Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 (Senedd)

Meeting date: 27 January 2025

Meeting time: 12.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

Private pre-meeting

(12.30-13.00)

Public meeting

(13.00-14.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.00)

2 Fuel poverty and the Warm Homes Programme: evidence session with the Cabinet Secretaries

(13.00-14.30) (Pages 1 – 31)

Jane Hutt – Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice,Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant – Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government,Welsh Government

Christine Grimshaw – Head of Public Sector Decarbonisation, Innovation and Fuel Poverty, Welsh Government

Carol Driver – Head of Domestic Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty, Welsh Government

3 Papers to note

(14.30)

3.1 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Legislation, Justice and the Constitution Committee

regarding the Inter-Institutional Agreement and forthcoming intergovernmental meetings

(Pages 32 - 33)

3.2 Correspondence from Jane Dodds MS to the Chair regarding scrutiny of the Welsh Government Budget 2025-2026

(Pages 34 - 35)

3.3 Correspondence from the Chair to the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding Budget Scrutiny on Welsh Benefits Supporting Children

(Page 36)

3.4 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair providing an update on progress regarding VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026

(Pages 37 - 46)

3.5 Correspondence from the Llywydd to the Chair regarding the Business Committee review of the Public Bill and Member Bill processes

(Pages 47 - 56)

Motion under Standing Order 17.42(iv) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

(14.30)

Private meeting

(14.30-15.30)

4 Fuel poverty and the Warm Homes Programme: consideration of evidence

(14.30-14.45)

5 Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2025-26: consideration of draft report

(14.45-15.30) (Pages 57 - 85)

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

Agenda Item 2

Document is Restricted

Welsh Government

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Equality & Social Justice Committee – 27 January 2025

Fuel Poverty in Wales

Contents

Whether there is an accurate picture of fuel poverty in Wales today, given that data is based on the 2008 Living in Wales Survey and 2017-18 Wales Housing Conditions Survey. 3

The potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment on fuel poverty in Wales 3

The detail of the new Warm Homes Programme, including the energy efficiency measures offered, changes to eligibility criteria, the approach to delivering advice services, and the development of an area based approach. 4

How changes from the previous programme will impact delivery, particularly in terms of the numbers of households that will be supported. 6

The extent to which the Warm Homes Programme is helping to address persistent fuel poverty in Wales, and if not, what further action is needed. 6

The effectiveness of support available to households in or at risk of fuel poverty, in addition to the Warm Homes Programme. 7

How effective local authorities have been at accessing and utilising ECO Flex funding 9

How the Welsh Government is working with the UK Government to address fuel poverty 9

Whether there is an accurate picture of fuel poverty in Wales today, given that data is based on the 2008 Living in Wales Survey and 2017-18 Wales Housing Conditions Survey.

On 13 April 2022, Welsh Government published Fuel poverty modelled estimates for Wales as at October 2021[1]. The estimates were calculated using base data from the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18, together with modelled information on changes to household incomes and fuel prices between 2017 and October 2021. We made further changes to these estimates to take account of the estimated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on heating regimes.

Once the energy crisis took hold, Welsh Government, revised the October 2021 estimates, using fuel prices for electricity, mains gas and heating oil from April 2022. We assumed all households were on the price cap and recognised these figures were likely to be an overestimation.

The further we move away from 2017-18, the more uncertainty is associated with the estimates, although historical trends, and administrative data can help reduce this uncertainty. It is not currently possible to produce estimates of fuel poverty based on administrative data alone. While the EPC Register for example can indicate how energy efficient some types of homes are, it cannot accurately represent all types of homes.

Although the cost of energy remains significantly higher than it did pre-crisis, there is far less fluctuation in the price cap than there was a couple of years ago. We are developing updated estimates of fuel poverty relating to October 2024 and anticipate publication in summer 2025. These estimates will be based on the Welsh Housing Conditions Survey 2017-18, together with modelled information from administrative data to reflect recent changes to household income and fuel prices.

Once we receive the revised fuel poverty estimates, we will work with the Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel[2] to agree meaningful interim targets based on EPC ratings for our Fuel Poverty Plan[3].

The potential impact of changes to the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Payment on fuel poverty in Wales

An important way to tackle fuel poverty is to get more money into peoples' pockets, including pensioners. Maximising incomes, building financial resilience, and putting money back into people pockets are top priorities.

Receiving Pension Credits is the key for many older people in Wales that unlocks their entitlement to a Winter Fuel Payment. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip (CSSJTCW) has met with the Older People's Commissioner in Wales, along with the Minister for Children and Social Care, to discuss joint action to encourage older people in Wales to claim Pension Credit by the 21 December deadline. Officials worked closely with UK Government to reach as many older people as possible before the deadline to increase the numbers of people eligible for winter fuel payments this winter.

[1] Fuel poverty modelled estimates for Wales (headline results): as at October 2021 | GOV.WALES
[2] Terms of reference: Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel | GOV.WALES
[3] Tackling fuel poverty 2021 to 2035 [HTML] | GOV.WALES

Welsh Government has also reshared with stakeholders across Wales the Pension Credit social media messages used in the Welsh Government's "Claim What's Yours" campaign last winter. The message will encourage people to contact Advicelink Cymru for help to claim Pension Credit. This has also been publicised through a poster and a digital screen graphic to display in public areas which many older people access on a regular basis such as GP surgeries.

Using data sets to target information to households on their entitlements can, as Neath Port Talbot Council has demonstrated, bring good results.

As part of the Streamlining Welsh Benefits Welsh Government are funding a 12-month pilot working with Policy in Practice to allow up to 12 Local Authorities to analyse existing income data sets to identify residents who are eligible for benefits, including Pension Credit. The pilot will not only increase take-up of benefits but will also provide valuable learning that will allow us to unravel some of the issues pertaining to data governance that are often cited as barriers that prevent the streamlining of the administration of Welsh benefits. The pilot will commence this month, and its impact will be monitored throughout and there will be a full evaluation of the pilot.

There has been a 145% increase in Pension Credit claims received by DWP in the past 16 weeks compared with the 16 weeks before the Chancellor's Winter Fuel Payment announcement[4].

The detail of the new Warm Homes Programme, including the energy efficiency measures offered, changes to eligibility criteria, the approach to delivering advice services, and the development of an area based approach.

Energy efficiency measures offered

Eligible households will receive a bespoke package of measures to insulate and decarbonise their home, leading to lower energy bills, moving them out of fuel poverty. Key to this is a whole house assessment, undertaken independently by the delivery agent to identify the most appropriate measures for each eligible household.

While it is our intention that all households accessing Nest will transition to low carbon technology immediately, this may not be possible in every circumstance. Installing an air source heat pump can take some considerable time and it is important households meeting the eligibility criteria, often the most vulnerable, are supported through Nest.

If the whole house assessment confirms it is not currently possible to install an air source heat pump, measures will be installed to lift the household out of fuel poverty and make the property ready for an air source heat pump when it is possible for one to be installed.

The Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel raised concern around householders without heating or hot water. The Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government (CSHLG) launched the crisis route to support the most vulnerable householders with a one-off boiler repair . If it is not possible to repair the boiler, it might be more appropriate to install an efficient gas boiler in its place. Moving more householders into repair/replacement may have

[4] Pension Credit applications and awards: November 2024 - GOV.UK

implications for the throughput of customers into the next year of the Programme, therefore we will review and reassess at the end of March 2025.

Where the boiler is repaired, a whole house assessment will be undertaken to identify bespoke measure that can be installed to improve the energy efficiency of the home along the PAS 2035 route. Where the boiler is replaced, a retrofit survey will be conducted, and measures identified to improve the energy efficiency of the home.

Changes to eligibility criteria

One of the findings of the "Next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme: Review and Recommendations Report"[5] was the reliance on means tested benefits as a measure of low income for the previous Nest scheme. This could exclude lower incomes who experience difficulty meeting the cost of their home energy needs.

The Health Conditions pilot suggested low incomes defined as a percentage of the UK median income ensures programmes are targeted not only for households struggling to meet the cost of maintaining a warm home, but also people at risk of falling into fuel poverty. This approach aligns with the Welsh Government's measure of relative low-income poverty more accurately rather than the reliance on receipt of means tested benefits.

The new Warm Homes low-income threshold now grants eligibility to households with an income lower than 60% of the median average. Disability related payments or benefits are not included in this income assessment.

Advice services

The separation between the advice service and delivery is an important element of the new scheme. Energy Saving Trust (EST) provides free and impartial energy savings advice to all households in Wales. As we transition to low carbon technology, it is important that fuel poor households receive the independent advice to allow them the confidence to make the transition.

The new programme has a more joined up approach with complementary schemes, to maximise benefits to Welsh citizens. The independence of the advice service allows them to support households to access the most appropriate scheme for their circumstances, including Nest, the Energy Company Obligation scheme, (ECO), Great British Insulation Scheme, (GBIS) as well as support that may available on householders' local authority area.

EST can direct householders to a range of other support services, including AdviceLink Cymru[6], water efficiency advice and referral partners.

EST has Partnership Development Managers (PDMs) who collaborate with a wide range of organisations to reach more vulnerable households. These partners include local authorities, health boards, the third sector such as regional voluntary councils, food banks and organisations supporting Wales' diverse ethnic minority communities.

Development of an area-based approach

[5] Next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme: review and recommendations report [HTML] | GOV.WALES
[6] Claim whats yours campaign | GOV.WALES

As the new scheme is in its infancy, officials are reviewing progress to ensure the demand-led element of the programme meets its primary objectives in tackling fuel poverty and the climate emergency. Once this review is complete, officials will focus on the area-based approach.

Our ambition is for the 2020s to be a decade of decarbonisation for housing, where we learn how to effectively and efficiently upgrade social housing, owner occupier and private rental housing in ways which reduce carbon emissions, and energy bills.

The development of an integrated approach across all tenures and income levels to drive decarbonisation will be developed from the experiences of Optimised Retrofit Programme[7] and other Welsh housing initiatives.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) boosts the quality of social housing in Wales. What we learn from upgrading our 230,000 social homes, will drive how we tackle decarbonisation of Wales' 1.2 million privately owned homes and reduce bills for householders across all.

How changes from the previous programme will impact delivery, particularly in terms of the numbers of households that will be supported.

We have increased the budget cap per household reflecting the deeper retrofits required to move homes away from fossil fuels and towards a cleaner, low carbon future.

We have extended the eligibility criteria to ensure we target the least well off, by introducing a low-income threshold, rather than relying solely on means tested benefits.

We have updated the Regulations to allow multiple applications, allowing boiler repairs in exceptional circumstances, allowing our delivery agents to install measures at the most appropriate time for each individual property.

We anticipate supporting 1,500 householders a year through the new Warm Homes Programme, compared with an average of 4,000 under the previous Nest scheme.

The scheme has a budget of over £30 million this year and we recognise the challenges undertaking more expensive, deeper retrofit will have on the number of households supported by the scheme.

The extent to which the Warm Homes Programme is helping to address persistent fuel poverty in Wales, and if not, what further action is needed.

Since 2011, the Warm Homes Nest Scheme has played a pivotal role in tackling fuel poverty and enhancing the energy efficiency of homes across Wales, with its focus on low-income households in the most inefficient homes.

During this period, Welsh Government has invested more than £251million to improve home energy efficiency through Nest. Nest has helped more than 61,000 lower income

[7] Optimised RetroFit Programme | GOV.WALES

households by installing measures in their homes. More than 210,800 have contacted Nest to receive free energy efficiency advice.

During the last year of the Nest scheme, 4,816 households received a home energy improvement package, such as a central heating system, a boiler, insulation, solar panel PV or an air source heat pump These improvements funded through Nest saved each household an estimated average of £595 on their annual energy bill. Benefit entitlement checks undertaken during this period resulted in a £4,233 average potential benefit take-up per household.

Of the 12,809 households who contacted the Nest helpline last year, 64.6% were estimated to have been living in fuel poverty, and of those, 30.6% were living in severe fuel poverty.

Nest is helping improve the thermal efficiency of the properties supported. In the final year of Nest, the SAP ratings of households before the installation of home energy efficiency improvement packages were as follows:

- 5.6% of households had a SAP rating of E;
- 29.8% of households were rated F; and,
- 64.6% of households were rated G.

The SAP ratings of households after the installation of home energy efficiency improvement packages were as follows:

- 20.2% of households had a SAP rating of C;
- 61.2% of households were rated D;
- 14.9% of households were rated E; and
- 3.6% of households were rated F.

Customer satisfaction with Nest has been consistently high over the life of the scheme: 98% of customers reported satisfaction with the advice services and installations provided by Nest in 2023-24.

The effectiveness of support available to households in or at risk of fuel poverty, in addition to the Warm Homes Programme.

Income Maximisation

Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that people in Wales claim every pound they are entitled to. We have a well-established stakeholder group driving forward this work and our benefit take-up campaign is delivering results and awareness of financial support in Wales.

During the period April 2023 to March 2024, the Claim What’s Yours advisors have helped over 36,800 people, with over 120,000 issues, over 9,600 issues were relating to debt problems. People helped were supported to claim over £10.4m in additional income.

Since the Single Advice Fund was introduced in January 2020, services have helped more than 280,000 people deal with over 1.1 million social welfare problems. Those helped were supported to claim additional income of £137 million and had debts totalling £38.5 million

written off. Our work to streamline the Welsh Benefits system is accelerating and a Phase One Route Map was endorsed by all Leaders in Partnership Council for Wales last week and will be published in January 2025.

Discretionary Assistance Fund

Over recent years, demand on the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) has increased and the profile changed with almost 50% of applications now coming from families with children.

The DAF budget will remain at £38.5 million for 2024/25, allowing this level of support to continue, in a time when individuals and families across Wales continue to face extreme financial hardship.

Between 1 April 2024 and 30 October 2024, 115,979 applications have been supported with nearly £16 million in grants. Of these, nearly £9.5 million were cash payments, supporting with the cost of food and gas/electricity.

The CSSJTCW announced in November that new arrangements will come into effect linked to the off-grid fuel element of the DAF. The new arrangements will involve increasing the one-off amount for a tank of oil or gas from £250 to £500 and increasing the amount for gas cannisters by 18% from £70 to £82.50 per award. Applicants can only apply once for the tank of oil or gas. Applicants can apply up to three times in any 12-month rolling period for off-grid gas cannisters. Both off grid oil and gas payments are considered to be an EAP payment and existing DAF qualification criteria will remain unchanged. This uplift will ensure the DAF continues to provide valuable crisis support for disadvantaged people who are living in poverty with no other means of support.

As part of the ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and organisations, officials meet regularly with the Bevan Foundation, Citizens Advice and other key stakeholders to discuss their latest insights regarding the DAF.

An analysis report on the DAF is available and covers the period May 2022 to May 2023[8].

Fuel Bank Foundation

On 15 November, the CSSJTCW announced a further £700,000 to support the work of the Fuel Bank Foundation, bringing our total investment this year to £1.2m. Since June 2022 Welsh Government have allocated more than £6.3 million funding to enable the Fuel Bank Foundation to introduce a national Fuel Voucher and Heat Fund scheme in Wales. The scheme has provided support to eligible households that pre-pay for their fuel and are at risk of disconnection. This includes the provision of fuel vouchers for homes with prepayment meters and deliveries of oil or gas for those not connected to the mains gas network.

72,473 fuel vouchers have been issued and supported 436 households to receive help to purchase off grid fuel. To date, these interventions have supported 180,014 people. Reporting from the Fuel Bank Foundation shows that for 99.6% of individuals they support, they are able to deliver help so that the heating is back on the same day that support is

[8] Discretionary Assistance Fund: analysis report | GOV.WALES

requested. The Fuel Bank Foundations core principle is to ensure this help is sufficient (10 days of help) alongside the financial advice and support of their delivery network to enable the supported household to have space to address the issues driving them into energy crisis in the first place.

How effective local authorities have been at accessing and utilising ECO Flex funding

Our ambition is to maximise access to the ECO Flex scheme in Wales. We are leveraging as much funding as possible into Wales from GB-wide schemes to ensure support is available to those most in need and have provided £350,0000 of funding. We continue working with the Welsh Local Government Association, (WLGA) to encourage local authorities to grow the ECO flex scheme. We are currently looking into providing additional funding for local authorities to support them in mobilising and administering local ECO Flex schemes.

We have worked with the WLGA to ensure every local authority in Wales has an ECO Flex scheme and a Statement of Intent. An early indicator of success of this approach is that every local authority now has an ECO Flex scheme, admittedly at different levels of maturity. The current iteration of the ECO Flex scheme introduced a 'rural off-gas uplift' which incentivises ECO suppliers and installers to target remote homes in Wales and Scotland. This has been very successful, to the extent that, to date, ECO4 LA Flex investment, has been concentrated in the most rural areas, and it has been local authorities in more urban areas that have struggled to attract ECO Flex and support for fuel poor households

Officials have worked with the WLGA and representatives of each local authority to explore how we can best support authorities during 2024/25 on ECO Flex and a further grant award will be made shortly to each local authority.

How the Welsh Government is working with the UK Government to address fuel poverty

The UK Government have important levers to help alleviate fuel poverty. A holistic response is required to help households struggling winter after winter to pay their bills and we welcome a close working relationship with UK Government to achieve our shared ambitions.

The CSSJTCW wrote to the new Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero shortly after he took up the role. The Cabinet Secretary expressed her willingness to work closely with the new UK Government on our shared ambition of tackling poverty to develop a permanent, effective form of protection for households in need.

The Cabinet Secretary had a very productive meeting with the Minister for Energy and Consumers in early October to clarify the direction of travel from UK Government to enable both governments to work together. The Cabinet Secretary welcomed us working together on an open basis to share policies to better protect Welsh households. It is important

Welsh Government can provide feedback on the impacts any proposals have for struggling householders in Wales.

We will work with UK Government to consider the possibility of a social tariff and other forms of social discounting. We believe a social tariff can be funded in a progressive way that supports the most vulnerable without having significant negative impacts on other households. The severity and longevity of the affordability crisis demands the consideration of new, progressive approaches

Officials regularly engage with counterparts in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). These meetings provide an opportunity to consider the impact UK Government policy has on householders in Wales. It is important the impact of policy changes is viewed through the lens of vulnerable people, people who often cannot afford to change their energy consumption, for medical reasons, or simply cannot afford to meet their rising energy bills.

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

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/3/25

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

SeneddLJC@senedd.wales

9 January 2025

Dear Mike,

Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement: Forthcoming Intergovernmental Meetings

I am writing in accordance with the Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement to notify you that I attended the second meeting of the Four Nations Group on the UK Government Child Poverty Strategy. As I noted in my letter to you in November the purpose of the group is to embed Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland into the development of a UK-wide strategy on Child Poverty. The group will provide the opportunity for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to inform the development of the UK-wide strategy and ensure the proposed strategy complements existing and developing strategies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The meeting, held on the 11th of December was chaired by Alison McGovern MP - Minister for Employment. Also in attendance was Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP – Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Scottish Government and Gordon Lyons MLA, Minister for Communities

The meeting focused on the Priority areas for the UK strategy and a forward look to future Taskforce and Four Nations meetings. During this meeting I highlighted key Welsh Government asks on energy social tariffs and Local Housing Allowance Rates. I also highlighted the importance of childcare as part of supporting people on pathways out of poverty and accessing skills and employment.

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.

I am copying this letter to Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs; the Children, Young People and Education Committee; and the Equalities and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,

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

Jane Dodds
Aelod o'r Senedd dros
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
—
Member of the Senedd for
Mid and West Wales

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.cymru
—
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.wales

0300 200 6565
@janedoddswld
@DoddsJane
/JaneDoddsWLD

Jenny Rathbone MS
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Dyddiad | Date: 15.01.2025
Pwnc | Subject: Response to Draft Budget

Annwyl Jenny,

Thank you for your role in chairing the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

On January 13th, I informed you that I planned to write to you following the scrutiny of the Equality and Social Justice MEG and the evidence of the Cabinet Secretary for Equality and Social Justice, Jane Hutt.

I would like our response to the draft budget to include a specific request on how the Welsh Government is challenging the UK Government on the following two changes to the benefits system, which have resulted in children and older people being poorer:

1. That the UK Government remove the two-child benefit cap on Child Benefit.
2. That the UK Government restore the Winter Fuel Allowance to older people.

I realise that the above are reserved matters and that there may be disagreement on the committee, but there is no reason why the Welsh Government cannot clearly state that they have made these representations.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yn gywir,

Jane Dodds

Jane Dodds
Aelod o'r Senedd dros
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru
—
Member of the Senedd for
Mid and West Wales

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.cymru
—
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
Jane.Dodds@senedd.wales

0300 200 6565
@janedoddswld
@DoddsJane
/JaneDoddsWLD

Jane Dodds MS/AS
Member of the Senedd for Mid and West Wales
Aelod o'r Senedd dros Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

—

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
SeneddCydraddoldeb@senedd.cymru
senedd.cymru/SeneddCydraddoldeb
0300 200 6565

—

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
SeneddEquality@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/SeneddEquality
0300 200 6565

Buffy Williams MS
Chair of the Children and Young People Committee

January 15th 2025

Dear Buffy,

Budget Scrutiny on Welsh Benefits Supporting Children

Before publication of the Draft Budget, the Bevan Foundation called for the Welsh Government to uprate the eligibility criteria and cash value of Welsh benefits in line with inflation. This includes the Education Maintenance Allowance, the School Essentials Grant and Free School Meals for pupils in secondary schools.

The Equality and Social Justice Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice about uprating these benefits during our Draft Budget evidence session on 13 January. The Cabinet Secretary responded that this was a matter for the Cabinet Secretary for Education. Due to time constraints we were unable to challenge this response, however we agreed to draw it to your attention.

In light of the relevance of these social justice issues, I would be grateful if the CYPE Committee would allow me to attend your budget scrutiny with the Cabinet Secretary for Education tomorrow in my capacity as Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee. I have the agenda and the Cabinet Secretary's supporting evidence and would be grateful with your agreement, if I might be able to ask a couple of questions.

Cofion cynnes,

Jenny Rathbone MS
Equality and Social Justice Committee

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

Ein cyf/Our ref: JH/PO/15/2025

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair
Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament

SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

21 January 2025

Dear Jenny

I am writing to provide an update from the Welsh Government one year on from the publication of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report on a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence.

I welcomed the broad thrust of your conclusions at the time, which were in line with our VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 that adopted a public health approach to tackle the causes as well as the effects of gender-based violence. This work continues to be delivered through our VAWDASV Blueprint collaboration and overseen by the National Partnership Board which I co-chair with Emma Wools (Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales).

Annex 1 provides an update on each of your recommendations. In future, we will consolidate updates on these recommendations within our statutory VAWDASV Annual Report.

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

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.

ANNEX 1

How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender based violence – Welsh Government progress update

Recommendation 1. *The Welsh Government should adopt a whole-of-government approach and work with partners across public services, the private and third sectors to promote gender equality and inclusivity in Wales. To help to achieve this it should implement a 'gender equality test' which assesses the impact of all policy decisions and legislative proposals on gender equality with the aim of reducing gender disparities. The gender equality test should be introduced as soon as feasibly possible and should be applied to all Welsh Government decisions from December 2024 onwards at the latest.*

We are taking action to improve the Welsh Government's Equality Impact Assessment which forms part of the wider approach to assessing the impact of policies in an integrated way. As one of the protected characteristics covered in the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, gender is included within the review. This is expected to be completed by summer 2025. The team has engaged with policy officials across the organisation and is producing a new template for the assessment of equality impact, which will be rolled out alongside new guidance, support, and training for staff. These changes will strengthen our capability to assess the impact of our policies and legislation on women.

The team is also working to further mainstreaming equality, including gender equality, across the organisation.

Action 1. *The Welsh Government should ensure all equality plans address gender disparities, challenge stereotypes and foster a culture of respect and equality. It should work with partners on detailed actions it will take in the short, medium and longer-term to improve public awareness about gender issues, promote women in leadership, and enforce rights that guarantee equality and freedom from discrimination, harassment and violence. An update on these actions should be provided to the Senedd in Plenary within six months of the Senedd debate for this report and annually thereafter.*

The key mechanism to report on progress to address gender disparities and challenge stereotypes is the Gender Equality Forum (GEF). The GEF advises on equality issues across Wales and brings together internal and external stakeholders working on gender equality issues across Wales. An update was presented to the GEF on 4 December 2024 on the *"Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan".* Minutes of this meeting and the updates against each objective will be published on the Welsh Government's Gender Equality Forum webpages in January 2025.

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;*

A core briefing about the VAWDASV Strategy and Blueprint has been finalised and shared with key stakeholders to generate a better understanding of the VAWDASV Strategy and Blueprint structure. A 7-minute briefing is distributed quarterly to all stakeholders including the VAWDASV National Partnership Board and National Programme board members, all workstreams, regional advisors, PCC VAWDASV Policy officers and survivor voice panel members which informs them of the ongoing developments for each of the Blueprint Workstreams.

In addition, the latest VAWDASV Blueprint annual progress update was published on 25 November 2024, which provides an update against each of the high-level actions published in March 2023.

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 Equality Race and Disability Evidence Units mission is to improve the availability, quality, granularity and accessibility of evidence about individuals with protected and associated characteristics so that we fully understand the level and types of inequalities across Wales. This will enable decision makers across Wales to develop better informed policies and measure their impact for all groups of people. The Evidence Units run an evidence program of work to meet evidence needs and publishes a regular update on progress for key projects on its website Equality, Race, and Disability Evidence Units | GOV.WALES

I would also like to provide an update on the VAWDASV national indicators. A task and finish group was established in 2023 to develop and build on the work undertaken on national indicators in 2019. This group involved collaboration between Welsh Government colleagues from policy teams and Knowledge and Analytical Services. The group identified a number of challenges that need to be addressed as part of a review of the national indicators, including:

- A lack of alignment with the VAWDASV National Strategy and other key national strategies such as the Well-being of Future Generations and the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan;
- Measurement issues due to a number of the indicators describing intended outcomes or behavioural change rather than specific, quantifiable measures; and
- Data source challenges due to a significant portion of the anticipated data sources outlined in the 2019 technical document being unsuitable for use or no longer available.

The key conclusion from the task and finish group is that the mapping showed a significant gap between the potential data available and their applicability to the national indicators, necessitating a need to conduct a wider mapping of the data landscape for VAWDASV in Wales. To address this, we will be commissioning two pieces of research:

- An investigation of the data landscape of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence in Wales. This exercise will involve assessing the data currently available at a national level and identifying potential sources that are high-quality, reliable, and repeatable.

- A comprehensive theory of change. This will ensure that the indicators are effectively aligned with the purposes of the VAWDASV Act and the objectives of the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 and can capture meaningful progress.

Recommendation 3, Action 3. *The Welsh Government should set out the timelines for the creation of the Central Repository and how the repository will support collaboration, knowledge sharing and facilitate research. In particular, the Welsh Government should identify opportunities for researching interventions that engage men and boys specifically in order to add to the evidence base on this issue.*

As I set out in my response in February 2024, we have adjusted our plans for a Central Repository to take account of the changing landscape of VAWDASV in Wales and the critical importance of focusing available resources on delivery and front-line services in particular. I will take every opportunity to ensure available resources are used as effectively as possible.

The bedding in of the VAWDASV Blueprint over the last two years has demonstrated this is a function which can best be served by other means. In this case, the communications framework for the Blueprint now provides a vehicle for agencies to share relevant evidence and research. In addition, the VAWDASV Research Network for Wales, established at the end of 2021, has brought together an inclusive research community to research, collaborate, and work towards the elimination of VAWDASV.

VAWDASV evidence planning is an iterative process, and progress on workstream evidence requirements and research undertaken is reported on in the VAWDASV Annual Report and Blueprint high level update.

Recommendation 4. *The Welsh Government should take urgent action to ensure that fast-tracked, specific and specialised therapeutic services are available for all babies, children and young people who experience or witness gender-based violence and provide details of these in response to this report.*

Officials have undertaken a review of the existing provision and landscape across sectors including CAFCASS, Social Services, Education and Health which demonstrates existing work taking place across Wales. The review, for example, highlights work within local authorities, who commission a range of services for children and young people and their families when they have been affected by violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

It is evident from the review that further work is required in this area, particularly around understanding the specific provision in Education and Health services and alignment to VAWDASV specialist provision. A cross-governmental approach to these issues is required and I have shared this review with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Cabinet Secretary for Health.

I have previously provided examples of how Welsh Government funds a number of specialist VAWDASV sector services directly to provide therapeutic support and recovery interventions for children and young people. Regional VAWDASV teams are also funded and have devolved authority to commission services in line with population need. The VAWDASV Blueprint Children and Young People's workstream is currently working on several actions to improve the landscape for survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In line with the public health approach, I intend to continue my partnership approach across the public and specialist sector to encourage our partners to prioritise and take ownership of any recommendations that develop as part of the Blueprint's programme of work.

Recommendation 4, Action 4. *Some of the particular challenges faced by migrant women were set out in our report: 'Gender based violence: The needs of migrant women'. We will be requesting an update to the recommendations and conclusions of that report in Spring 2024.*

We have assessed progress against the recommendations set out in the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report *'Gender based violence: The needs of migrant women'* report and collated a summary update:

Language and Interpretation Services: The Welsh Government is addressing language and interpretation issues for migrant women by utilising the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) and developing e-learning modules for public sector staff. WITS provides high-quality interpretation and translation services to ensure that language barriers do not prevent migrant women from accessing essential services. The e-learning modules aim to equip public sector staff with the necessary skills to effectively communicate with non-English speaking individuals, thereby improving service delivery and support for migrant women.

Support for NRPF Victims: The Welsh Government has funded Bawso to deliver the 'top up' pilot to support migrant women who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence and have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in 2024-25. This funding has continued to ensure that migrant victims in Wales with no recourse to public funds are offered additional support whilst navigating the complex immigration landscape, including safe housing, legal assistance, and healthcare services. Ongoing analysis is taking place to identify the most appropriate and sustainable route of supporting people moving forwards.

Annual Updates on NRPF Work: The Welsh Government will publish annual updates on its NRPF work via the VAWDASV Annual Report, including the activities of the NRPF steering group and progress on supporting migrant women with NRPF. These updates will provide transparency and accountability, highlighting the achievements and challenges faced in supporting migrant women. The annual reports will also outline future plans and initiatives to further improve support for this vulnerable group.

Review of NRPF Guidance: An ongoing review of NRPF guidance includes an internal review, an external survey, and workshops with local authorities to improve implementation, with revised guidance expected by spring 20255. The review aims to identify gaps and areas for improvement in the current guidance, ensuring that it is comprehensive and effective in addressing the needs of migrant women with NRPF. The revised guidance will provide clear instructions and best practices for local authorities and service providers.

Legal Advice for Migrant Women: The Welsh Government has funded training and accreditation for staff to provide immigration legal advice and supports projects like Asylum Justice to safeguard legal advice for migrants. This initiative aims to ensure that migrant women have access to accurate and timely legal advice, helping them navigate the complex immigration system. By supporting organizations like Asylum Justice, the Welsh Government is committed to protecting the rights of migrant women and ensuring they receive the legal support they need.

Engagement with UK Government: The Welsh Government continues to engage with the UK Government to improve the provision of immigration legal advice and raises this issue at the Interministerial Board on Safety, Security, and Migration. This engagement aims to advocate for better policies and resources to support migrant women, ensuring that their needs are considered in national immigration policies. The Welsh Government is also working to influence UK-wide initiatives to improve the overall support system for migrant women.

Data Sharing Restrictions: The Home Office is considering policy recommendations to establish a firewall between police and immigration enforcement to prevent data sharing and increase victims' confidence in reporting. This policy aims to protect the privacy and safety of migrant women, ensuring that they can report crimes without fear of immigration enforcement. By establishing clear boundaries between law enforcement and immigration authorities, the Welsh Government hopes to build trust and encourage more migrant women to seek help when needed.

Recommendation 5. *The Welsh Government should request that Estyn's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales undertakes a national thematic review of healthy relationships in schools. The review should be included in the next available programme of thematic reviews and completed within the usual timescales.*

Estyn have confirmed that this will form part of the Estyn Thematic Review 2025/26 schedule, subject to formal agreement.

Recommendation 6. *The Welsh Government must take immediate action to ensure that teachers are reminded of the mandatory reporting duty placed on them in relation to female genital mutilation (FGM).*

The Welsh Government wrote to schools at the end of Easter Term 2024 to remind them of the mandatory duty to report cases or suspected cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In addition, in October, VAWDASV policy officials presented to the Safeguarding Education Group, which consists of safeguarding leads across Wales, spotlighting the importance of recognising and responding to cases of FGM.

Recommendation 6, Action 5. *The Minister for Education should write to higher education institutions in Wales to remind them of the Welsh Government's expectations and direct the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research to work with universities to agree actions which strengthen preventative approaches across the sector.*

The Minister for Further and Higher Education has written to higher education institutions and Medr to highlight the importance of a strategic approach to preventing and tackling gender-based violence in universities across Wales. I am pleased to be working across portfolio areas on such an important issue, and I am aware that officials from across the VAWDASV and tertiary education policy areas are engaging regularly on these matters.

Medr, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, are responsible for funding and regulating the tertiary education and research sector in Wales. Medr representatives are members of the 'gender-based harassment in all public spaces' VAWDASV Blueprint

workstream, which provides helpful opportunity for engagement and participation through a partnership approach. Medr's strategic plan is currently being finalised, prior to formal submission to Welsh Ministers and I understand that following the consultation process, its revised draft will demonstrate their commitment to supporting the legislative and strategic approach to tackling VAWDASV in Wales.

Recommendation 7. *The Welsh Government should require its newly established Advisory Panel for Digital Resilience to agree its priorities and forward work programme at pace and publish these by the end of April 2024. The Panel should clarify which areas it will prioritise, estimated timescales for sequencing of its forward work programme and how it will address the significant areas of non-devolved policy and legislation relating to digital and online regulation.*

The Panel as referred in the original recommendation and known as the Keeping Safe Online Youth Group has been revised with a new delivery partner, Praesidio Safeguarding, who were appointed to facilitate meetings of the Keeping Safe Online Youth Group. The new group held its first meeting in November 2024. The group continues to comprise young people under the age of 16 and therefore does not have a purpose of identifying and reporting upon priorities. Its purpose is to ensure that youth voice is at the heart of the work of the Digital Resilience in Education Team, Hwb which provides the Keeping Safe Online are of Hwb.

The Digital Resilience in Education Team continues to focus on providing information, guidance and support on online safety and digital resilience for young learners, their families/carers and practitioners and school staff.

Engagement continues with industry experts to identify latest developments and trends pertaining to online safety and digital resilience and holds a Symposium on an annual basis (November) to bring these experts together to discuss priorities which inform the work plan for the Digital Resilience in Education Team for the coming year.

Recommendation 8. *The Welsh Government should work with health bodies to enhance the ability of healthcare professionals to identify and respond to GBV. To give effect to this recommendation the Welsh Government should:*

- *extend the Ask and Act duty to other health and social care professionals and issue revised guidance to GPs in the first instance;*
- *track and publicly report statistics on the participation of staff in training programmes;*
- *collate and publish statistics on the timeliness of response times (between disclosure and being seen by a specialist) to Ask and Act referrals;*
- *clearly outline the methodology for measuring the impact of training initiatives.*

This work should be completed by March 2025.

The NHS Women's Health Plan for Wales published on 10 December 2024 sets out the NHS Wales approach to improving healthcare services for women. The plan focuses on clinical areas that are a priority in Wales, one of which being VAWDASV. This priority includes actions aligned in principle to the recommendations of the Committee, with a short term time-frame of under two years for health boards to ensure that there are trained staff to support data collection, training, implementation of policy including the VAWDASV Act and the Serious Violence Duty and to provide education on VAWDASV to all healthcare professionals to build confidence and competence to ask about violence.

Further progress on this recommendation will be reported through the NHS Wales Executive reporting mechanisms on the Women's Health Plan.

Recommendation 9. *The Welsh Government should establish a seventh workstream within the VAWDASV Blueprint whose mission will be to make ambitious recommendations on how businesses and organisations can create safer and more equal workplaces. The workstream should cover practical information on the policies, procedures and training necessary to support this aim. The group should operate in a spirit of social partnership with representation from employers and trade unions.*

An update on the progress of the Blueprint Workplace Harassment workstream for 2023-24 is set out in the Blueprint Progress report published in November 2024.

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.*

Over the past 18 months, the Welsh Government has funded an award-winning early intervention and prevention campaign called Sound. It focuses on engaging men and boys across Wales to play a role in tackling VAWDASV. The campaign uses Welsh celebrities and influencers, as well as cohorts of men and boys across Wales, including apprentices from a local college and boxers from a gym in Newport. In the summer of 2024, it launched its documentary named 'Sound Lad' which has now reached over 95% of men and boys across Wales in the target audience group of 18-35 years.

In just over twelve months, Sound has shifted attitudes, creating opportunities for men to educate themselves and have meaningful conversations about positive behaviour patterns. As the campaign continues to build on its first-year foundations, Sound will continue to develop content for the audience. Targeted visible support for young men, through education resources, video-led influencer engagement and focused discussion with bilingual Welsh communities. Though a rolling campaign, we have undertaken an evaluation of the impact that the campaign has had so far and identified next steps. The next phase of this campaign will focus on gender-based harassment in public spaces and is due to launch at the end of February.

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.*

In December 2023, through the Blueprint's Tackling Perpetration Workstream, a Wales wide survey was launched to gather information across the whole sector about what perpetrator interventions were available. There were 55 responses in total which were mainly Criminal Justice statutory interventions. The intended purpose of the survey was multi-functional, including creating a directory of services for practitioners, establishing gaps across Wales in terms of service delivery, and to enable regions to reflect on existing services and to make more informed commissioning decisions. A report of its findings was delivered to the National Partnership Board in July and this report is due to be published shortly setting out the themes drawn from the results of the survey. I will share a copy of this report when published.

The survey results evidenced that efficacy or effectiveness is difficult to measure given the current tools available. There is an inference that only those interventions that are accredited are effective, however this is not the case. Around half of the responses were from accredited programmes or interventions, and of those accredited, only a handful are up to date with their evaluation processes. Given the complex landscape surrounding 'efficacy', Welsh Government have commissioned the University of South Wales to undertake a project establishing what 'efficacy' means when referring specifically to perpetrator interventions across the whole sector, and what commissioners may wish to take into account when considering the most effective interventions to implement. This efficacy position statement is due to be completed by April 2025.

Recommendation 12, Action 7. *The Welsh Government should report back on its work with Public Health Wales to consider whether a specific approach to alcohol abuse is necessary, and whether they intend to commission any research or data collection to better understand the relationship between alcohol and GBV given the gap in the evidence base. An update should be provided to the Senedd in the autumn term of 2024.*

The VAWDASV team sought input from the specialist sector on this recommendation. No issues have been raised in regards to the existing "Good Practice Framework for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Substance Misuse" published in 2018.

Recommendation 12, Action 8. *The Welsh Government should work with local authorities and/or the Welsh Local Government Association to ensure that local councillors have access to similar training and resources aimed at tackling GBV and report back by the end of 2024.*

The Welsh Government's VAWDASV e-learning module has been provided to the WLGA to be used on an e-learning portal and implemented by a consortia of local authorities. Local authorities and local councillors are also able to access the module on other e-learning platforms including the NHS Learning website. We will continue to promote this resource and take steps to ensure councillors are aware of the resource

In 2023 I attended the Joint Council for Wales on VAWDASV, and I am aware that VAWDASV is regularly discussed at this forum. These meetings are attended by cabinet members for workforce, human resource directors network and the trade unions. VAWDASV has also featured on the Workforce Partnership Council agenda as awareness raising items, and to ensure it is appropriately reflected in organisational policies and procedures.

Recommendation 12, Action 6. The Welsh Government should publish the results of its bystander intervention initiative as soon as possible after completion.

As set out in the VAWDASV Annual Report 2023-24, the Lead the Change: Bystander Intervention training completed the initiation phase of the pilot, including recruitment and training of trainers and began the early phases of delivering training in different formats to different cohorts. This is a three-year pilot funded by Welsh Government to run until March 2026. An evaluation of the pilot will be produced as part of this project at its completion in 2026.

Y Pwyllgor Busnes
–
Business Committee

Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN
SeneddBusnes@senedd.cymru
senedd.cymru/SeneddBusnes
0300 200 6565
–
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN
SeneddBusiness@senedd.wales
senedd.wales/SeneddBusiness
0300 200 6565

Senedd Committees

21 January 2025

Dear Chair,

Business Committee review of the Public Bill and Member Bill processes

The Business Committee is reviewing the Senedd's processes relating to Public Bills and Member Bills. We would like to hear your views on what is working well and what could be improved.

Annexed to this letter are the terms of reference for our work and a list of the areas of focus for our initial evidence gathering we have identified to date. We would welcome your views on the matters within our terms of reference which are relevant to your work, including, but not necessarily limited to, the areas of focus. If there are other matters of relevance to our terms of reference that you would like to raise in your evidence, please do so.

We would be grateful if you could provide your written evidence by Friday 28 March 2025. You can either send your submission to SeneddBusiness@senedd.wales or respond to specific questions on each of the areas of focus set out in the online form available as part of our open consultation.

To ensure that anyone who would like to share their views about the legislative processes is able to do so, we have also issued an open consultation. We would be grateful if you could share the consultation with your stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Elin Jones MS
Chair of the Business Committee

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

Annex: terms of reference and areas of focus for the initial evidence gathering phase

Public Bill process

Terms of reference

To explore options for improving the operation and effectiveness of the Senedd's scrutiny of Public Bills introduced in accordance with Standing Order 26, by reviewing experiences in the Sixth Senedd (and previous Seneddau where relevant), including:

- Relevant procedures, practices, conventions, culture and ways of working.
- The experience of legislating in a hybrid environment.

Areas of focus for the initial evidence gathering phase

- The overall effectiveness of the Senedd's consideration of Public Bills and opportunities for the public and stakeholders to contribute to the Senedd's scrutiny.
- The timetabling of Senedd scrutiny of Public Bills, including: the establishment of Bill timetables in accordance with SO26.7 (and the factors taken into account when timetables are established); and the timing of amendment tabling deadlines, the publication of Marshalled Lists/Groupings Lists and proceedings.
- The explanatory materials and information provided during the Public Bill scrutiny process, including: the requirements for Explanatory Memorandums specified in Standing Orders; the timing of written responses to Stage 1 committee reports; the provision and presentation of other information during scrutiny (such as Welsh Government-provided documents or Senedd Research publications); arrangements regarding explanatory text about the purpose and effect of amendments; and the availability, accessibility and clarity of the guidance available to Members and the public about the legislative process.
- How admissibility of amendments is assessed, and how amendments to Bills are debated and disposed of.
- How the Senedd is asked to agree to the financial consequences of Bills and amendments, including the movement of Financial Resolutions and whether it is sufficiently clear how 'significant' should be interpreted for the purposes of SO26.69-26.71.
- Whether the rules relating to the optional 'Further' amending stages are clear enough.

- The rules relating to emergency Bills.
- Whether the experience of legislating in a hybrid context, in which Members and others may participate virtually or in person, has had any impact on the Senedd's scrutiny of Public Bills.
- Any considerations for the Public Bill process arising from the increase from 60 to 96 Members in 2026 or the increase in the frequency of ordinary Senedd elections from every five years to every four years.

Member Bill process

Terms of reference

To explore options for improving the operation and effectiveness of the Senedd's Member Bill process, by:

- Reviewing experiences in the Sixth Senedd (and previous Seneddau where relevant), including relevant procedures, practices, conventions, culture and ways of working prior to a Member Bill's introduction (including but not limited to the way in which Members are selected for the opportunity to propose a Bill, the process for gaining 'leave to proceed', and the level of information Members are required to provide at these stages).
- Identifying any potential implications for the Member Bill process arising from the increase in the number of Members of the Senedd.
- Identifying and, where appropriate, raising with relevant decision-makers including the Senedd Commission and the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd, issues relating to the resource and support available to Members during the Member Bill process.

Areas of focus for the initial evidence gathering phase

- The overall effectiveness of the Member Bill process.
- How Members are selected for the opportunity to propose a Bill.
- How Members are granted leave to introduce Bills.
- The rules about what can, or cannot, be included in a Member Bill, i.e. the 'scope' of such Bills.

- Any considerations for the Member Bill process arising from the increase from 60 to 96 Members in 2026 or the increase in the frequency of ordinary Senedd elections from every five years to every four years.
- The implications of the above for the support and resources available to Members wanting to propose Bills.

Document is Restricted