens Voice Body
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	A transfer of £128k from Reserves on a non-recurrent basis due to IFRS 16 CDEL implications following re-measurement of Lease Liabilities and Right of Use adjustments
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	No change

BEL	1267: Women's Justice & Youth Justice Blueprints
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Transfer out of -£200k in respect of budget allocations that was provided through the 24-25 Draft Budget on a one-off non-recurrent basis.

BEL	1372: Community Facilities Programme
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	An allocation of £2.9m to the Community Facilities Programme.

2024-25 Draft Budget Social Justice MEG

Explanations of movements at BEL level

FT Capital

BEL	1694: Financial Inclusion - repayments
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	Planned repayments of -£39k relating to Financial Transaction Capital.

BEL	1372: Community Facilities Programme (FT capital)
Changes at the First Supplementary Budget 2024-25	No changes
Changes at Draft Budget 2025-26	An allocation of £1.5m to support the WCVA's Community Asset Loan Fund.

Agenda Item 3.1



Department
for Work &
Pensions

THE RT HON. SIR STEPHEN TIMMS MP
Minister for Social Security and Disability

Caxton House
Tothill Street
London, SW1H 9AJ

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

04 December 2024

Dear Jenny,

Equality and Social Justice Committee - Inquiry into the disability employment gap

Thank you for your letter of 15 October 2024 to the Secretary of State about your inquiry into the disability employment gap. I am replying as the Minister of State for Social Security and Disability, and I apologise for the delay in my response. As you may know, the Work and Pensions Select Committee conducted an inquiry on this topic when I was its chair, publishing its report in July 2021.

I was interested to hear about your inquiry and am delighted to provide you with the relevant information requested.

Disability Confident

Upon forming a Government in July 2024, we made clear our intention that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will shift from being a department for welfare to being a department for work. We have an ambitious agenda of reaching an 80 per cent employment rate and consider the Disability Confident scheme to be an important asset which can encourage employers to create disability-inclusive workplaces, thereby supporting disabled people to not only get into work but also to get on in work.

We recognise there are opportunities to make the Disability Confident scheme more robust, and my officials will work with employers and disabled people to realise the full potential of the scheme. There are currently over 19,000 members signed up to the scheme who, collectively, estimate over 12 million paid employees are working in their organisations. In 2022, the DWP conducted survey research which explored, from an employer perspective, the effect that signing up to the Disability Confident scheme has had on their recruitment and retention attitudes and practices towards disabled people.

Most members were planning on renewing their membership, with a quarter intending to move up a level and nearly three in five (57 per cent) planning to stay at the same level. Very few (2 per cent) did not intend to renew. Furthermore, the majority of employers (90 per cent) reported that they would recommend the Disability Confident scheme to another employer.

The UK Government and the DWP have responsibility for providing employment support in Wales. Disability Confident is a Great Britain-wide scheme and the development of a Welsh-based kitemark is not something we are considering. However, I would be happy for my officials to engage with officials from the Disability Rights Taskforce to discuss their findings in more detail.

The Plan to Make Work Pay sets out an ambitious agenda to ensure employment rights are fit for a modern economy, empower working people, and contribute to economic growth. The Employment Rights Bill is the first phase of delivering our plan to Make Work Pay, supporting employers, workers, and unions to get Britain moving forward. By introducing various measures including day one protection from Unfair Dismissal, increasing protection from sexual harassment in the workplace, addressing unscrupulous fire and rehire practices, strengthening Statutory Sick Pay, strengthening rights and requirements for collective redundancy, and ending exploitative zero hours contracts, the Employment Rights Bill will raise the bar for workers and provide a baseline of security in work.

The Impact Assessments for the Employment Rights Bill show that disabled workers are overrepresented in the low paid, insecure jobs that are targeted by the package and, as such, are among the groups expected to benefit the most from the package of reforms. For example, disabled workers are more likely to be in low paid jobs that are in scope of the reforms to Statutory Sick Pay, zero and low hours contracts, and unfair dismissal claims. Changes to make flexible working the default, unless it is not reasonably justifiable, can also support employment participation, as they enable a wider range of people, such as disabled people, to enter the labour market. Disabled workers are also more likely to be members of a union and so are expected to benefit from the Trade Union reforms, including strengthening workers' rights to trade union access, recognition, and representation.

Some measures will be also delivered through the Government's Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, such as extending pay gap reporting to include disability and ethnicity for employers with more than 250 staff and measures on equal pay, and extending equal pay rights to protect workers suffering discrimination on the basis of disability or race. The Government will begin consulting on this legislation shortly, which will include consulting with disabled people and their organisations alongside employers, with a draft Bill due to be published during this Parliamentary session for pre-legislative scrutiny. Further engagement will also take place prior to the making of secondary legislation implementing these reforms.

Role of DWP in supporting people into work

Thank you for bringing these concerns to our attention. We take feedback from our customers very seriously and are committed to improving the support we provide to disabled people seeking employment.

We acknowledge the feedback about the training, knowledge, and awareness of Jobcentre staff. The DWP is dedicated to ensuring that all staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to support disabled people effectively and sensitively.

The DWP has implemented several measures to ensure that staff are aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of disabled customers. This includes mandatory training programs that cover a wide range of disabilities and health conditions. These programs are designed

to enhance the understanding and empathy of our staff, enabling them to provide tailored support to each individual.

Jobcentre staff, including Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs), undergo comprehensive training that includes the following.

- **Disability Awareness Training**

This training covers various disabilities and health conditions, providing staff with the knowledge to support disabled customers effectively.

- **Customer Service Training**

This training is focused on improving communication skills and ensuring that staff can interact with service users in a respectful and supportive manner.

- **Specialised Training for DEAs**

DEAs receive additional training to equip them with the skills needed to provide direct support to disabled customers and those with long-term health conditions. DEAs also spend time supporting work coaches by providing knowledge and upskilling on how to support disabled customers and customers with long-term health conditions.

- **Trauma Informed Training**

The DWP has a dedicated Trauma Informed Approaches integration team, which is focussed on embedding the six core pillars of the approach: safety; trustworthiness; choice; empowerment; collaboration; and intersectional considerations. In line with this, we are co-producing a suite of learning products with colleagues, customers, and external partners to empower our colleagues in applying a trauma-informed lens to every interaction.

- **Launch of The Customer Additional Needs (CAN) Framework**

This incorporates and brings together the operational requirements to ensure the correct networks and processes are in place to support delivery whilst considering complex needs, barriers, health, disabilities, and promotes our trauma-informed approach.

Implementation of the CAN Framework is providing all districts with a structured assurance process that reviews, refreshes, and reinvigorates the approach to supporting all customers.

The overriding principles of the CAN Framework are:

- each customer approaches us with specific individual needs;
- we have a responsibility to identify a customer's individual needs and barriers; and
- our service supports customers who experience barriers to build financial resilience and move into/progress within work by providing and arranging additional support.

Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) in every site, including 'Health SPOCs' ensure that every member of staff's awareness is regularly refreshed so that they continue to build confidence and capability in:

- identifying needs and barriers;
- using the tools, team, and support network to provide additional support; and

- using strong partnership relationships to signpost or refer to expert and/or specialist support within the community.

Disability Awareness and Customer Service Training are mandatory for all Jobcentre staff, with the additional Specialised Training for DEAs being mandatory for colleagues entering that role. The effectiveness of the training is monitored through regular assessments and feedback from both staff and customers. We continuously review and update our training programs to ensure they meet the evolving needs of our customers.

The DWP is committed to providing the best possible support for all our customers, including the most vulnerable in society. This includes those who have a health condition or disability.

Where customers are required to undertake work-related requirements, they should be tailored and agreed according to the customer's capability and personal circumstances, making them realistic and achievable. Work Coaches can limit the number of hours a customer is required to be available for work, search for work, and undertake other work-related requirements to reflect the customer's caring responsibilities, health condition, or wider circumstances.

To help people into work, our core Jobcentre offer provides a range of options, including face-to-face time with Work Coaches and targeted employment support. In addition, there is also specific support targeted towards job seekers with disabilities or health issues, such as Additional Work Coach Time, DEAs, and Work Psychologists.

COMPLAINTS OPTION 1

The specific incident mentioned in your feedback is not in line with our policies and standards. We would be keen to engage further with the individual involved to understand their experience better and take appropriate action to prevent such occurrences in the future. Therefore, please feel free to write back to me with further details about the complaint and the person who wishes to raise it such as their name, address, National Insurance number.

The DWP remains committed to supporting disabled people into work and ensuring that our staff are well-equipped to provide the necessary support. We appreciate your feedback and will continue to work towards improving our services.

Examples of best practice

HM Treasury officials have provided the following information. Should you wish for further details then I know that my Ministerial colleagues in the Treasury will be happy to help should you care to reach out to them direct enclosing a copy of my response.

VAT is a broad-based tax on consumption, and the 20 per cent standard rate applies to most goods and services. Exceptions to the standard rate have always been limited and balanced against affordability considerations.

The UK already provides a comprehensive set of reliefs as compared with other countries, including VAT relief on goods and services for disabled people such as adapted motor vehicles, low vision aids, building works such as ramps, among many others. The last EU statistics to include the UK, which were published in 2021, suggested the Government forgoes more potential VAT revenue due to reliefs such as zero-rates than all 27 EU countries except two. VAT reliefs also add to administrative costs and increase the

complexity of the VAT system, and changes to VAT are often not the best way to produce targeted behavioural change.

Terms of Reference 3, 5 and 6

The DWP have not undertaken an evaluation of the Welsh Government's policies on getting disabled people into work. I understand the Welsh Government's Disabled Peoples Employment Champions (DPECs) are a proactive Team who engage with key stakeholders, including external engagement Teams across DWP Wales, to champion the disability agenda via the Strategic Objectives within their Work Plan. I and Officials within the DWP would welcome working with the Welsh Government on understanding how best to work together to get people back into work.

The Government recognises that many people find health conditions and disabilities, including mental ill health a barrier to employment, which is especially true for young people. The DWP Youth Offer supports 16–24-year-olds on UC, including those with health conditions and disabilities. Through support from work coaches, including in Youth Hubs and from Youth Employability Coaches (YEC), we are providing targeted interventions to help young people gain new skills, build confidence, and move into work.

DWP's Youth Offer is important in providing young people with tailored support to start, stay and succeed in work. Young people with health conditions and disabilities can benefit from more flexible support from Youth Employability Coaches, and Youth Hubs, who work with local partners to provide or signpost to appropriate support.

Young people with health conditions and disabilities participating in DWP's Youth Offer will be supported by work coaches who work closely with Disability Employment Advisors (DEA's) and can signpost to local partners for appropriate support. The Youth Offer also provides support to address a wide range of other risk factors that could be associated with mental ill health such as homelessness, loneliness, debt and financial security as well as helping young people into employment. The DWP supports young people achieve financial security by delivering support to start, stay and succeed in work which will in turn support young people's mental health.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Timms', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability

Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP
Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
Ministerial Correspondence Team
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Liz,

15 October 2024

Congratulations on your appointment and I wish you all the very best in this important role.

Inquiry into the disability employment gap

The Equality and Social Justice Committee is undertaking an inquiry into the disability employment gap. The inquiry will explore what progress has been made and what more could be done to reduce and remove barriers to employment faced by disabled people.

Terms of reference

The full terms of reference for the inquiry are listed in the Annex. Whilst our primary focus is on devolved areas within the control of the Welsh Government, it has become increasingly apparent that our work would benefit greatly from the input of the Department for Work and Pensions. We would therefore welcome it if you could outline your thoughts on relevant points from the terms of reference (i.e. the third, fifth and sixth bullet points) and the specific issues highlighted below.

Disability Confident

Professor Debbie Foster who authored the Locked Out report 2021 as well as the WG's Disability Rights Group suggests that *Disability Confident* has been "very tarnished by its association with the Department for Work and Pensions, because there's a lack of trust amongst disabled people with the Department."¹ Professor Foster suggests detaching an employers' scheme or kitemark from social security to another portfolio and/or the development of a Welsh-based kitemark as potential solutions.

¹ Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Record of Proceedings, paragraph 21](#), 30 September 2024

- How would you respond to Professor Foster’s concerns that the Disability Confident scheme is tarnished by its association with the DWP?
- What is your position on:
 - moving responsibility for Disability Confident to another portfolio; and
 - the development of a Welsh-based kitemark?
- What is the UK Government’s position on future reform of the Disability Confident scheme?
- How will the proposed Employment Rights Bill address the needs of disabled people and help to reduce the disability employment gap?

Role of DWP in supporting people into work

We have heard mixed reviews regarding the support offered to disabled people by the DWP and considerable concerns regarding the training, knowledge and awareness of Jobcentre staff. Feedback from participants with lived experience who took part in our engagement so far has been nearly all negative; several disabled people said that some Jobcentre advisers seem to lack the training required to appropriately and sensitively advise those looking to find work.

One focus group participant from Cardiff noted:

“It’s the thoughtlessness and lack of care in what they do. This came out for me when I was told by a member of the Jobcentre staff, you’ve got to go for a mandatory interview. You’re going to lose your money if you don’t go for this interview. I asked, ‘What’s the job for?’. They said driving for Stage Coach. I was sat there with a guide dog.”²

- How do you respond to concerns that Jobcentre staff lack awareness, knowledge and training needed to adequately support disabled people into work?
- How does the DWP ensure that staff are aware of, and sensitive to, the needs of disabled service users?
- What specific training is provided to Jobcentre staff and what is the take-up rate? How is the effectiveness of this training monitored?

Examples of best practice

On the basis that nearly everyone should be able to benefit from the dignity of work, what consideration has been given to providing financial support or incentives to good employers who may be interested in taking on people with disabilities who have difficulty competing for posts on the open job market, e.g. people with cognitive abilities who could do certain jobs under supervision, to assist with the cost of supervising the disabled person’s post. For example, in Spain organisations with a disabled workforce of 70-90% are exempt

² Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Interim summary of engagement work](#)

from VAT, whilst those at 90% or above receive financial bonuses. Within the public sector, 5% of all jobs are reserved for disabled people.

- How will you ensure that the DWP's work in this area will be informed by evidence and best practice?
- What consideration have you given adopting international approaches for instance the support highlighted in Spain and exploring whether it would work in the UK?

We hope that you will be able respond positively to our request for information. Given the planned timescales for concluding the inquiry, we would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience and no later than by 13 November 2024.

With thanks and kind regards,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Senedd Cymru

Welsh Parliament

The Terms of Reference for the inquiry on Disability and the Employment Gap are as follows:

- What progress has been made to deliver the recommendations set out in the 'Locked Out' report and to reduce and remove barriers faced by disabled people who want to access Wales's labour market. Why progress to reduce the employment and pay disability gap has been so difficult to achieve.
- How the social model of disability is being used to underpin employment and recruitment practices, and what barriers continue to exist throughout society that impact on access to work (i.e. transport, attitudes).
- How effective Welsh Government actions (e.g. the network of Disability Employment Champions and apprenticeships) have been in reducing barriers to employment and reducing the employment gap between disabled and non-disabled people, including the extent to which Welsh Government policies complement/ duplicate/ undermine those set by the UK Government.
- Whether disabled people are accessing apprenticeships and if any further support is needed to ensure a schemes are inclusive.
- What further policy measures are needed to support disabled people, young disabled people and employers to increase participation rates and what can be learned from elsewhere.
- What actions would support those who are currently unable to work to access voluntary opportunities (which could lead to future work opportunities).

Sioned Williams

Aelod Plaid Cymru o'r Senedd dros
Orllewin De Cymru

Plaid Cymru Member of the Senedd for
South West Wales

34 Stryd Alfred,
Castell-nedd,
Castell-nedd Port Talbot,
SA11 1EH

34 Alfred Street,
Neath,
Neath Port Talbot,
SA11 1EH

Dyddiad | Date: 09.12.2024

Pwnc | Subject: Advancing Human Rights in Wales

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Senedd Cross Party Group on Human Rights. A meeting of the Cross Party Group on 6th December discussed your letter dated 8th November 2024 to the chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee (Ref JH/PO/320/24)). As you are aware, the letter sets out the Welsh Government's response to the Committee's request for information concerning progress on strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales.

At its meeting of 6th December the Cross Party Group requested that I write to you in the following terms.

To express concern that the information provided in your letter raises doubts about the Welsh Government's commitment to protect and promote human rights in Wales through progress on recommendations 1 and 25 of the SAEHR research.

In contrast to the position suggested in your letter that the threat to human rights has 'lessened', those in attendance at the meeting on 6th December were clear that there remain a number current, persistent and chronic threats to human rights in Wales. Examples discussed included: high levels of socioeconomic inequality and poverty in Wales, and the rise of far-right populism. With these, and other risks to human rights in mind, the Group wishes to express its unease at the lack of urgency to progress expeditiously toward incorporation of international human rights.

During the meeting on 6th December it was also agreed that the lack of urgency on incorporation overlooks its importance to protect the human rights of future generations. Even if it were the case -

Senedd Cymru

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Senedd Cymru / Senedd Cymru
senedd.cymru/sionedwilliams
www.sionedwilliams.cymru

Agenda Item 3.2

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
sioned.williams@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/sionedwilliams
www.sionedwilliams.wales

01639 203204 

@SionedPlaid 

@Sioned_W 

/SionedWilliamsPlaidCymru 

Gofynnwch am / Please ask for:
Llinell uniongyrchol / Direct line: 01639 203204
E-Bost / E-Mail:
Ein Cyf / Our Ref: 20231116

which it is not - that the threat to human rights in the UK is less significant now than it was under the previous UK Government, it still needs to be recognised the incorporation of human rights is about putting in place enduring protections for the human rights of future generations.

Bearing the above in mind, and on behalf of the Cross Party Group on Human Rights, I would urge the Welsh Government to allocate sufficient resources to enable the Legislative Options Working Group to bring forward its recommendations on legislation to incorporate CEDAW and the UNCRPD as soon as practically possible.

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

Yn gywir / Yours faithfully,

S.A. Williams

Sioned Williams AS/MS



Jane Hutt AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

10 December 2024

Dear Jenny

Following our correspondence in May regarding the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry and report into a "Public health approach to preventing gender-based violence" and Plenary debate, I have now published the [Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(VAWDASV\) Annual Report 2023-24](#).

The VAWDASV Annual Report covers the work completed between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, with reference to the six objectives set out in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026. Alongside this, I have published a [progress update report on the Blueprint High Level Plan](#). This is the first time we have brought together the reporting on these two elements to demonstrate the significance of the Blueprint approach in delivering the objectives of the strategy.

I would like specifically to draw your attention to the following sections of the VAWDASV Annual Report that provide an update on the Equality and Social Justice Committee recommendations.

Recommendation 2. *The Welsh Government should embrace its role as an innovator and leader in applying a public health approach to gender-based violence, by:*

- *identifying opportunities to raise awareness and generate shared understanding of the approach and Blueprint;*
- *contributing to the evidence base of what works by proactively publishing progress updates and resources used to underpin the Blueprint;*
- *continuing to prioritise work with the next generation through effective programmes aimed at children and young people.*

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

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

In addition to the Blueprint High Level progress report I mentioned above, Part 1 of the Annual Report includes an update on our strategic communications, including the publication of a [VAWDASV Communications and Engagement Toolkit](#) and 7-minute progress updates intended to inform stakeholders of progress.

Recommendation 10. *The Welsh Government should consider funding a nation-wide public awareness campaign with a top male, sporting role model who can inspire other men and boys to take a stand against violence and promote positive values and behaviours. It is important this person is well-informed about the issue and receives appropriate training to effectively communicate and advocate for change. An evaluation of impact should be undertaken at the end of the campaign.*

Part 2 of the Annual Report, Objectives 1 and 4, provides a detailed update on our successful Sound campaign which encourages more reflective discussions amongst men and boys as to how they can play their role in addressing violence against women and girls, in addition to committing to evaluate phases 1 and 2 of the Sound campaign.

Recommendation 11. *The Welsh Government perpetrator workstream should undertake a rapid review of perpetrator programmes designed to prevent GBV that are available across Wales. The review should seek to provide assurance that each programme considers the safety of survivors and can evidence effective rehabilitation. It should also consider different cultural and contextual factors that can influence the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes and be completed by June 2024.*

The Blueprint progress report provides an update on the Tackling Perpetration Workstream, and specifically on the all-Wales survey which sought to gather information in relation to all currently available perpetrator interventions. The report and the recommendations included within it have received sign off from the VAWDASV National Partnership Board. The workstream is developing an interventions directory using the information gathered through the survey.

Recommendation 3. *The Welsh Government should set out how the development and evaluation of policies which address the intersectionality of GBV will be informed by data, evidence, and analysis. In particular the Welsh Government should provide the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units with clarity regarding their priorities and agree timescales for completion of key milestones by end of April 2024. The response should include details of:*

- *the target date for completing the work to establish baseline data and a summary of the baseline indicators it intends to use;*
- *the partners it will work with to gather baseline data and the target date by which data-gathering efforts will be mainstreamed; and*
- *when it anticipates the data gathered by the Units will be able to meaningfully contribute to policy development and evaluation.*

Part 1 of the Annual Report sets out the conclusions of the Task and Finish group which will be presented to the VAWDASV National Programme Board in December. Following this an update on the conclusions of the group and next steps will be published in early 2025.

I will write in the new year to provide a full update on all the Committee's recommendations.

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 letter 'J'.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Agenda Item 3.4



13 December 2024

Angharad Roche
Clerk, Equality & Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru
Pierhead Street
Cardiff
Wales CF99 1SN

4 Callaghan Square
Tresillian Way
Cardiff
CF10 5BT
www.centrica.com

By email: SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales

Dear Angharad,

Thank you for your email of 6 December, sharing a transcript from the Committee's session on 2 December at which my colleague, Fiona Cameron, and I were pleased to provide evidence.

Firstly, having reviewed the transcript, we are not aware of any required edits or corrections to the evidence that we provided. There are however, as you note, a number of follow up points of information that we undertook to provide the Committee in support of its ongoing inquiry. We are grateful for the opportunity to address these, in turn, below. We would also be pleased to provide any additional information that may support the work of the Committee as its evidence gathering continues – indeed, we would be delighted to host a visit by members of the Committee to meet our delivery team and see at first hand how we are mobilising the ambitious new Warm Homes Programme.

Referrals - the proportion of referrals who were customers that had no form of heating or water.

- As mentioned during the Committee session (paragraph 227), in October we saw that 16% of the referrals we received were for customers with no heating or hot water. This figure increased significantly in November, with 30% of the referrals falling into this category. The nature of these referrals can in part be attributed to the colder weather, which leads to more households switching on their boilers and discovering issues. Importantly of course, the criteria for referrals itself had been expanded in this period to include all customers with no form of heating or hot water, contributing to the rise in numbers. To address these urgent needs, we implemented a rapid response system. Referrals received from the Energy Saving Trust before eleven o'clock in the morning are attended to on the same day, on the majority of occasions, or next day if not possible. Our team attempts to repair the boiler immediately, and if successful, we continue to work with the customer to ensure a long-term solution. This includes conducting a retrofit assessment and technical survey to determine additional measures such as insulation, solar photovoltaic, or battery installation to support the customer fully. We are committed to not only providing immediate relief by repairing boilers but also to supporting our customers' long-term needs and contributing to net-zero ambitions by implementing energy-saving measures.
- The figures provided relate to referrals over the period since the criteria was expanded. Should the Committee wish any additional information, in respect of the period prior to this, I believe Energy Savings Trust will have captured the data for all referrals submitted since the beginning of April.

Contract management - follow-up on the issue of contract management arrangements for the scheme and providing a view on the effectiveness (when compared with the previous Warm Homes Programme).

- The contract management arrangements for the Nest scheme represent a significant evolution compared to the previous Warm Homes Programme, incorporating several innovative elements aimed at addressing fuel poverty and decarbonisation more effectively.
- Nest's demand-led approach prioritises those worst affected by fuel poverty, focusing on low-income households and individuals whose health is impacted by cold living conditions. The scheme also introduces expanded eligibility criteria, which now include households with the lowest incomes residing in the least energy-efficient homes. This enhancement addresses a broader segment of vulnerable populations than the previous Warm Homes Programme.
- Key improvements include allowing multiple and repeat applications, a crucial flexibility for ongoing assistance in addressing persistent energy inefficiencies or deteriorating conditions. This is a marked improvement from the prior scheme, which had stricter limitations on such support.
- Additionally, the Nest scheme implements a streamlined contractor mobilisation process. While previous iterations allowed six months for this phase, the new scheme reduced the timeframe to three months. Despite this expedited timeline, the early rollout encountered challenges due to the poor condition of housing stock, necessitating significant remedial work before efficiency measures could be installed. To address these challenges, the Welsh Government approved a policy enabling contractors to allocate up to 10% of measure costs to such remedial work.
- Furthermore, the scheme employs robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aligned with the Welsh Government's standards, emphasising the importance of flexibility to ensure continuous improvement. Early-stage refinements have already addressed barriers such as rigid fuel cost and carbon saving targets, which initially excluded many eligible properties.
- Compared with the previous Warm Homes Programme, the Nest scheme demonstrates a stronger alignment with Wales' long-term energy and decarbonisation goals while balancing immediate fuel poverty alleviation. For example, the incorporation of PAS2035 measures like solar PV and insulation addresses both short-term cost reductions and long-term carbon savings. The scheme also adapts to emergent data and feedback, as seen in the relaxation of criteria for boiler repair and replacement under the crisis route.
- Overall, these contract management arrangements reflect a more responsive and inclusive approach, offering a promising model for tackling fuel poverty and advancing sustainable energy solutions.
- Lastly, given reference to the previous iteration of the scheme, one point that I wanted to pick up on was in relation to the evidence provided at the earlier session of the Committee on 2 December with representatives from various frontline consumer organisations. In paragraph 44 of the transcript, one witness states "...that, at some point in the previous iteration, it had changed track slightly and largely became a boiler replacement scheme, to the extent that about 94 per cent, 95 per cent of all the measures that were installed were boiler replacements." I don't feel this is a fair interpretation. In fact, within the 2023-24 contract year, Nest installed a total of 6,980 measures in a total of 4,304 properties. Of which, only 45% were gas boilers. Insulation accounted for 8% of measures, and Solar PV & Battery accounted for approx. 39% of measures installed.

Data on programme to date – including the number of people who have received interventions or measures, the category or type of intervention made to each household, and the outcomes for each household in receipt of measures in terms of impact on their level of fuel poverty.

- With the new scheme in the early stages of delivery, as of this month, 59 customers have received measures or have measures planned under the programme. Interventions include Air Source Heat Pumps, ventilation improvements, loft insulation, Solar PV & Battery storage, and gas boilers under crisis repair. Additionally, 34 customers have benefited specifically from boiler repairs.

- These interventions target improving household energy efficiency and mitigating fuel poverty. However, the outcomes in terms of reductions in fuel poverty levels and associated benefits (e.g., energy savings, carbon reduction) are yet to be finalised. The impact analysis is expected to be completed and reported to the Welsh Government by the end of the month.
- I also wanted to pick up here on a point made in the earlier evidence session on 2 December with the frontline consumer organisations – whose views I very much respect and value – but which may have left an impression that we were leaving households without heating or hot water. Since the beginning of October, for every property that we cannot repair a boiler on under the crisis route, we will send a Retrofit Assessor to the customer's property to complete a technical survey. At the point of the survey, the RA will offer the customer temporary electric portable heating until the heating measures have been installed.

Pathways - more information on the average timeline for each referral pathway to the Nest scheme.

- You will understand that the data we capture relates to the period from receipt of the referral to installation. We will be providing this information to the Welsh Government and, with their agreement, would be pleased to share this with the Committee. If the Committee is seeking more information on the referral pathway into the scheme, then Energy Savings Trust would need to provide this.

Supporting households - details of Wales-specific action taken to support vulnerable customers to include the number of customers reached and an outline of the type of support provided.

- This information will need to be provided by Energy Savings Trust, as they complete the marketing activity, and target customers and will have all of the information available in relation to the support provided.

However – in line with the commitment given by Fiona Cameron at the end of the session – we wanted to follow up in writing about the work Centrica does, as an energy supplier through British Gas, to support vulnerable people in Wales, including monitoring their access to warm homes and hot water.

Supporting Vulnerable Customers Policy

Centrica recognises that the energy and cost of living crises over recent years have been very painful for households here in Wales, and across the country and the priority for us through this time has been to step up support for our customers.

We have a Policy in place which sets out the requirement for all areas of British Gas Energy to ensure that our products and services meet the needs of our residential customers in vulnerable situations both at the design stage and throughout the customer's engagement with the product or service; and to ensure that we effectively identify vulnerable customers and provide proactive, tailored customer service.

The policy goes on to explain how this should be achieved – through training, governance and other specific means.

There is a clear explanation within the policy that a customer is deemed vulnerable if 'due to their personal circumstances, they are significantly less able to safeguard their personal welfare or that of other household members or significantly more likely to suffer detriment or that detriment is likely to be more substantial'. This may include physical and/or mental health issues, and/or those experiencing financial hardship. Vulnerability can be permanent or transient in nature.

Priority Services Register (PSR)

The PSR is used by energy suppliers, electricity, gas and water networks and is available for those who might need extra support such as over-65s, families with children under 5, and people with disabilities. Customers on the PSR can get free annual servicing, large-print or braille billing, and advanced service warnings.

We currently have 3,514,064 million people signed up to the PSR UK-wide with approximately 173,399 of these customers in Wales.

Monitoring access to warm homes and hot water – ‘OSCAR’ process

British Gas operates an Off-Supply Customer at Risk (OSCAR) process to detect and prevent pre-payment meter customers going off supply. Essentially, it is a proactive monitoring system to identify customers who are potentially in difficulty and who might be self-disconnecting.

Currently, we monitor customers' vending patterns and when we believe they should have topped up their credit we proactively contact them. We will never leave customers without credit and emergency credit is available 24/7. We also proactively offer PPM customers non-repayable credit.

British Gas Energy Trust

We've committed £140m since the start of the energy crisis to support vulnerable customers in financial difficulty. This is largely through the British Gas Energy Trust which provides financial help, with grants of up to £1,700 to those who are struggling with energy debt, whether they're British Gas customers or not, and it can also help households in other ways—for example, with replacement of white goods, like washing machines.

In Wales, we have provided more than 230 grants of up to £1,700 to customers through the British Gas energy trust.

British Gas also gives support direct to customers. For example, last week we sent credits to 15,000 of our customers on prepayment meters who we've identified as struggling (to the value of £2.3 million). We have also launched our first-of-a-kind 'You Pay, We Pay' scheme which 100% matches payments, helping customers clear debt over a 6-month period.

We're also working hard to identify those in need and have just launched a new round of community Post Office pop-ups that sees British Gas-funded energy advisors in Post Offices throughout the UK. Outreach and partnerships with local organisations like Citizens Advice and Riverside Advice help us reach hard-to-identify vulnerable populations.

In our experience, combining practical support like grants, with holistic advice drives the best results. The British Gas Energy Trust, our independent charity, is now in its 20th year and over the last year the Trust has supported over 64,000 people and their activities have created almost £50m in net benefits to society. This year the British Gas Energy Trust carried out a series of roundtables, including one in Cardiff, with frontline organisations supporting people suffering with fuel poverty to develop actions for Government, energy companies and the third sector to help alleviate fuel poverty.

Finally, we also think that as a company with valuable real world experience of what is driving difficulty for our customers, we have a responsibility to use our voice and push for policy changes that would help people in difficulty. We back a just transition for vulnerable households, advocating a social tariff funded via taxation and stronger partnerships and data-sharing with agencies like DWP and HMRC would enhance targeting and outreach, ensuring help reaches those who need it most.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee – and please let us know if there is anything else that we can provide that may be helpful at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Kirwan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ross Kirwan
Head of Nest

029 2076 8850

info@tenovuscancercare.org.uk

tenovuscancercare.org.uk

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee
Senedd Cymru
By email SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

19 December 2024

Dear Ms Rathbone,

On behalf of Tenovus Cancer Care, I am writing to you in your capacity Chair of the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee. I wish to draw to your attention our response to the proposed increase in employer National Insurance Contributions (NIC) and share the impact that it will have on the charity and its ability to provide services to people affected by cancer across Wales.

We are deeply disappointed and frustrated at the lack of recognition of the devastating impact the increase in National Insurance Contributions will have on charities like Tenovus Cancer Care. We simply cannot sit back and take the hit.

This increase will very likely force charities to make extremely difficult decisions – cutting services, reducing workforce, or both. Such cutbacks would not only harm the vulnerable individuals we support but also the NHS, which cannot deliver the services we provide at the cost-efficiency we provide.

At Tenovus Cancer Care, we deliver essential services for people affected by cancer including counselling, nurse-led support, and benefits advice. This is provided free of charge, exclusively to the NHS. More than 10% of people diagnosed with cancer in Wales will use one of these vital services, that increases to nearly 20% in North Wales. Sadly, a third of those we support are end-of-life, facing their most difficult days.

We estimate this additional financial burden will cost us, at a minimum, a quarter of a million pounds (£250,000) annually. It's equivalent to the cost of running our benefits advice service. In the last year, this service alone helped secure £4.1m worth of payments to 1,820 people with cancer across Wales.

It is a misconception that all charities are cushioned by government grants or contracts. For many, including us, operations rely almost entirely on charitable donations. While we absolutely want to pay our staff fairly and anticipated the living wage increases, the scale of this NIC rise is unsustainable in the context of a challenging fundraising environment.

Call our free Support Line
0808 808 1010
Ffoniwch ein Llinell Gymorth rhadffôn

Jones Court, Womanby Street, Cardiff CF10 1BR. Jones Court, Stryd Wompa, Caerdydd, CF10 1BR.
Patron: HRH The Princess Royal. Noddwraig: Ei Huchelder Brenhinol Y Dywysoges Frenhinol.

Registered Charity Number 1054015 Company Limited by Guarantee Number 943501 Elusen Gofrestredig Rhif 1054015 Cwmni Cyfyngedig trwy Warant Rhif 943501

Pack Page 107



Cofrestrwyd gyda'r



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR
RHEOLEIDIWR
CODI ARIAN

We are a substantial employer, with 228 staff working across our 56 shops, head office, and out in communities across Wales. This decision also risks harming the foundational economy within the very communities we serve.

Despite the disproportionate impact of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis on charities like ours, we received no bespoke support and were forced to make huge redundancies just to keep afloat. After working hard to recover, finally balance our budgets, and supporting public services, being told to absorb this increase is a bitter blow.

Therefore, we are calling for:

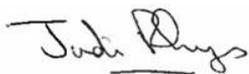
- The UK Government to reconsider the NIC increase for charities such as ours that provide direct support to the NHS from charitable funds and include us in exemptions as has been done for public sector organisations.
- Welsh political representatives to advocate for us – and for others in our situation - across the Welsh third sector, and appeal to the UK Government for urgent action to protect vital services that people rely on, often at time of personal crisis.
- The Welsh Government to mitigate the burden if UK exemptions are not forthcoming – an acknowledgment of the services we deliver free of charge to patients across Wales.

I trust that my contribution is shared amongst members of the Committee and is taken into consideration when the Committee considers the impact of the up and coming Budget on Wales.

I am happy and able to find the time to meet with you to discuss further.

Please contact me via alison.partridge@tenovuscancercare.org.uk to make arrangements or if require additional information.

Yours sincerely,



Judi Rhys MBE

Chief Executive



Ministry
of Justice

Agenda Item 3.6

Sir Nic Dakin MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice

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

MoJ ref: ADR119143

19 December 2024

Dear Jenny,

TURNAROUND PROGRAMME

Thank you for your letter of the 14 November.

The Autumn Budget 2024 presented by the Chancellor on 30 October set the budget for the Ministry of Justice for the next financial year. Our focus is now on how it will be allocated across the breadth of the department's responsibilities. This includes early intervention support for children on the cusp of the justice system.

I appreciate your concerns around the continued uncertainty, and I am pleased to be able to tell you we will be providing funding for early intervention work with children on the cusp of the justice system across England and Wales for the financial year 2025/26.

The amount of funding the MoJ is able to provide is not yet certain and is subject to decisions yet to be taken about how the departmental settlement for 2025/26 will be allocated. We will update you further on this as soon as possible.

Thank you for your understanding and ongoing support as we continue to work toward a resolution.

SIR NIC DAKIN MP

Sir Nic Dakin MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State for Justice
Ministerial Correspondence and Support
Team,
9th Floor ,102 Petty France,
London
SW1H 9AJ

14 November 2024

Dear Nic,

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in the youth justice system

Thank you for your letter of 29 October regarding the provision for speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system.

As we outlined in our original letter of 14 October the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) highlighted their concern about the uncertainty regarding the future of Turnaround Programme funding beyond its scheduled end in March 2025. We appreciate that prior to the Budget you were unable to comment on the programme's continued funding and offered to share further details as soon as possible.

Following the Autumn Budget we would be grateful if you could now confirm the arrangements for the continued funding of the Turnaround Programme or a successor to that programme, including whether funding can be secured over a multi-annual timeframe.

We would appreciate a response by 11 December 2024.



With thanks and kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Chairs' Forum

Via e-mail

7 January 2025

Dear Chairs,

Representation on inter-parliamentary bodies

Following the discussion at the Chairs' Forum meeting of 2 December, I am writing to confirm the decisions taken around the Senedd's representation on the Inter-Parliamentary Forum and the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. The Senedd may nominate two Members each group. Chairs agreed that:

- The Senedd's representation on the two bodies should continue to be linked to committee remits;
- The nominated Members should be the chairs of the relevant committees in each case, but with the continued ability for a chair to nominate alternates from their committee to attend meetings as required;
- Continuity of representation was important, where that could be maintained;
- The Legislation, Justice and Constitution (LJC), Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI), Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs (ETRA) and Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations (CCWLSIR) Committees would provide the Senedd's representation on the two bodies, with the allocation of roles to be determined with those committee chairs outside the Chairs' Forum meeting.

Discussion outside of the Forum has led to the following nominations being agreed:

- Inter-Parliamentary Forum: The Chairs of the LJC and CCEI Committees.
- UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly: The Chairs of the ETRA and CCWLSIR Committees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elin Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd

Chair of the Chairs' Forum

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

Agenda Item 3.8

Jane Hutt MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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

Mike Hedges MS
Chair
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee
Senedd Cymru

SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

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

07 January 2025

Dear Mike

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

In accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement, I am writing to inform you that a meeting of the Interministerial Group for Safety, Security and Migration has been scheduled to take place on Wednesday 22nd January from 10:15am to 11:30 am. The meeting will take place virtually and will be chaired by the Home Secretary.

It has been agreed the meeting will focus on outlining all four devolved governments' priorities for safety, security and future migration policies. The agenda allows time for a round table discussion on all outlined topics and will include discussion on improving future engagement and collaborative working.

In line with the agreement, a joint communique will be published following 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.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

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

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

Yours sincerely

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

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Agenda Item 3.9

Cardiff Council recognised the need for young adults with learning disabilities and or autism to be given the opportunity to have quality work experience opportunities within a working environment. As such, DFN Project Search license was purchased to accommodate school aged children and a project set up in conjunction with Cardiff Commitment, Into Work and Education/ Inclusion department and is currently funded by Cardiff Commitment/ SPF funding. The current funding is due to end in March 2025 and the Inclusion service of the Education department have confirmed funding of the project until the end of this current academic year. The host business chosen to support the project was Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and are able to offer young people a really diverse range of placement opportunities across the site. The project sees young people apply for the provision with the help of their school/ family member and attend an interview and skills assessment day. We recruit students from local special schools or schools who have a Special Resource Base attached to them. Successful applicants are then involved in a transition programme in readiness for a September start date, whereby interns meet on a monthly basis to help build rapport with staff and peers whilst also familiarising themselves with the host business site. Any student identified as needing help with travel training are put forward to undertake Travel Training with the staff and this is completed during the school summer holidays. The young people complete an academic year with us on the project whilst remaining on roll at their school and complete 3 9/10 week block placements across the school year. Each placement block is separated by a Transition Week, allowing students to prepare for their forthcoming placement by attending trial sessions and interviews. We help the interns prepare for interviews and also provide suitable clothing for them to wear should it be required. Should students be eligible for Free School Meals or EMA, this provision continues with them onto the project. In readiness for the placements, the interns complete a 6 week induction programme which consists of host business orientation activities, 14 NHS ESR mandatory training units, Employability Curriculum delivery covering modules which include Building Health Relationships, Conflict Resolution, Health and Wellness, Self Advocacy, Financial Literacy, Team Building, Workplace Safety, Maintaining Employment together with the delivery of vocational training modules in Customer Service, Food Safety and Hygiene, Emergency First Aid and Manual Handling, interview preparation, departmental talks and subsequent departmental visits allowing the young people to make an informed choice about their forthcoming placement choices. We hold monthly Steering Group Meetings allowing school to be regularly updated of progress throughout the intern's journey. The intern also regularly email their school/ teacher to 'touchbase' and to ensure they feel their relationship with school is maintained. Young people with additional learning needs often have strong bonds with their school friends and teachers and we recognise the emotions the young people as they transition into adulthood and as such these weekly/ fortnightly emails help to regulate the

interns whilst also sharing their successes and achievements. The interns are also involved in the recruitment process of future interns as current interns are invited to return to their school late in the autumn term to deliver a presentation outlining their time on the project.

Whilst in placement, interns are supported to varying degrees throughout their 9/ 10 week placement. Some students require intensive support throughout their placement whilst others require support during the initial few days/ weeks of placement before moving on to supporting the intern in reduced capacity but still supervising on a daily basis. Whilst in placement, the department/ mentor receives fortnightly evaluation sheets which allows staff to offer recommendations/ feedback to the young people in addition to the feedback offered from the support provided by project staff. Ahead of the placement, a departmental analysis and task analysis are undertaken ensuring project staff know key information about the department together with the tasks outlined for the intern. These tasks can then be practiced/ developed ahead of time/ during induction ensuring the student is competent to start their placement. The termly targets set by the staff are also informed by the tasks the interns are set aswell as being set in conjunction with their literacy/ numeracy/ social goals.

We work with a Business Liaison Manager at CAVUHB who helps secure the quality placements for our interns. Identified departments are invited to attend a meeting with project staff and a manager/ mentor handbook is provided which outlines the expectations of all parties involved in the project together with relevant contact numbers, term and rotation dates. As we are now in our fourth year of provision we are able to offer the following placements for the interns to choose between:

General Porters	Radiology Porters	Assistant Technical Officer Pharmacy
Health Records Assistant	Administration assistant	Lab technician in Cellular Pathology
Housekeepers	Linen assistants	Central Production Unit Porter
Radiology Department Assistant	ICT Service desk assistant	Meet and Greet volunteer
Ward Based Catering	Catering Assistant	Physiotherapy Outpatients Assistant
Theatre Stores Assistant	HSDU	Waste collection
Maintenance assistant	Podiatry HCSW/ admin	Transit Stores- delivery

British Association for Supported Employment (<https://www.base-uk.org/>) offer training opportunities for those individuals working with young people who are entering into the work of work. The aim of the provision is to ensure that all staff working with people with learning disabilities are all working to the same standard. Such training is free for people based in England but not for people

based in Wales. One member of the team has been able to undertake this training but due to training costs, the other members of the team have been unable to access the provision.

As a project we have helped young people overcome a number of barriers linked with employment such as helping a young person to apply for photographic ID allowing them to open/ apply for a bank account allowing them to move on to the JGW+ programme ensuring their weekly allowance gets paid directly to them rather than a family member. We have also helped a young person register with their local GP having recently moved home and family members were not able to support them. We continue to support young people find employment once they have completed their time with us on the project and regularly send out job opportunity emails to previous students and support previous students when attending job interviews. We have helped learners apply for PIP, apply for travel passes, complete DBS check and access Barrier to Work Fund allowing students to have the necessary uniform (e.g. steel toe cap boots, utility trousers). This support comes in addition to the support offered to actually search for suitable job opportunities, complete application forms and complete any relevant paperwork required once employment has been successful.

We are really proud of the impact our project has made thus far on the lives of those involved together with their families. The ripple effect of the young people's involvement in this project has been hugely impactful and we have captured this in the attached case study/ quotes from departmental managers, students and family members. Our successes since the start of the project have been outlined below:

Academic Year	Enrolled	Completed	Outcome	Employment Status
2021-2022	7	7	6 employed by CAVUHB 1 moved on to CAVC	5 remain employed by CAVUHB 1 employed by Greggs
2022-2023	9	8	5 employed by CAVUHB 1 employed by 'Cardiff Works for You' in Cardiff Parks department 1 moved on to CAVC 1 moved on to Pencoed College	4 remain employed by CAVUHB
2023-2024	16	15	1 found employment at CAVUHB 7 moved on to ACT/ Jobs Growth Wales + 5 moved on to CAVC	4 remain/ moved into employment at CAVUHB 3 remain on ACT/ JGW+ but 2 have applied for positions

			1 moved on to Coleg Y Cymoedd 1 remained with us at PS for a second year to continue personal development	with CAVUHB and awaiting interviews/ shortlisting
2024-2025	7 (6 FT 1 PT)	6 (5 FT 1 PT)		

We have established a fantastic working relationship with our host business over the past 4 years and recognise the positive impact our interns are having on the work force both in their internship and employment roles. Our interns have an excellent work ethic, a strong desire to achieve, be independent and to be part of a community and as such make excellent employees.