

## Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 (Senedd)

Meeting date: 2 March 2026

Meeting time: 10.00

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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### Pre-meet

(09:30–10:00)

### Public meeting

(10:00–12:05)

#### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(10:00)

#### 2 Access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food: evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

(10:00–10:30)

(Pages 1 – 21)

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

Claire Germain, Deputy Director, Tackling Poverty & Supporting Families,  
Welsh Government

Keith Smyton, Deputy Director, Food, Welsh Government

### Break

(10:30–10:35)

#### 3 General Ministerial scrutiny: session with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

(10:35 –12:05)

(Pages 22 – 78)



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

Amelia John, Director, Communities & Social Justice, Welsh Government

Andrew Charles, Deputy Director, Cohesive Communities, Welsh Government

Ian Jones, Deputy Director, Equality, Poverty & Children's Evidence and Support, Welsh Government

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

Mike Connolly, Deputy Director, Community Safety Division, Welsh Government

## **4 Papers to note**

(12:05)

### **4.1 Correspondence to the Chair from Cadoxton Primary School regarding "Ready, Steady, Cook – Family Healthy Cooking Programme"**

(Pages 79 – 81)

### **4.2 Correspondence to the Chair from NHS Wales Dieticians regarding the Access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food inquiry**

(Pages 82 – 83)

### **4.3 Correspondence to the Chair from Colegau Cymru regarding Welsh Colleges new approach to recognising prior learning**

(Pages 84 – 85)

### **4.4 Correspondence to the Chair from Fishguard Bay Sustainable Food regarding the access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food inquiry**

(Pages 86 – 90)

### **4.5 Correspondence to the Chair from Michelle Crotty of the Judicial Office regarding experiences of the Criminal Justice System**

(Pages 91 – 93)

**4.6 Correspondence to the Chair from the Magistrates Association regarding the increase in women in Wales remanded in custody by magistrates' courts**

(Pages 94 – 98)

**4.7 Correspondence to the Chair from the Future Generations Commissioner regarding the Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of the Future Generations Report 2025**

(Pages 99 – 101)

**5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of today's meeting**

(12:05)

**Private meeting**

(12:05–12:20)

**6 Access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food: evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip – consideration of the evidence**

(12:05–12:10)

**7 General Ministerial scrutiny session with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip – consideration of the evidence**

(12:10–12:20)

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Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet  
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/25/2026

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

20 January 2026

Dear Jenny

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond as part of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

We recognise that there are significant barriers to overcoming food poverty in a sustainable, preventative way that provides healthy and nutritious food for all. Rising food costs make healthy choices less affordable for many families. Access to fresh produce can be limited in rural and deprived urban areas. Food systems can often be fragmented, and not enough is done to connect local producers directly with communities. In addition, gaps in food literacy mean that too many people lack the skills and confidence to prepare nutritious meals. Despite these challenges, we are determined to build a food system that works for everyone. That is why we are:

- Funding Local Food Partnerships, giving communities a voice in shaping food systems that meet their needs and ensuring healthier food is accessible and affordable.

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

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

- Setting a target to increase public sector procurement of Welsh food by 50% by 2030, strengthening local supply chains and ensuring schools, hospitals, and public services serve nutritious, locally sourced meals.
- Embedding food literacy in education, so that every child leaves school with the skills to prepare healthy meals and understand nutrition.
- Supporting the expansion of edible horticulture and community growing projects, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening local resilience.

The ability for all people to be able to access healthy, nutritious and affordable food, no matter their circumstance, is a basic right and one which the Welsh Government takes very seriously. This is why since 2019 the Welsh Government has invested over £29 million to support community food organisations to tackle food insecurity and provide a wider range of services to help individuals and households maximise their income and build financial resilience.

Funding has supported foodbanks and community food organisations to overcome barriers to accessing, storing and distributing additional supplies of good quality food, including good food surplus. It has also provided funding for Local Food Partnership Coordinators, who seek to bring members of the community together to work towards a more resilient food system, with shorter food miles, less food waste and improved access to nutritional, affordable food for everyone. The Food Partnerships are supporting a range of food related projects which aim to increase access to locally grown produce for all, building community knowledge and skills in growing, facilitating nutrition and cooking skills sessions and helping to reduce the carbon footprint.

Our Emergency Food Aid funding, issued to local authorities to distribute in their areas, is making a real difference to those struggling with affording the cost of food. It is supporting food pantries and co-ops, providing cookery and nutrition classes to families and supporting community growing projects

Tackling food poverty is linked to broader strategies on poverty reduction, health, and education. Our funding reflects this by closely aligning with initiatives that improve household income, reduce inequality, and strengthen local food networks. This integrated approach ensures that while urgent needs are met, we also address structural issues that drive food poverty, helping families move from crisis to stability.

The Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Delivery Plan 2025-27 places a strong emphasis on access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all people. It sets out a series of themes, goals and actions to help focus where we can collectively effect the greatest change. Action 9 of the plan aims to support healthy weight initiatives that

reduce health and economic inequalities. This includes initiatives such as Universal Free School Meals ('UPFSM') and our targeted meal offer in secondary schools meaning that more than two thirds of Welsh learners can access a free school meal every day. The Delivery Plan's goals for schools and settings are:

- School meals meet learners' nutritional requirements
- food provided in school premises is healthy by default
- Children develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to plan, grow, prepare and cook affordable and healthier food
- Children experience a range of different foods and understand where they come from
- physical activity is part of the day-to-day life of the school
- All children have opportunities to be active during the school day
- all children have the opportunity to explore and experience a range of sport and active recreation options and are helped to find the ones that they enjoy
- children are physically literate

On 17 December 2025, the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 were laid before the Senedd. These new Regulations strengthen standards for food and drink provided in maintained nursery and primary schools across Wales, supporting access to healthier, balanced choices for learners, ensuring closer alignment with the latest nutritional guidance. These will come into force on 31 October 2026.

Through the Universal Primary Free School Meal commitment just under 174,000 pupils have become newly eligible for a free school meal, and over 57 million additional free school meals have been served since roll out began in September 2022. This transformational intervention is helping to support Welsh families with the cost of living and keeping much needed money in their pockets. Recognising the priority we place on delivering a quality offer in the face of rising costs, on 10 December 2025 the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced an increase to the rate paid per Universal Primary Free School Meal, from £3.20 to £3.40. This will safeguard continued delivery of the offer and help ensure our learners have the best possible start. In addition, to maximise the impact of our universal primary offer we are independently evaluating it so that lessons can be learned and its delivery can be continually improved.

The "food and fun" School Holiday Enrichment Programme is a school-based scheme that provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to learners in areas of socio-economic disadvantage for a minimum of 12 days during the school summer holidays. Children and their families

can also engage in joint physical activity and learn about the benefits of healthy food adopting Community Focused School approaches.

The Community Food Strategy (CFS), published in April 2025, aims to encourage the production and supply of affordable, sustainable and locally sourced food in Wales. An inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) core members was held on 3rd December 2025. This is a dedicated Group with the relevant expertise and specialisms necessary to guide delivery against the objectives of the strategy and measure its progress and success.

The CFS focuses on invigorating and supporting grassroots food-related initiatives and improving the focus on food matters in policy making, planning, and service delivery at a community scale. Towards this goal, the Welsh Government has committed funding of over £2 million in 2025 to 2026 to further develop the network of Local Food Partnerships across Wales and to fund Local Food Partnership Coordinator posts until March 2028. The purpose of this investment is to support the development and long-term viability of local food initiatives by building strong relationships between them and the communities they serve. Grant funding objectives for Local Food Partnerships include a focus on the local availability, affordability, access and consumption of healthy and nutritious food for all community citizens, including for those experiencing poverty and with protected characteristics.

The Strategy underpins the actions within the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales delivery plan, particularly around improving the provision and access to locally sourced, healthy food.

Across Wales there are numerous examples of how healthy, nutritious, and affordable food is being made available to everyone. In Blaenau Gwent the food partnership have introduced a fruit and vegetable voucher scheme across fifty-two households involving a £10 voucher to redeem at an independent greengrocer in Ebbw Vale. Referrals for the scheme have been received from Flying Start, reinforcing the message of giving every child the best start in life. The voucher redemption rate in the first month was 88%.

A pilot project in Brecon and Newtown is providing families with subsidised veg boxes followed by monthly cooking classes. Whilst in Carmarthenshire, the food partnership have been working with children on a menu redesign for schools which involves the pupils visiting farms to understand more about the journey of food.

Food Cardiff's 'Planet Card' scheme offers discounts on organic produce at the city's Farmers Markets and is designed to address the issue of food insecurity and to

improve access to healthy, sustainable food options for people experiencing low-income.

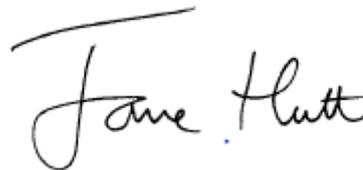
We are supporting the Welsh Veg in Schools scheme which is increasing the number of vegetables our children are eating in their school lunches, improving their diets today and improving their food literacy for the future, while also supporting local farmers and growers. These are just some examples of initiatives which are tackling food poverty by supporting the provision of healthy and nutritious food. The Local Food Partnerships are heavily involved in this and hold regular network meetings where good practice is shared. Later this month I will be meeting Local Authority Cabinet leads with responsibility for Local Food Partnerships and I look forward to sharing with them some of the good practice that is happening across Wales.

Together, these measures represent a shift away from short-term emergency responses toward long-term prevention addressing both immediate needs and underlying causes. By working in partnership with communities, producers, and public services, we can overcome the barriers to food poverty and build a healthier, more sustainable future for Wales.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y  
Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd  
a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet  
Secretary for Climate Change and Rural  
Affairs



**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

# Agenda Item 3

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

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# Equality & Social Justice Committee

## General Scrutiny

February 2026

We remain committed to tackling poverty and reducing inequality in Wales. During this Senedd term, we have delivered a range of initiatives to maximise household income and remove barriers to support, underpinned by the *Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024*, which sets clear objectives to prevent and mitigate child poverty. This work is supported by our Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan (2025–2029), updated in 2024, and our Community Cohesion Programme, which strengthens partnership working, supports public bodies and promotes equality of opportunity.

We also continue to embed 'integration from day one' for people seeking sanctuary, deliver the VAWDASV National Strategy (2022–2026), work closely with the third sector, and ensure the fair and equal provision of devolved services, including for those in contact with the criminal justice system.

An annex is attached which addresses the further issues you raised in your letter of 26 January.

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## 1. Tackling poverty

Since 2022 we have invested over £7bn across government to support households in Wales through programmes to alleviate financial pressures, help maximise income and keep money in people's pockets. This includes investing in our Childcare Offer and Flying Start, in Universal Primary Free School Meals and free breakfasts in primary schools, in our Baby Bundles programme, in our Schools Essentials Grant, in our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, in affordable travel, and through the crisis support provided by our Discretionary Assistance Fund. Our Single Advice Fund and Claim What's Yours campaigns make sure families are claiming all they are entitled to.

### Income maximisation

During this Senedd term, we have delivered a range of successful initiatives to maximise household income by removing barriers, increasing awareness, offering practical support, and simplifying applications. Our flagship Claim What's Yours campaign has, since 2021, encouraged 90,000 people, many who would not usually seek advice, to contact Advicelink Cymru, resulting in them claiming £30 million in additional income. Alongside this, our free income maximisation training has been attended by over 7,000 frontline workers, building their knowledge and confidence to help service users access their entitlements.

### Streamlining Welsh Benefits

The Welsh Benefits Charter, launched in January 2024, underpins this work, and its adoption by all local authorities reflects their collective commitment as our main delivery partners. In phase one, we are introducing a "tell your story once" approach for three key Welsh benefits: the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Free School Meals, and the School Essentials Grant. We are ensuring authorities understand how they can determine entitlement for these benefits using a single set of information provided by an individual. Local authorities taking part in our pilot with data analytics company Policy in Practice also gained valuable insights, particularly regarding their powers to share and repurpose data to improve take-up of Welsh benefits. They have been able to use a tool to identify and target residents who are missing out on their entitlements and deliver benefit take up campaigns targeting households who did not know they were entitled to support.

### Funding for Advice Services

The Single Advice Fund services are central to our income-maximisation work. Between January 2020 and September 2025, the services helped people to claim £213 million in additional income and write off £71 million in debt. We have allocated £36 million over three years (April 2025–March 2028) to sustain these essential services. The long-term funding enables better service planning, supports staff well-being through longer employment contracts, and aligns with the Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector.

## Digital Inclusion

*Digital Inclusion Wales*, our new digital inclusion programme, launched last year, will provide national advice and support to organisations across Wales on digital inclusion and the minimum digital living standard as well as funding to organisations across all sectors to provide locally developed and delivered solutions to help ensure everyone in Wales can engage with and benefit from digital technology. It builds on our previous programme, *Digital Communities Wales: Digital, Confidence Health and Wellbeing*, which supported over an estimated 246,000 people to gain the basic digital skills, confidence and motivation between July 2019 and 30 September 2025.

Alongside this we have provided funding to organisations across Wales to undertake pilot projects to meet the Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) and capture the impact. Welsh Government has led the way throughout the UK by commissioning research and operationalizing projects to explore the MDLS with two research reports and establishing an MDLS definition for Wales.

## Financial Inclusion

Welsh Government champions ethical saving and lending and has continued to support credit unions to grow and build resilience. Support has continued via the loan expansion scheme (£3.4m during this Senedd term), thirteen revenue project funding (including school savers, prison savers, payroll initiatives, and social media marketing), consumer duty support funding and capital funding. The loan expansion scheme alone has enabled more than 6200 additional affordable loans to be accessed by people who would otherwise be declined ethical credit, with a loan value of over £3.6m.

Welsh Government co-produced and co-owns the Financial Wellbeing Delivery Plan for Wales (with Money and Pensions Service (MaPS), 2020-2030, which sets out practical and deliverable initiatives that can both make a difference to people making the most of their money now and in the future.

Access to cash and financial services remains a concern for many; over this term Welsh Government has strengthened engagement with key stakeholders in the development and delivery of solutions for communities in Wales, these include the FCA, Cash Access UK and LINK, Fair4AllFinance and CDFIs delivering alternative community-based solutions.

Engagement with UK Government on the new Financial Inclusion Strategy has ensured the Welsh context is reflected at UK level

The Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF), is delivered consistently across Wales, providing vital emergency support for those in unexpected financial crisis with no other means of support and assisting people in moving to a more settled way of life following a financial crisis. The budget has risen from £27.4m in 2021-22 to £39.5m in 2025-26. Since the beginning of the Senedd term, more than 1.14m awards have been made totalling nearly £144m in grants. The DAF has been continuously improved, with officials engaging regularly with key

stakeholders and delivery partners to ensure the DAF offer remains relevant to changing needs on the ground.

### Child Poverty

Our **Child Poverty Strategy for Wales 2024** sets out the Welsh Government's aims to prevent and mitigate child poverty in Wales. It provides an ambitious set of objectives and priorities through which we can deliver policies and programmes that support the outcomes we want for our children and young people now and in the future. An **update on progress** (including our **Monitoring Framework**) was published on 02 December 2025. Alongside the progress report, we also **published** evidence from people with lived experience of poverty to understand how policies and actions are, or are not, making a difference to the lives of children, young people and families.

Since 2023/24, over £2.4 million has been awarded to 47 organisations through the **Child Poverty Innovation and Supporting Communities Grant**, developing new and existing partnerships to deliver innovative, place-based interventions.

### Food Poverty

Since 2019, the Welsh Government has allocated over £29 million to support community food organisations to help tackle food poverty and provide a wider range of services to help individuals and households maximise their income and build financial resilience. This includes supporting the development of Local Food Partnerships in all local authorities since 2022. Local Food Partnerships bring together partners from a range of different sectors to help tackle social, economic and environmental issues, working together to ensure good food for all. They work across-sectors bringing key people together to develop a vision for a more sustainable food future that's tailored to its local area and responds to its specific needs.

### Fuel Poverty

A revised Tackling Fuel Poverty Plan was announced in June and included priority actions for the next two years.

We are investing more than £30 million this financial year to the Warm Homes Nest scheme, our programme to assist people on low incomes living in cold, damp homes with free energy efficiency measures and affordable, low carbon heating solutions. This includes a crisis route which provides emergency support to households without heating or hot water.

Up until the end of March 2024, we have invested more than £479 million to improve home energy efficiency through the Warm Homes programme. Over 82,000 households have benefitted from measures in their homes and 210,800 with free energy efficiency advice. In 2023-24 these improvements saved households around £595 on their annual energy bill.

We have also provided more than £7million funding to the Fuel Bank Foundation since June 2022 to support delivery of a national Fuel Voucher and Heat Fund scheme for those in fuel crisis. To date, these interventions have supported 226,525 people, of which more than 93,421 were children. This

funding has also supported 4,264 households with at least one older person living in it.

### Warm Hubs

This year, over 400 warm hubs across Wales are providing vital support to communities this winter, thanks to £1.5 million Welsh Government funding. This funding commitment in the Welsh Government's budget for 2025-2026 builds on previous investment, totalling £4 million since 2022, and has ensured hubs can support communities throughout the year, not just during winter months.

### Cwtch Mawr

Since its launch in February 2024 Cwtch Mawr, Wales' pilot Multibank run by Faith in Families, has distributed over 1 million essential items across the Swansea area through trusted partners. Over the two year period this network has supported 59,000 family instances and over 49,500 children and young people. The partnership are also seeing continued demand from the over-60s (25,000 instances).

### Basic income for Care Leavers in Wales pilot

Our innovative and ground-breaking Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales pilot, which was launched in July 2022, provided 644 care-experienced young people in Wales with a basic income of £1,600 per month (pre-tax) for up to 24 months after turning 18 years of age. The pilot concluded in November 2025 when the final recipient received their final payment. The independent evaluation, led by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE) at Cardiff University with partners at the University of Oxford, the University of York, King's College London, and Northumbria University, has been underway since November 2022 and has reported annually since 2024. The evaluation continues into 2027, when the final report will be published.

## 2. Reducing inequality

Alongside tackling poverty, reducing inequality is central to how we deliver our work in Wales. Our Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan, which was updated and expanded in 2024 to include human rights, runs from 2025-2029. Its focus is on promoting equality, tackling discrimination and ensuring human rights are central to policy making in Wales. Several specific, targeted plans set out cross cutting actions which are being taken forward by all policy teams across Welsh Government and will contribute to deliver of our seven National Equality Objectives.

### Gender Equality and Period Dignity

We are strongly committed to gender equality and have been pleased to support Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales since 2022 to advance gender equality through work on diverse leadership, women's rights and caring responsibilities. We have also provided funding to Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales (FTWW) to strengthen policy capacity on period dignity, gender equality and disability rights, alongside funding in 2023/24 to update the Endometriosis website. Since 2022, funding has supported the Equal Power Equal Voice mentoring programme, delivered by WEN Wales with partners to increase diverse representation in public and political life. Almost 300 people have completed the programme, which has seen strong engagement in both the mentee community, and with mentors. Many have gone on to take leadership roles in politics, charity boards, civil service, third sector and in public interest campaigns. We have enjoyed the support of almost 200 mentors, many of whom volunteer over multiple years and include several former mentees paying on their positive experience of the programme. Of those on the EPEV programme, 68% were women.

We are tackling period poverty. Through our Period Dignity grant, funding has been allocated to all Welsh Local Authorities to enable Period Dignity leads to distribute products and related items across schools, community settings, sporting organisations and third-sector organisations.

### Race equality and anti-racism

After working co-productively with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, communities and organisations to develop the plan, in 2022, we launched our Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP). Funding for the implementation of the plan has come from across government to deliver on the cross-portfolio commitments.

We also engage with race equality issues via the Wales Race Forum which is a quarterly Welsh Government-led advisory group bringing together organisations, community representatives, and stakeholders to discuss and advise on issues affecting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in Wales. It is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip.

The refreshed Anti-racist Wales Action Plan brings together our Nation of Sanctuary commitments from our 2019 Plan, the relevant chapter in the original

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (2022) and our Global Refugee Forum pledge (2023) into a refreshed 'Wales – a nation of sanctuary' chapter.

The Nation of Sanctuary policy area has reported progress against every associated action within the ArWAP. Key progress includes the extension of the Wales Sanctuary Service, strengthening the support offered to forced migrants. Funding for the 'Refugee Well Housing' project to support newly recognised refugees to access 'Move On' accommodation.

Within the ArWAP, one area of particular focus is supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities in Wales. This has included funding through our Sites Capital Grant to improve accommodation and sites; we have also provide a range of other support, including for advocacy services and to address fuel poverty in the community, delivered through Local Authorities and through the Fuel Bank Foundation, and launching education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people in Wales in December 2023.

We recognise the importance of lived-experience and have embedded this within our policy work. For example, the commissioning of national work on transit provision across Wales has engagement with Gypsies and Travellers and Roma people as an essential component. We have commissioned a community-informed national training programme to improve culturally competent practice across Welsh local authorities in relation to their engagement with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

### Disability equality

In December 2025 we published our ten-year Disabled People's Rights Plan which sets out practical actions and long-term co-produced goals to tackle barriers across employment, transport, education, healthcare, housing, digital access, and public services. This Plan was informed by the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce which was established in 2021 and convened ten thematic groups, involving over 350 external stakeholders and more than 200 government policy leads, to develop recommendations on how to improve the lives of disabled people. Many policy areas have already started delivering against priority actions identified in the recommendations, and we have also been actively providing Social Model of Disability training for Cabinet Members. Looking forward, we are establishing an External Advisory Board which will play a critical role in shaping the direction, monitoring progress, and maximising the impact of the Plan, connecting disabled people, policy makers, and service providers. Alongside the External Advisory Board, the Disability Equality Forum — chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd, and Chief Whip — provides a forum for stakeholders to engage with Welsh Government on key issues impacting disabled people and their families in Wales.

## LGBTQ+ equality

We are strongly committed to LGBTQ+ equality and promoting inclusion. Since the inception of the LGBTQ+ Action Plan in 2023, the Welsh Government has supported Pride Cymru to deliver an annual event – selling over 14,000 tickets in 2025 - and the hosting of the 2023 European Pride Organisers Annual AGM. We have provided support for the Wales-wide Grassroots Pride Fund to strengthen smaller Pride events and help create safe, inclusive environments across Wales. Galop has provided in 2024-2026 a dedicated Support Service for victims and survivors of conversion practices in Wales, aligning with the Programme for Government commitment to end such practices, providing advocacy, networking and outreach and supporting over 70 case referrals for those needing specialist support. We have funded Stonewall to deliver programmes that empower LGBTQ+ people, strengthen community organisations, reduce regional inequalities, improve well-being and safety, and transform learning environments. Recognising the importance of supporting young LGBTQ+ people, we have provided funding towards supporting LGBTQ+ youth work within schools. The Future Leaders Programme, supporting 25 young people a year, is designed to empower LGBTQ+ young people (aged 22 – 30) from across Wales to develop their understanding how we can create inclusive environments where all LGBTQ+ people can thrive. The Stonewall Cymru Leadership Programme is designed to reach more advanced leaders. The most recent event in November 2025 had over 25 attendees, and feedback was very positive

## Supporting and promoting British Sign Language (BSL)

Welsh Government strongly supports the use of BSL as part of Wales' diverse linguistic landscape; we are committed to supporting and protecting its rich cultural and historical heritage. Welsh Government has been supporting Mark Isherwood MS's BSL (Wales) Bill as it progresses through the Senedd. Welsh Government established the BSL Stakeholder Group and the development and implementation of the BSL Route Map which is an 18-month route map setting out first steps towards our ambition of creating a Wales that respects, promotes and facilitates BSL.

## Supporting Human Rights in Wales

Welsh Government is committed to safeguarding and advancing human rights in Wales, recognised in the Welsh Government commissioned Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights (SAEHR) Research report completed in 2020 and in our Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan launched in 2025

A Strengthening and Advancing Equality and Human Rights Steering Group brought together stakeholders to oversee early implementation of the SAEHR recommendations. This Steering Group later became the basis for the Human Rights Advisory Group (HRAG) creating a more formal, long term advisory structure.

The HRAG has provided sustained, cross sector advice on strengthening and advancing equality and human rights in Wales. Its remit covers four linked workstreams: legislative options; practical guidance and capability; equality and human rights impact assessment reform; and public awareness. HRAG held its early meetings in 2022, and its Terms of Reference were formally agreed on 7 November 2022. Membership updates followed until February 2025, reflecting the maturing programme of work.

We have delivered awareness-raising and engagement activity including an event at the Welsh Centre for International Affairs and awareness raising videos for Human Rights Day. We established the Legislative Options Working Group (LOWG) to undertake detailed right-by-right analysis of options for taking forward the Programme for Government commitments on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

### 3. Community Cohesion

Over this Senedd term we have invested in the Wales wide Community Cohesion Programme, and have increased funding to respond to growing needs in our communities. Our Community Cohesion Programme which has been extended to 2029 has strengthened our collective ability to monitor tensions, work with partners to mitigate emerging risks, support public bodies through training, and act as trusted conduits between communities and services to promote participation and equality of opportunity.

In this term we introduced a small grants scheme which to date has invested in projects across Wales, enhanced mechanisms for collaborative working, and provided longer-term funding to support a more strategic and sustainable model for fostering cohesion.

Following the Senedd Inquiry into Social Cohesion we established an Expert Group on Cohesion, and have engaged with them and Regional Community Cohesion teams to develop **cohesion principles for practitioners**.

We have continued to invest in national and local initiatives that reduce hate, prejudice and community tensions. The Wales Hate Support Centre, delivered by Victim Support Cymru, offers confidential 24/7 support for victims of hate crime, including a specialist service for children and young people. Alongside casework and advocacy, the service delivers national training and awareness-raising activity to improve understanding of hate crime and increase confidence to report.

Our national **Hate Hurts Wales** campaign has run multiple bursts this term, promoting reporting and highlighting the positive outcomes when victims come forward. Using TV, radio, digital and out-of-home channels, the campaign is informed by lived experience and real prosecutions. We targeted areas with higher incidence of hate crime, working closely with criminal justice partners.

Following the tragic deaths of Harvey Evans and Kyrees Sullivan in May 2023 and the subsequent disorder in Ely, we commissioned Action for Caerau and Ely (ACE) to co-ordinate development of the Ely & Caerau Action Plan. This was shaped through extensive listening and community-led co-production, overseen by a Community Steering Group of local residents. This work has informed more recent targeted interventions in Llanelli and elsewhere.

We have developed new tools to improve responses to tensions and hate. Our new Community Cohesion Response Framework supports more accurate identification, assessment and response to incidents within Welsh Government. We developed a Stakeholder Misinformation Toolkit to help community leaders address harmful information. We have funded training for councillors and council staff on mis- and disinformation threats, and developed a resource to help third sector organisations protect themselves from hate and harassment.

We continue to support Holocaust education and commemoration by funding the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to employ a support worker who promotes community-based remembrance across Wales, reinforcing awareness of the

consequences of unchecked hate and prejudice. Our Faith Communities Forum, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, originally founded after 9-11, meets quarterly and provides a forum for discussions on issues affecting faith and belief communities in Wales.

## 4. Migration and Sanctuary

Over this government term we have invested funding to support the delivery of the Migration & Nation of Sanctuary policy. A significant proportion of the funding has focused on support to Ukrainians in Wales, following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Since 2024, the principles, goals and actions of the Nation of Sanctuary policy have been set out in full within the Nation of Sanctuary chapter of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, which ensures we are maintaining a whole-government focus on dignity, inclusion, compassion and social cohesion.

We have embedded 'integration from day one' as a core principle — ensuring people seeking sanctuary can access support, information and opportunities immediately on arrival; reducing harm, promoting independence and helping individuals settle safely.

### Ukraine Response

Wales has welcomed around 8,000 Ukrainians to the UK since the full-scale invasion in February 2022. This includes over 3,300 under the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor route and over 4,600 to Homes for Ukraine household sponsors.

Initial accommodation was established on a temporary basis to welcome guests as they arrived from Ukraine and to offer them the right support to ensure they could begin to make a new life in Wales. Local authorities collectively moved on over 2,400 guests from our initial accommodation, enabling them to live more independently. This enabled us to close our initial accommodation estate earlier than anticipated, in July 2024.

We supported local authorities to provide wraparound support to new arrivals from Ukraine, including access to healthcare, education, employment support, language classes, and community integration activities, with the aim of supporting successful integration into our society.

We established the National Move On Task Force to deliver operational move on support and advice to other local authorities with initial accommodation; this service, delivered by Blaenau Gwent County Council, was instrumental in supporting move on across Wales and enabling us to close out initial accommodation estate. The National Advisory Service continues to provide accommodation and move on support to the very few Ukrainians arriving into Wales, and support and advice to local authorities supporting Ukrainians settled in our communities.

In acknowledgement of the increased pressure on local services as a result of the Ukraine response, particularly housing and accommodation, since March 2023 we have provided an additional £14m to Welsh local authorities to support Ukrainians in settled accommodation and prevent homelessness for all other

cohorts in need of homelessness prevention support. This funding is not restricted to any particular group or demographic.

Our Ukraine response would not have been possible without the “Team Wales” approach, which saw local councils, the third sector, the NHS and the Welsh Government pull together in a joint effort to establish the arrangements and services for Ukrainians fleeing the conflict.

This multi-agency approach has continued in the form of the Nation of Sanctuary Strategic Oversight Board which I co-chair alongside the WLGA’s spokesperson on migration and includes senior leaders from across our public sector and key partners.

### Resettlement & Accommodation

The Welsh Government was an integral part of the multi-agency response to supporting Afghan citizens who urgently needed to leave their country in 2021, and we worked closely with our partners and local authorities so that initial accommodation and support was available to those placed in Wales. We have continued to support the UK Government’s Afghan Resettlement Programme and are committed for Wales to play its fair share.

Through our Homes for Ukraine Super Sponsor route and support of the Afghan Resettlement Programme in Wales, we have demonstrated the added value which Devolved Government can bring to these policy areas.

We are supportive of the Home Office plans to consider pilot initiatives for more cost effective and sustainable housing solutions for asylum seekers. We continue to advocate for dispersal across Wales, avoiding reliance on large-scale accommodation, and press for plans to be developed in close coordination with local partners, ensuring community cohesion and effective integration.

### Support & Integration

We have strengthened the Wales Sanctuary Service to support migrants and sanctuary seekers to access legal advice and support, exercise their rights and reduce the risk of destitution. The Service is delivered through a multi-agency consortium, ensuring consistent access to specialist advice and advocacy across Wales.

We have increased access to English language support (ESOL) through our REACH+ Hubs, which have provided a central point of contact for anyone wishing to access ESOL in four regions of Wales, offering assessment, guidance, and connection to the right ESOL provision.

Employment plays a crucial role in aiding migrants' integration, facilitating their transition to independent living, and supporting their overall independence. We have improved professional integration pathways, including support for refugee and asylum-seeking health professionals through the Wales Asylum Seeking and Refugee Doctors (WARD) scheme, enabling qualified doctors and consultants to continue to practice within the NHS. We have also strengthened and improved access to employment platforms and re-accreditation programmes for sanctuary seekers in professions including law, engineering and healthcare.

Since 2022 we have funded the Family Reunion Integration Service which supports a safe and legal route for people seeking sanctuary in Wales. We were the first nation in the UK to fund this type of service, and I am proud that other nations have followed following its success.

### Migrant Integration Framework

In 2023 we published the **Migrant Integration Framework for Wales** which aims to help Welsh organisations understand whether migrants and host communities are well-integrated, by including approaches to support integrations across several domains of life. Implementation of the Framework is well underway, which has already led to improved data quality across work, housing, health, education, employment and wellbeing.

### Planned Migration & EU Citizens

Since 2021, we have provided funding to support EU, EEA and Swiss citizens following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This funding has provided access to support and advice on citizens' rights, including specialist immigration advice, and support to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme. This funding includes specialist support to EU citizens who experience significant barriers to support, to ensure they understand and access their rights.

Acknowledging issues faced by the Legal Aid sector and to ensure access to immigration legal advice in Wales, since 2024 we have provided funding to support immigration legal advice providers to deliver projects aimed at increasing both immediate and long-term immigration legal provision in Wales.

In 2024 we introduced the first Displaced Talent Programme in Wales, with a focus on green skills supporting cross-government priorities and collaboration. We also responded at pace to the UK Government's end to new overseas applications for social care roles, in July 2025.

## 5. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

The Welsh Government is wholly committed to tackling VAWDASV. Over this Senedd term (2021-2026) we have allocated around £53 million from the Social Justice MEG to deliver the objectives of the VAWDASV Strategy (2022-2026). This does not include funding allocated in other MEGs on direct or complimentary VAWDASV activities.

Our **VAWDASV National Strategy** (2022-2026) set out how we will work with other organisations to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Our national strategy set out six objectives, underpinned by the principles of; a whole society approach; tackling male violence; a comprehensive understanding of VAWDASV; an equalities approach; survivor's voice; a public health approach; trauma informed; and collaborative working and co-production. We publish **progress reports** on delivery of the strategy and on our Blueprint approach. This work is overseen by a VAWDASV National Partnership Board co-chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner Emma Wools. The Blueprint approach brings partners together to deliver six Blueprint workstreams: gender-based harassment in all public spaces: workplace harassment; tackling perpetration; sustainable whole system approach; older people's needs; and children and young people's needs.

### Victim services

We have funded and supported services across Wales to continue to deliver critical support for victims, hold perpetrators to account and support children and young people who are victims in their own right either of witnessing domestic abuse at home, or have been the victims of exploitation or additional complex issues.

Our core grant funding to all 6 regions across Wales enables them to address regional needs which include victim services, Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) roles, training for professionals, local communication campaigns and keyworker roles. We continue to support activities of VAWDASV third sector organisations and have provided additional support. This has included funding specific keyworkers to provide access to specialist support for people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who are victims of VAWDASV.

### Public attitudes

Our award-winning "Sound" campaign has reached more than 380,000 men and boys, promoting positive role modelling and challenging harmful behaviours. We expanded our Sound Squad of male allies and delivered a 2025 campaign highlighting gender-based harassment in public spaces. Over 1,000 people have completed our national Bystander Intervention training. Welsh Women's Aid continued delivery of the Live Fear Free Helpline, handling 28,137

enquiries in 2024–25 and over 134,000 during this Senedd term. Impactful campaigns were delivered to help individuals recognise the signs of abuse, understand how to access support via the Live Fear Free helpline, and promote safety, respect, and equality in relationships.

### National Training Framework

We have strengthened workforce capability across public services through, equipping thousands of frontline professionals across health, education, social services and policing to identify abuse, respond safely, and provide trauma informed support.

### Survivor Voice

Working with the VAWDASV National Advisers we established a survivor voice, scrutiny and involvement panel to ensure the voices and real-life experiences of survivors are at the heart of our work and that of the VAWDASV Blueprint.

We have commissioned Welsh Women's Aid to map child voice forums available in Wales, geographical area, topics covered and whether there is incentive to participate, this work informs the Blueprint's engagement with children and young people and to make recommendations for the future VAWDASV Strategy.

### Leadership

Marking 10 years of the VAWDASV Act, we held a public sector summit in 2025 emphasising leadership responsibility in tackling gender-based violence. We also delivered workplace harassment conferences across Wales and commissioned work on child voice forums and on effective perpetrator interventions to inform future policy.

### Perpetration

The University of South Wales were commissioned to undertake a piece of research on efficacy of perpetrator interventions. The research is focussed on identifying best practice for defining and measuring efficacy for perpetration interventions and will underpin a workstream position statement. The research will underpin the development of a Blueprint position statement on measuring efficacy for perpetration interventions.

### Prevention and Early Intervention

We continue to invest in school-based prevention through the Spectrum project and the Cwtch Project. In 2024–25, Spectrum engaged 40,860 pupils across 3,040 sessions, alongside 2,855 staff, to strengthen understanding of VAWDASV issues. Local authority co-ordinators are developing new support materials for delivery from 2026 onwards.

## Capital Funding Programme

Since 2022, £12m has been invested in new and refurbished properties, refuge spaces, therapeutic environments, IT equipment, and children's play areas. Regions have also used innovation funding to support early-intervention projects, mainly for children and young people

## 6. Third Sector & Volunteering

The Welsh Government recognises and highly values the role of the third sector in delivering services and empowering communities across Wales. We have continued our strong relationship with the third sector by working closely with our partners in the third sector to improve the environment in which they operate through the co-development of an updated Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector and a New Approach for Volunteering. This will make it easier for them to play their crucial role, especially in areas of prevention.

### Support for the Third Sector

The Third Sector Scheme has created a unique support structure. This includes the Third Sector Partnership Council, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip. It also includes Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) which supports voluntary sector organisations in Wales. Its members are the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and the nineteen County Voluntary Councils across Wales.

Between 2025-28, for example, TSSW will receive funding of £25.8m (a 7% increase on their previous funding baseline) as part of a three-year funding agreement to enable them to continue to deliver a needs-based model of support with a focus on those voluntary organisations working with Wales' most disadvantaged areas.

Between 2021/22 and 2024/25, TSSW has provided the following support:

- Sustainable Funding Support – 22,000 hours of support through 29,000 interactions resulting in over £72m of funding being awarded.
- Volunteering - 13,000 hours of support to nearly 3,800 organisations, enabling over 5,200 volunteers to enter into volunteer opportunities. In addition, during this period almost 14,700 signed up to volunteering opportunities
- Good Governance – over 20,000 hours of support through 19,000 interactions to nearly 5,000 organisations

The Newid programme aims to improve the digital capacity of the voluntary sector in Wales. Working closely with its partners (WCVA, Cwmpas, Promo Cymru) and the Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS) this programme has resulted in 406 interventions across the 2023-2026, three-year funding agreement. This most recent phase has:

- 15 grants made in 24/25, with 30 applications for 25/26
- 50 support activities delivered
- 32 digital prototypes developed
- 1008 hours mentoring

## Time Credits

We have supported the Tempo Time Credits programme which builds local and national networks through volunteering and using time credits with a range of local and national businesses and partner organisations. Tempo works with a range of organisations to facilitate its community groups and partners to grow and develop. It also enables volunteers to find new opportunities and receive recognition for their valuable contribution.

During the last three-years of funding 2023-2026 this programme has developed a network of 301 groups across Wales, involving 6,404 volunteers who have earned nearly 170,000 time credits. A recent survey revealed that 74% of people felt able to contribute to the community and other people, 64% feeling less isolated and lonely and 64% feeling their mental health had improved.

## Dormant charitable funds

Revitalising Trust - In 2021-2023 a small amount of funding (c.£200k) was provided to the Charity Commission to enable them to target Welsh charities that had been dormant or ineffective. The work over four years to March 2025 revitalised funds worth over £10m, either by getting charities to replace trustees and start working again, transferring funds to a similar charity which is active, or transferring funds to Community Foundation Wales to manage become part of their funding activities.

## Community Facilities

Our Community Facilities Programme (CFP) is a capital grant fund providing grants at two levels, up to £25,000 and up to £300,000 to support communities to purchase and improve well used and much needed facilities. In the ten years of its operation the CFP has provided grants worth over £72m to more than 530 unique community facilities across Wales. It has provided over £41m of these grants in the five years of the current Senedd term.

Community Asset Loan Fund (CALF) is a £7.5m loan fund operated on our behalf by the WCVA. It provides long term (up to 25 years) loans of up to £300,000 to help incorporated community groups to purchase and improve community assets. Since its launch in 2022 the community asset loan fund has provided over 40 loans, totalling nearly £6 million to third sector organisations in Wales. It expects to see commitments increase to £7.5m before end of March 2026.

## 7. Criminal Justice

Criminal justice is currently not devolved to Wales, but in practice devolved services such as health, education, social care and accommodation play an important role in the operation of the criminal justice system.

The Welsh Government vision for criminal justice is for a trauma-informed, evidence-based approach which addresses the underlying causes of offending and supports people at risk of offending towards fulfilling, crime-free lives. This approach can prevent crime happening in the first place.

We are committed to the fair and equal provision of devolved services so everyone in the criminal justice system has the support they need to live successful, crime-free lives.

Coupled with ensuring the justice system works in Wales, the Welsh Government are dedicated to working in collaboration with reserved partners, to improve the justice system and to promote a distinctly Welsh version of criminal justice. This work improves outcomes for the often very vulnerable people involved in the justice system, helping to keep people in Wales safe and to help those involved in the justice system to desist from crime.

This work has included, but is not limited to:

- Coordinating work with the UK Government on the innovative Women's Justice Blueprint and Youth Justice Blueprint, to improve outcomes for women and children in contact with the justice system.
- Providing strategic oversight to implement policy which aims to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people in Wales, such as co-chairing the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel (WYJAP).
- Improving the interface between Welsh Government and Policing in Wales, the Policing Partnership Board for Wales continues to be a valuable forum for taking forward our joint work and further strengthening our partnership working. As Chair, I work together with Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners from across Wales to consider and take action on the key strategic priorities impacting on the safety of Welsh communities to prevent crime and safeguard communities from harm.

### Women's Justice Blueprint

The Women's Justice Blueprint is a joint initiative between the Welsh Government, His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Policing in Wales, with other partners such as His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service and third sector partners closely involved. This Blueprint exemplifies what we can achieve when we work together and has delivered a range of positive outcomes since it

was established in 2019, from initiatives such as the Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach and Visiting Mum, through to sentencer engagement work and establishing prevention schemes across the whole of Wales.

As of April 2025, the Blueprint has moved into a new phase, building on the existing framework and principles to continue to embed best practice in the justice system for women in Wales. This will be done by ensuring the joint ways of working between the UK and Welsh Governments in this important area continue and the Blueprint underpins business as usual to support the specific needs of women.

### Youth Justice Blueprint

The Youth Justice Blueprint is a joint initiative between the Welsh Government, the Ministry of Justice, Policing in Wales, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and third sector partners closely involved.

This Blueprint exemplifies the benefits of partnership working and has delivered a range of positive outcomes since it was established in 2019, including the delivery of trauma-informed training to over 300 Welsh justice practitioners and supporting the expansion of Enhanced Case Management (ECM) to all Welsh Youth Justice Services. This psychology led, multi-agency approach recognises the trauma young people have experienced and identifies how to help them build the resilience they need to thrive and live crime-free lives.

As of April 2025, the Blueprint has moved into a new phase, building on the existing framework and principles to continue to embed best practice in the justice system for young people in Wales. The publication of the Youth Justice Prevention Framework on 17 June 2025 provided a single view of what works to prevent offending, and how we are supporting vulnerable children towards fulfilling, crime-free lives.

### PCSO Funding

Welsh Government has consistently funded PCSOs in Wales to complement the reserved policing settlement, recognising their vital role in promoting community safety and engagement. We are proud of the partnerships we have built with policing partners and we continue to work collaboratively with the united purpose of keeping Wales safe and to serve our communities.

This funding is over and above what the forces would normally receive. It is a direct investment from Welsh Government into the safety of Welsh communities and shows the value we place on neighbourhood policing, despite criminal justice being a reserved matter.

In 2025-26, funding was maintained at £16 million, supporting around 344 PCSOs. The 26-27 draft budget provides a further 2.2% rise. Forces are expected to match fund additional posts, ensuring continued presence in communities.

## Justice Devolution

The Welsh Government's ambition is to secure the devolution of policing and justice, in its entirety. We continue to work with the UK Government and others to secure the next steps to allow this to happen. Delivering change of this scale requires a phased and pragmatic approach.

We are working with the UK Government to explore initial options where responsibilities in the youth justice system could be devolved. This includes strategic oversight, partnership and governance arrangements and funding of youth justice services as starting points. These areas are logical and practical first steps, that will enable better integration and coordination of policy and service delivery and improve accountability and efficiency.

We are starting devolution of probation services with a memorandum of understanding (MoU), informed by learning from the approach in Greater Manchester. An MoU will create opportunities for greater alignment and collaboration in the delivery of probation and connected services.

The UK Government's announcement of the abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners and the forthcoming Police Landscape Reform White Paper has opened the door for reviewing the police governance systems within Wales. The UK Government has acknowledged that Wales needs a distinct approach to policing, and they are working constructively with us and Welsh partners to develop a bespoke model of police governance for Wales.

## 8. Use of evidence

Over the Senedd term, our analytical programme has drawn on a wide range of analytical methods to inform the development, delivery and evaluation of policies across the portfolio. This has included establishing monitoring frameworks to measure progress against policy goals; collecting data on lived experience; drawing on existing evidence to support policy development; commissioning primary research to address evidence gaps; and delivering large-scale multi-year evaluations to assess the implementation and impact of policies and programmes.

### Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units

Improving the availability, quality, granularity and accessibility of equalities evidence has been a key focus of this term. The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units (the Units) were established in January 2022 as a Programme for Government commitment following several key reports highlighting the higher impact of COVID-19 on people with protected characteristics.

Since being established, the Units have worked closely with policy and analytical colleagues across the Welsh Government and with stakeholders across Wales and the rest of the UK. This has enabled improvements in the evidence about individuals with protected and associated characteristics, so that we fully understand the level and types of inequalities across Wales.

Much of the work delivered is cross-cutting. It is improving the equalities evidence base across portfolio areas and supporting Welsh Government requirements under the overarching legislative framework that includes the Equality Act, Public Sector Equality Duty, Socio-Economic Duty, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Human Rights Act.

The Units regularly publish their outputs and progress on their [webpage](#), where all of the outputs are in one place.

Over this period, the Units have delivered many pieces of evidence and analysis that have helped to improve the availability, quality, granularity and accessibility of equalities evidence. For example:

- **Race:** the Units have provided analytical support for the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP). They have worked with stakeholders on the ArWAP evidence sub-group to develop a comprehensive approach for evaluating ArWAP; published the [impact measurement framework](#); developed an internal dashboard to support understanding of impacts; and commissioned lived experience projects on issues faced by ethnic minority communities. The process and early impacts evaluation of ArWAP is being commissioned and will be awarded by the end of the term.

- **Disability:** the Units have co-produced and **published research** with members of the Disability Taskforce on the Disability Confident employer scheme and a national centre for independent living. They have published **reports on barriers to employment** for disabled people and are developing an **approach for collecting data on the social model of disability**. More recently they have designed an evaluation approach for the Disabled People's Rights Plan.
- **LGBTQ+:** the Units published the **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales Evaluability Assessment**, which has informed the commissioning of a process and emerging impacts evaluation for the LGBTQ+ action plan that will be delivered in 2027.
- **Cross-cutting projects:** including a **review** of Welsh Government equality data sources and outputs; a **review** of diversity in the public sector workforce and boards in Wales; and equalities syntheses including annual macro-level summary for First Minister's key priorities on the protected characteristics and intersectional information to inform Cabinet spending decisions.

## Evaluations

Evaluation is central to the effective use of evidence across the portfolio, helping us understand the outcomes of policies and programmes, and learn lessons from implementation.

For example, the Basic Income Pilot has been accompanied by an **independent evaluation**, led by Cardiff University with partners at the University of Oxford, University of York, King's College London, and Northumbria University. It is strengthened by incorporating co-production with young care experienced people who help to shape the evaluation. The evaluation continues into 2027, when the final report will be published.

The Digital Communities Wales programme was evaluated with **findings** used to help shape and inform Digital Inclusion Wales – the new Welsh Government approach to digital inclusion, launched in May 2025.

Ask and Act – a core part of our national training framework to help frontline professionals identify and support people experiencing Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) – was subject to **an evaluation** in 2022. This provided findings and recommendations which were used to improve this training programme.

## Evidence reviews, data collection and analysis

In addition to evaluations, a range of research and analysis been undertaken across the portfolio to inform decision making and understand 'what works'.

For example, evidence reviews and data analysis has been have been undertaken on range of topics including **Credit Union best practice**; the VAWDASV data landscape; analysis of monitoring data for the **Discretionary Assistance Fund**; and reviewing evidence relating to the contributions of Police Community Support Officers.

Another important area is the research into how the devolution of the administration of social security to the Welsh Government could be taken forward in Wales. Findings are due to made available ahead of the end of this current term.

We continue to fund a boost to the Wales sample of the Family Resources Survey. This will improve data quality and potential for breakdowns of estimates relating to family incomes and circumstances for Wales, including poverty statistics.

In November 2025 we published an updated edition of the **Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)**. Over two decades since its introduction, WIMD continues to be used as a practical and evidence-based tool to inform planning, funding allocation, geographical targeting, monitoring, and analysis.

In February 2025 we published the **Support for children affected by parental imprisonment: scoping research** which aimed to understand existing support for children affected by parental imprisonment. In 2025, a three-year programme was commissioned to support preparations for justice devolution through a flexible programme of research. We have also worked with the Wales Centre for Public Policy who produced a report on **building a Welsh Probation Service**, with the second phase of work due to be published ahead of the end of this current term.

### Monitoring frameworks and lived experience evidence

A robust approach to monitoring our Child Poverty Strategy was developed and **published in 2024**, and the first populated framework published in **December 2025**. The approach was supported by engagement with the External Reference Group on the Child Poverty Strategy, and through independent advice and expert peer review. The monitoring framework forms one of the three elements for assessing our progress against the Child Poverty Strategy's objectives:

- The **monitoring framework** reports on regular and robust population level data on a range of child poverty outcome indicators and measures.
- The **policy progress report** provides a detailed update on the impact of specific policies, actions and associated outputs.
- Analysis of child poverty **lived experience** responses provides important information about how policies and actions are making a difference.

## ESJ Committee

### Questions raised by Committee in 26 January letter from Chair

#### Progress since accepting report recommendations

*The Welsh Government accepted most of the Committee's report recommendations, including several in principle. As of 2026, how many of the recommendations of the reports listed below do you believe have now been fully implemented, partially delivered, or remain outstanding.*

##### *o Gender based violence: The needs of migrant women, 2022*

There were 15 recommendations from this report, 13 were accepted, 1 was partially accepted and 1 was accepted in principle in the Welsh Government's [response](#) (2022). I determine that 9 recommendations are delivered, and 4 are partially delivered.

##### *o Women's experiences in the criminal justice system, 2023*

As part of the above report, the Committee set 18 recommendations; 7 were accepted and 11 were accepted in principle by the Welsh Government. As of February 2026, I determine that Recommendations 4, 5, 13, 14 and 16 are delivered and Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17 and 18 are partially delivered.

##### *o 60% - Giving them a voice Speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system, 2023*

As part of the above report, the Committee set 7 recommendations; 3 were accepted, 2 were accepted in principle and 2 were rejected by the Welsh Government. As of February 2026, I determine that Recommendations 1, 2, 4 and 7 are delivered and Recommendation 5 is partially delivered.

##### *o Calling time on child poverty: how Wales can do better, 2023*

Of the 5 recommendations accepted or accepted in principle by Welsh Government following the Calling Time on child poverty report 2023, as of February 2026 I determine that Recommendations 1, 4 and 5 are partially delivered and recommendations 2 and 3 are fully delivered.

##### *o Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap, 2025*

Of the 7 recommendations accepted or accepted in principle, recommendations 2,4,5, and 7 have been fully implemented and recommendations 1, 3 and 6 have been partially delivered with work ongoing.

#### **Gender based violence - Migrant women**

*As a result of the Committee's report the Welsh Government established a crisis fund for migrant women. What is the current status of this fund and has any evaluation been carried out to assess its impact on migrant women.*

## **Welsh Government response:**

For 2023/24 and 2024/25 we funded the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund Pilot which topped-up the Home Office Support for Migrant Victim scheme. The top-up aimed to support migrant victims in Wales subject to NRP conditions, ensuring they could access longer stays in funded accommodation, alongside increased subsistence funding to support easier access to food and other essentials. During 2024/25 161 people have been supported through the Support for Migrant Victim scheme and the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund pilot.

In light of a significant uplift to the Home Office Support for Migrant Victim scheme for 2025/26, internal evaluation of the pilot and engagement with the sector, Welsh Government repurposed this funding to adapt to the needs of migrant victims and survivors and professionals who support them across Wales. Two keyworkers were funded through a core grant allocation to ensure easier access to specialist support for those victims of abuse who are also subject to no recourse to public funds conditions.

In addition, during 2025/26, specialist immigration training was made available for around 100 professionals across Wales to encourage easier access to information for victims and survivors. Officials continue to work with the specialist third sector in Wales to support victims and survivors with no recourse to public fundings effectively, aligning to the Home Office Support for Migrant Victim Scheme.

## **Criminal Justice**

### Women's experiences in the criminal justice system

*Could you provide an update on the development of the Residential Women's Centre in Swansea? In particular, we would welcome clarification on progress to date, the current timeline for delivery, and any outstanding issues—such as planning, funding, or partnership working with the Ministry of Justice and HMPPS—that may affect implementation.*

## **Welsh Government Response:**

Decisions on the Residential Women's Centre are for the UK Government. However, as you may be aware, building and planning permission are confirmed, and the Centre remains a key objective for Welsh Government. It will improve the lives of women in Wales, providing therapeutic and rehabilitative services as part of a trauma-informed approach.

We understand the importance of women maintaining contact with their families, particularly since many currently reside in facilities across the border in England. The Centre will allow women to stay closer to home and maintain crucial family ties, especially with their children. By providing support closer to home, the Centre will also help address the underlying issues that contribute to offending behaviour, such as mental health issues, substance misuse or domestic violence.

The Counsel General and I regularly engage with UK Government Justice Ministers and key partners who are leading on this important programme of work.

We appreciate the interest of the Committee in this work. It is noteworthy to mention that I answered an Oral Question from Altaf Hussain MS on 14 January 2026, regarding the opening of the Centre. In my response, I confirmed I will meet soon with Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, to help fully understand the latest position.

In the meantime, Welsh Government officials continue to work closely with the UK Government to ensure the Centre remains a priority and is progressed as soon as possible.

### Speech, language and communication needs in the youth justice system

*What steps is the Welsh Government taking to ensure early identification of SLCN during the transition from primary to secondary school, given its importance in preventing later youth justice involvement?*

*How is the Curriculum for Wales being used to strengthen universal and targeted SLCN support within education settings?*

*How many SLCN-related commitments in the Youth Justice Blueprint have been delivered to date, and which remain outstanding?*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

The focus of the Welsh Government work to date on the identification of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) has been in early years, with an investment of £1.5m in Prosiect Pengwin, our bilingual SLC surveillance and intervention package for children under 5 years old.

Joint working across the Welsh Government including 'Talk with Me' and the Curriculum for Wales, 'has led to building further capacity in the workforce. Together we are developing a speech, language and communication training pathway which will help practitioners of 5–16-year-olds identify their training needs and access the support required to strengthen their skills and improve outcomes for all learners. Alongside this a SLC training module has been developed for Hwb both of which are due to go live over the coming weeks. These complement existing support for those working with 0–4-year-olds, ensuring a coherent, whole-system approach from early years through to secondary education.

The Community Focussed Schools team also rolled out a light touch preventative intervention based on the Talk with Me key messages for early SLC development.

A consultation on 'Talk with Me phase 2' is currently underway and includes proposals to replicate this approach for children aged 5-11 years old.

Through the Curriculum for Wales, speech, language and communication are part of the mandatory cross-curricular skill of literacy meaning they are embedded across learning. Our national investment in literacy—over £13 million in professional learning and targeted programmes—is strengthening teachers' capability to identify and support SLCN within everyday classroom practice across all phases. This includes programmes such as Ein Llais Ni, which enhances oracy pedagogy for primary, secondary and special schools and supports consistent approaches to monitoring learner progress. The CAL:ON project is developing assessments to help

schools identify learners who may require additional support and to spot difficulties early so targeted support can be put in place before gaps widen.

As the Committee will be aware, the Youth Justice Blueprint was published in July 2019, and importantly delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board. It set out our vision for youth justice in Wales, taking a ‘children first’ approach; working in a child-centred rather than service-focused way, meeting the individual needs of children in the justice system or those at risk of encountering the justice system. As of April 2025, the Blueprint has moved to a new delivery phase as we look to build on the existing framework and continue to embed best practice. To maintain a joined-up approach and acknowledgement of the specific needs of children, we published the Youth Justice [PREVENTION FRAMEWORK](#). The Framework provides a single view of what works to prevent offending, and how we are supporting vulnerable children towards fulfilling, crime-free lives.

### Prisons and probation

*What progress has the Welsh Government made in exploring how elements of the Manchester Model—particularly the integration of probation with locally delivered services and devolved governance structures—could be adapted for Wales, and can you update us on any discussions with the UK Government or HMPPS about piloting or implementing a similar approach here?*

#### **Welsh Government Response:**

The Welsh Government commissioned the Wales Centre for Public Policy to produce a report exploring how a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) might apply in Wales. This report is now complete and has been shared with Welsh Government Ministers and key stakeholders for their review. To support with the creation of an MoU model that is suitable for the Welsh context and to leverage operational expertise, His Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has seconded an employee to the Welsh Government to lead this workstream.

Work is progressing at pace within Welsh Government to bring key stakeholders together to agree the key areas that an MoU will cover, with a view to finalising these areas by the end of February 2026. HMPPS nationally and in Wales have expressed their support for the MoU and the intention is therefore to have an agreed MoU in place by the end of 2026.

*In light of the serious safety concerns highlighted at HMP Parc and the lack of clarity around why Wales continues to have such a disproportionately high imprisonment rate, what discussions has the Welsh Government had with the UK Government to pause any plans to expand HMP Parc, and what steps you will take in response to the issues raised in Dr Rob Jones’s recent briefing on conditions and safety at the prison? A copy of Dr Rob Jones’s briefing to Committee from December 2025 is attached.*

#### **Welsh Government Response:**

As you will be aware, justice is not yet devolved to Wales. Prisons and offender management are the responsibility of the UK Government, and they remain the best and most appropriate source of information about operational matters across the

prison system in England and Wales. We work closely with HMPPS on areas where we do have responsibilities such as health, housing and social care and will continue to work together to help mitigate the risk of future harm to staff and prisoners.

I met with Dr Robert Jones on 3 December 2025, to discuss his recent briefing entitled, 'The Expansion of HMP Parc: Wales' (Growing) Imprisonment Rate' and it is welcome that Dr Jones similarly shared this briefing with the Committee in December 2025.

It is right that academics scrutinise the decisions of both the UK Government and Welsh Government and I have expressed my gratitude to Dr Jones and his team at the Wales Governance Centre, for their committed work and research on the criminal justice system in Wales.

Following my meeting with Dr Jones, I wrote to Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, on 22 December 2025. My letter noted Lord Timpson's appearance at the Welsh Affairs Committee on Prisons, Probation and Rehabilitation in Wales, on 17 December 2025. At his Committee appearance, Lord Timpson was accompanied by Ian Barrow, Chief Executive of HMPPS in Wales, who shared that an additional 160 staff members will be employed at HMP Parc, to facilitate the expansion. Despite these assurances, my letter to Lord Timpson highlighted a number of issues and implications for Wales, in relation to the expansion, and I also shared with Lord Timpson a copy of Dr Jones' briefing.

I will attend a Women's Justice Blueprint Roundtable on 11 February 2026, chaired by Ian Barrow, Chief Executive of HMPPS in Wales. Dr Rob Jones will attend the event and presented his 2024 Factfile. The event will also be attended by representatives from Third Sector organisations, Magistrates and Justice Unions, among others.

Our vision is for a preventative, trauma-informed approach to justice, which addresses the underlying causes of offending and stops crime happening in the first place. A long-term approach is needed to address these longstanding issues.

I meet regularly with Lord Timpson and Ian Barrow and have asked to discuss the expansion of HMP Parc in further detail with Lord Timpson when we meet again soon.

## **Child poverty**

*How would you respond to the UK Government's Child Poverty Strategy, published in December 2025? What impact do you think the content of the strategy will have on your efforts to tackle child poverty?*

## **Welsh Government Response**

Whilst the UK Strategy had a strong focus on England only policies, there is much we can welcome in the strategy which will support our own actions here in Wales. This includes the removal of the Two Child Limit which we have been calling for. This is a vital step in tackling child poverty in Wales, bringing relief to 69,000 children in

Wales and reducing relative child poverty rates by up to three to four percentage points.

The UK Government's Child Poverty Strategy covers a number of areas including boosting families' income, reducing the costs of essentials and strengthening local support for families. On the 2 December 2025 we published our own Child Poverty Strategy progress report outlining the significant steps we are taking across government, using every lever we have available to us in Wales to tackle Child Poverty and to mitigate the worst impacts of living in poverty.

We welcome the positive engagement with the UK Government on the development of the strategy and look forward to continuing this engagement in the delivery of our shared objectives and our priorities for Wales.

*How have you worked with the Scottish Government to better understand the legislative, fiscal and other resources that would be required to make a similar payment to the Scottish Child Payment?*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

Officials have engaged with Scottish Government colleagues to better understand the design, delivery and resourcing of the Scottish Child Payment. We have also drawn on publicly available evaluation and policy documents and have sought initial legal advice on Welsh Government competence.

The engagement with Scotland and wider research undertaken has helped the Welsh Government to better understand the potential benefits of a direct child payment and the scale of legislative, fiscal and delivery challenges involved in replicating a similar scheme in Wales. These insights continue to inform Welsh Government's broader approach to tackling child poverty.

### **Disability employment gap**

*Further to the update provided by the Cabinet Secretary on progress in delivering Recommendation 4, can the Welsh Government provide copy of the letter sent to every devolved public sector body and local authority in Wales encouraging them to take steps to become a Disability Confident 'Leader' and set a timeframe for achieving it.*

The letter provided here has been issued to all devolved public bodies and public services in Wales.



Anything's  
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Anything's  
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The letter includes the following:

- The Welsh Government has urged public bodies to review employment policies and work towards Disability Confident Leader status within a set timeframe.

- Organisations are encouraged to align with the Disabled People's Rights Plan and eliminate the disability employment gap as a formal objective.
- Support is available via Disabled People's Employment Champions and the new Disability Confident Leaders Forum for Wales.

*What involvement has the Welsh Government had in the 'Timms Review' and what evidence has the Welsh Government submitted as part of the review.*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

The DWP has not yet commenced the Personal Independent Payment or 'Timms' review and is still recruiting members for the Review Steering Group. Welsh Government officials have supported the DWP during the review planning phase.

The Welsh Government's Disability Equality Forum members and former Disability Rights Taskforce members have been encouraged to apply for positions on the Review Steering Group, which will oversee the review, gather evidence, and develop recommendations to improve PIP.

Minister Timms has met with the Disability Equality Forum to discuss effective co-production, ensuring the voices of disabled people in Wales are heard, and the importance of the social model of disability underpinning the review and its recommendations.

The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip has met Minister Timms on several occasions, highlighting Wales's Disabled People's Rights Plan, and encouraging the UK Government to learn from this work.

Officials meet monthly with DWP colleagues to discuss the review.

*What work the Welsh Government is undertaking to take forward the legacy of the Engage to Change program which came to an end in March 2025, including what actions is taking to support young people aged 16-25 with a learning difficulty, learning disability and/or autism to gain meaningful employment.*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

Welsh Government is building on the Engage to Change legacy by strengthening specialist employment support for disabled people through a mix of employer engagement, tailored programmes and targeted support.

A network of Disabled People's Employment Champions and Business Wales Disabled People's Employment Advisors supports employers of all sizes to improve the recruitment, retention and progression of disabled workers. New online employer resources also provide practical guidance.

People of all ages (including 16-24 year olds) with a learning disability, learning difficulty and/or autism can get help to move into paid work through job coaching, via a wide range of Welsh Government programmes, including Working Wales, Communities for Work Plus, Jobs Growth Wales+ (delivering Supported Employment provision). We also have in place the Individual Placement and Support and Out of Work Service. All these services offer personalised careers advice, mentoring, skills development, confidence-building and progression into training or work.

Apprenticeships remain fully accessible, with Welsh Government funding 100% of training costs and offering an Employer Incentive Scheme for disabled apprentices. Participation has grown to 13% of apprenticeship starts.

### **Anti-racist Wales Plan (ArWAP)**

*The refreshed ArWAP is currently available as a summary document. Can you provide the full technical document?*

A copy of the full ArWAP technical document is attached.

*The Welsh Government published a progress report in 2023. What progress has been made to deliver the actions set out in the Plan?*

### **Welsh Government Response**

The refreshed ArWAP takes into account the progress report in 2023 and the recommendations of the Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into the implementation of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: [Anti-racist Wales \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales).

We have recently published the ArWAP Progress tracker on the Welsh Government website. Overall, the ArWAP focus remains on leadership, evidence, stakeholder engagement, and transparency, ensuring lived experience remains central to ArWAP implementation and building momentum across the public sector.

*What has changed for people from ethnic minority backgrounds since the publication of the plan and provide evidence to support this.*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

A comprehensive evaluation, currently being commissioned, will capture quantitative, qualitative and lived experience evidence around the implementation and impact of ArWAP.

Separately, an [evaluation of the ArWAP culture, heritage and sport grants](#) programme concluded that the programme contributed to the ArWAP goals, with positive impacts at multiple levels, including for individuals, organisations, and sectors. This included widened access and participation in arts and sport; increased community engagement and collaboration; improved skills, physical and mental health; and promotion of greater empathy and understanding between communities.

*Provide an update on the development of a dashboard which shows disparities in ethnic minority outcomes in Wales and 'indicator mapping'.*

### **Welsh Government Response:**

We are due to publish the unpopulated ArWAP indicator framework by the end of March 2026. A prototype dashboard has been developed based on this framework – which pulls together publicly available data in one place – for use by the External Accountability Group. We are exploring approaches to publish or summarise the dashboard in an accessible way for everyone in Wales.

*The Committee would appreciate a written update on*

***Victims and Prisoners Act 2025: What practical impact—positive or negative—has the Act had on victim support services in Wales since its introduction, and how have UK-wide measures been integrated with Wales’s devolved VAWDASV and support frameworks?***

### **Welsh Government Response:**

We are broadly supportive of the Act’s provisions to improve victim support services, and the need to collaborate to ensure consistent support for victims aligns to provisions in our VAWDASV Act (2015). We will continue to work with UK Government to determine the impacts the Act is having on victims in Wales.

In response to section 16 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, the UK Government published statutory guidance about the specified victim support roles - Independent Domestic Violence Advisors and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. As the guidance relates to reserved matters only in Wales, the Welsh Government has engaged with Stakeholders from across the Welsh public and specialist sectors, victims and survivors, and representatives from across reserved agencies working in Wales, to garner insights into how well the statutory guidance reflects the Welsh context, meeting the needs of victims & survivors, practitioners and service providers. Following this engagement, we are now considering options in regard to the Welsh Government’s response to the published guidance – any Welsh specific guidance will be trauma informed and rooted in the lived experience of victims and practitioners.

***Strip searches of children by Welsh police forces: What steps has the Welsh Government taken to ensure that accurate, standardised data on strip searches of children (including ethnicity breakdowns) is collected and published to support scrutiny and compliance with children’s rights obligations?***

### **Welsh Government Response:**

We take this issue seriously, to protect children in Wales and to ensure the importance of proper police conduct. As such, I have discussed the issue at regular bi-lateral meetings with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Dafydd Llywelyn, who holds the responsibility for child-centred policing.

Strip searches are potentially extremely traumatic for children, and it is crucial for the police to ensure that this only happens when absolutely necessary, with robust safeguards in place. Every case should be fully justified, appropriately conducted and used as a last resort. This includes the presence of an appropriate adult.

The term ‘strip search’ covers a wide range of activity. Crucially, it does not differentiate between someone being asked to remove an outer item of clothing, like

a jacket, and a much more intimate search. It is important that we understand this nuanced language, to ensure accurate data is captured to support a comprehensive understanding of how searches are used and what action may be necessary to improve practice further.

Policing in Wales has an established Child Centred Policing portfolio and the strip searching of children is one of the main priority areas for that group. The Chairs of this group are Deputy Chief Constable, Nicky Brian (Gwent Police), Police and Crime Commissioner, Dafydd Llywelyn (Dyfed Powys Police) and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Eleri Thomas (Gwent Police). The Police Liaison Unit have also created a data dashboard for the Child Centred Policing portfolio, focussing on stop search. This collates data from across the four Welsh forces on stop search (including strip searches) and allows central governance and scrutiny in the Child Centred Policing portfolio.

***Taser use:*** *What assurances has the Welsh Government now received from the UK Government regarding the evidence base, equality impact assessment, and the undertaking of a full Children's Rights Impact Assessment before any authorisation of Taser 10 for police forces in England and Wales, given the concerns set out in your letter of 17 July 2025 about potential negative or disproportionate impacts on children and ethnic minority young people?*

#### **Welsh Government Response:**

The Equality and Social Justice Committee and the Children, Young People and Education Committee wrote to me on 4 July 2025, to bring my attention to the potential authorisation of Taser 10, for use by police forces in England and Wales.

Following receipt of this letter, I wrote to the former Minister for Policing and Crime Prevention, Dame Diana Johnson, on 17 July 2025. My letter affirmed our commitment to an evidence-based, trauma-informed criminal justice system in Wales, to prevent crime happening in the first place. I noted the positive work of the Youth Justice Blueprint and emphasised our commitment to the delivery of children's rights in Wales. I also upheld our commitment to delivering an Anti-Racist Wales with our Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

In my letter, I raised concerns with the Minister, that this policy position might be incompatible with the UN Convention on Rights of a Child. I requested further details regarding the evidence base and assessments carried out, to ensure this approach does not negatively impact children and young people and does not disproportionately impact children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. I also requested further information and assurances regarding how the UK Government intend to assess the impact of this policy position on children, in England and Wales, explicitly querying whether the UK Government would conduct and publish a Children's Rights Impact Assessment.

The former Minister for Policing and Crime Prevention replied to my letter on 29 July 2025. The Minister confirmed that UK Government departments and police forces must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and that the PSED includes consideration of the potential impact of policies and decisions on all groups with protected characteristics, as well as children. The Minister noted that the UK Government would progress with an equality impact assessment (EIA) of Taser 10.

The Minister stated that the EIA would consider any relevant risks and mitigations, in relation to the impact of a new model of Taser should it be used on children.

The Minister noted the UK Government's approach to the use of force, including Tasers, aligns with Articles 2 and 3 of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms. The Minister also confirmed that there are times when it is deemed operationally necessary by officers for the police to use a Taser, including on children, in the interests of public safety.

The Minister confirmed there are a number of safeguards and mitigations in place around police use of Tasers. These include specific mitigations for Taser use on children. All officers who are selected to use Taser must pass a comprehensive training programme and need to have an appreciation of the physical and psychological effects of the device on children. This includes training officers to have a thorough understanding of de-escalation skills and to factor in the potential vulnerability of a person and factors such as age and stature when assessing each situation. Furthermore, College of Policing guidance sets out that individuals in police custody, who have been subjected to a Taser discharge must be examined by a specially trained healthcare professional working in General Forensic Medicine.

Since my engagement with the former Minister on this matter, I understand that Taser 10 has received National NPCC sign-off, as of October 2025. The Police Liaison Unit have also updated that Welsh Forces are in the process of undergoing the necessary training, to then rollout out the new devices operationally from March 2026 onwards.

Although we work closely with Policing in Wales on areas of interface and joint interest across our responsibilities, forces have autonomy over the operational decisions they make, and it would be inappropriate for the Welsh Government to comment on a reserved area of practice or intervene in individual cases. The decision is for Chief Officers to determine whether to authorise Taser 10 in their force area including in Wales, based on their assessment of threats and risks.

## Ready, Steady, Cook – Family Healthy Cooking Programme



**Ready, Steady, Cook** is a long-running family cooking and healthy eating programme, now in its **fifth consecutive year**, delivered weekly at the community centre. The programme targets families with children from **Nursery to Year 4**, with **ten children and their parents** invited to participate each week. (Year 5 and Year 6 pupils do not attend, as they already take on leadership and volunteering roles within the Good Food Café based at the same venue.)

Across an academic year, this equates to approximately:

- **30 weekly sessions**
- **300 child places and 300 parent places annually**
- **Over 1,500 child–parent participations** across five years

### **Inclusive design and confidence-building approach**

Parents arrive first and are welcomed with tea or coffee, creating an informal, non-judgemental space for social connection and peer support. Children are then brought to the centre to join their parents, reinforcing the programme’s emphasis on **learning together as a family**.

Sessions are deliberately designed to remove barriers commonly associated with cooking confidence. For example, during a recent session focused on **healthy oat cookies**, weighing scales were not used. Instead, ingredients were measured using spoons (e.g. *8 spoons of oats, 4 spoons of flour*), enabling families to replicate the recipe easily at home without specialist equipment. Each parent–child pair worked collaboratively using their own bowl and utensils, producing **six cookies per family**. The cookies were baked on site, followed by shared tasting and group discussion.

This practical approach directly supports:

- healthy eating habits
- basic numeracy and procedural skills
- confidence and independence in food preparation
- positive parent–child interaction

Parents regularly request copies of recipes, and informal follow-up indicates that a **significant proportion recreate the recipes at home**, often adapting them by adding fruit, vegetables, or alternative ingredients to suit family preferences and dietary needs.

Over the five years, families have prepared a range of **low-cost, nutritious foods**, including:

- cheese wheels
- homemade sausage rolls
- pizza wheels with vegetable toppings
- soups and simple baked goods

All recipes are designed to be affordable, repeatable, and aligned with healthy eating guidance.

### **Impact on families**

Consistent qualitative feedback demonstrates positive outcomes for both children and parents, including increased willingness to try new foods, improved parental confidence, and strengthened family relationships through shared activity.

Indicative parent feedback includes:

- *“Oh my God, I made them at home and all the other kids loved them as well, I can’t believe how easy that was.”*
- *“I can’t get my child to try new things, but he loved doing this. Thank you so much.”*
- *“It’s the first time I’ve cooked properly with my child, now he asks to help at home.”*

### **Soup and Song – Intergenerational Healthy Eating Programme**

Running alongside Ready, Steady, Cook for the same five-year period is **Soup and Song**, a structured **six-week programme** aimed at older primary pupils and their families. Each programme cohort includes **8 Year 4 children and their parents**, equating to approximately **48 family places per year**.

The programme explicitly links **healthy food education** to the **Curriculum for Wales**, particularly the **four purposes**, with a focus on developing learners who are:

- healthy, confident individuals
- ethical, informed citizens
- effective communicators
- ambitious, capable learners

Each session begins with a short discussion with parents on:

- the importance of healthy, affordable food
- how food preparation supports learning and wellbeing
- practical strategies for teaching children to safely chop vegetables
- the value of conversation and relationship-building during shared tasks

Parents and children then prepare soup together from fresh ingredients. The soup is served to **older members of the local community**, followed by shared singing, creating meaningful **intergenerational connection** and tackling social isolation. Fresh bread is often baked to accompany the soup, and sessions frequently include a simple, healthy pudding.

The programme was initially supported through **Warmer Spaces funding**, enabling families to access a warm, welcoming environment while learning practical skills. During one funded phase, families who completed all six weeks were given **soup makers**, removing a further barrier to continuing healthy cooking at home.

Follow-up feedback indicated that:

- many families continued making soup at home
- ingredients were often sourced from **Big Bocs Bwyd**, reinforcing food affordability
- children showed increased confidence with vegetables and food preparation

Parents commented:

- *“We still make soup every week, it’s cheap, filling, and my child actually eats vegetables now.”*
- *“My child loved serving the older people. He still talks about it.”*
- *“Having the soup maker made all the difference, it became part of our routine.”*

## Summary of Evidence

Across both programmes, delivery over five years has engaged **hundreds of families**, supporting:

- healthier eating habits
- increased parental confidence and skills
- stronger parent–child relationships
- intergenerational community connection
- alignment with national curriculum and wellbeing priorities

These programmes demonstrate how **low-cost, community-based food interventions**, when delivered consistently and relationally, can generate sustained impact for families experiencing food poverty.

# Agenda Item 4.2

Lisa Williams, All Wales Nutrition  
Training Facilitator, Cardiff and Vale UHB

Andrea Basu, Service Lead for Public Health  
Dietetics, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

Caroline Bovey, Lead Public Health Dietitian,  
Aneurin Bevan UHB



Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

9 February 2026

Dear Jenny Rathbone,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals to be regulated by an independent *statutory* regulator. Dietitians' practice must meet professional standards of proficiency, and practice is governed by an ethical code to ensure that all practitioners work to the highest standard in protecting both individuals and the public. Dietitians use the most up-to-date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, and translate this into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food and dietary decisions. We work with governments, policy makers, organisations, communities and individuals so that the public are protected and can access trusted, credible, evidence-based information and professional support.

Further to the focus group discussion on 2 February 2026, we ask the Senedd and Welsh Government to:

1. uphold the priority themes and action outlined in the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales delivery plan 2025-27 (supporting babies, children and young people / reducing health inequalities) by widening dietetic coverage and involvement for all Flying Start areas across Wales building on good practice from Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent
2. embed nutrition into cross sector food provision, policy and strategy by involving dietitians in the development, design and implementation of food policy and regulations e.g., the Community Food Strategy and the network of Local Food Partnerships.

In relation to the committee's questions about the provision of healthy and nutritious school meals, Wales is leading the way in the UK in providing Universal Primary Free Schools Meals (UPFSM). This is a vital step towards prioritising children's health. The provision of UPFSM in Wales supports wide ranging goals including easing the immense pressure on household budgets, reducing inequalities and effectively and independently supporting a reduction in the impact of the harder to tackle, wider determinants of health.

The revised Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations, coming into force in October 2026, will reflect the latest Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommendations, another crucial step to ensure food in schools is healthy and nourishing for our youngest citizens.

Dietitians in Wales are stakeholders in the development and implementation of the revised regulations. We support a whole school approach to nutrition through the following:

1. Accredited food and nutrition training for school governors, senior leaders, parent-teacher associations, healthy schools' teams, school caterers, school meal

- supervisors, teachers, teaching assistants and Estyn inspectors. This increases nutrition knowledge and confidence to interpret the new regulations, lead on action and compliance, and galvanise nutrition action across the whole school community,
2. Food and Fun programme - nutrition education sessions and opportunities for children and parents to enjoy a school meal together. This can raise parents' confidence that children enjoy new foods and encourage uptake of free school meals,
  3. School-based food preparation skills sessions for parents and children to make nutritious, affordable meals together, learning from the positive impact of regional programmes. As examples,
    - a. Come and Cook with your Child in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB has demonstrated greater parental engagement and improved family and children's eating habits,
    - b. The Food Hour programme in Cardiff and Vale UHB brings together food, nutrition, growing and sustainability in participating schools,
  4. Expert nutrition advice and guidance to school catering teams on medically prescribed diets and nutritional analysis of school menus ensuring compliance with the revised regulations.

To maximise the benefits of UPFSM for children in Wales the following actions must be prioritised by the Senedd and Welsh Government:

1. Commit long term, sustainable funding for UPFSM and the Food and Fun programme,
2. Communicate the benefits of UPFSM for children and families to all stakeholders and provide clear guidance for implementation, monitoring and compliance with the new regulations through training, promotional materials and assessment tools,
3. Credible, evidence informed nutrition training, delivered by qualified dietitians, and guidance for Estyn Inspectors to facilitate accurate assessment of compliance with the regulations and any sanctions for non-compliance,
4. Strengthen schools' focus on addressing diet related inequalities by reinstating food and nutrition as a core component of the Health and Well-being Promoting Schools Scheme. Furthermore, reward schools that are fully compliant with the regulations through schemes such as the National Quality Award,
5. Experiential learning opportunities, from farm to fork, for children to develop their food and nutrition knowledge and skills (food literacy) as highlighted within the Future Generations 2025 report (pg 24),

*'Welsh Government should scale up the Nutrition Skills for Life programme across all schools in Wales, ensuring that every child leaves school food literate, with the skills and knowledge to maintain a healthy and sustainable diet'*

6. Food available in schools must visibly align with national dietary guidelines, i.e., the Eatwell Guide. Failure to align to the national model can undermine nutrition education, create confusing and mixed messages, and allow space for non-evidence informed information to be circulated, which will ultimately limit effectiveness.

We thank you again for inviting us to contribute to the inquiry. If you would like any further information about our programmes of work, do get in touch.

Yours sincerely

**Lisa Williams, RD**  
All Wales Nutrition Training  
Facilitator

**Andrea Basu, RD, RPHNutr**  
Service Lead for Public  
Health Dietetics

**Caroline Bovey, BEM, FBDA**  
Lead Public Health Dietitian

Office of the Equalities and Social Justice Committee  
Senedd  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

10 February 2026

Dear Members of the Equalities and Social Justice Committee,

## **Re: Welsh Colleges new approach to Recognising Prior Learning**

I am writing to highlight the innovative developments taking place in Welsh Further Education Colleges regarding the recognition of prior learning, especially for learners with additional learning needs (ALN). This was recently highlighted in the [European Lifelong Learning Magazine](#). Wales is pioneering a fresh, learner focussed approach that prioritises independent living skills and personal growth over the traditional qualifications. Despite significant challenges, including high levels of poverty and a substantial population of individuals with disabilities, the new framework places learners at the heart of further education and aims to equip them for autonomous, fulfilling lives.

Recent changes, driven by the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (ALNET) Act, have encouraged Welsh colleges to shift from a qualifications centred system towards a more individualistic curriculum. This curriculum now emphasises skills that matter in everyday life, such as community participation, health and wellbeing, independent living, and employability. Colleges are using baseline assessments to understand individual learner needs and aspirations, building tailored pathways that genuinely support each student's journey.

The approach is being accredited by the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) framework, which replaces traditional accreditation with a focus on measuring real progress and achievement. While there is still work to be done to achieve consistency throughout all colleges, significant strides have been made, and Wales is now recognised as a leader in inclusive education practices. Staff training in inclusive teaching skills is ongoing, with a commitment to stretch and challenge all



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learners, ensuring that their potential is realised and not limited by repetitive or basic tasks.

For example, small projects such as the Neuro Tech course at Coleg Cambria providing personalised learning environments for young people with autism. These efforts highlight the importance of tailoring education to individual needs and aspirations, rather than relying solely on diagnosis or standardised pathways.

To highlight some of these positive changes, I would like to extend an invitation to the Committee to visit your local Further Education college and witness these practices firsthand and the impact it has on the learners and their communities. We believe that seeing our curriculum and inclusive teaching strategies in action will offer valuable insights into the potential for further progress across Wales. Your engagement and support will be crucial as we continue to strive for educational excellence and equality for all learners.

In the next Senedd term we are asking the next Welsh Government, working with Medr, to ensure that colleges receive sufficient funding to support learners with ALN. Maintaining staffing levels in colleges is critical to manage the increased workload as a result of statutory duties under ALNET. Projections from college ALN leads indicate additional costs exceeding £3million for 2025/26. Without sustained investment, the quality and sustainability of inclusive provision are at risk

Please let us know a convenient date if you would like to visit to your local further education college, and we look forward to welcoming you as a group, or as individual members, to one of our colleges to discuss these developments further.

Kindest regards,



Rachel Cable  
Director of Policy and Public Affairs  
Colegau Cymru



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# Agenda Item 4.4

## [Response from the Fishguard Bay Sustainable Food Initiative to the access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food inquiry](#)

- **To what extent does the Welsh Government's approach to tackling food poverty support provision of healthy and nutritious food for all, and what actions could it take to achieve this?**

Our sustainable food initiative is focused around the community of Fishguard and Goodwick, North Pembrokeshire. In terms of tackling food poverty the voluntary sector or social enterprises are the most visible in terms of whole community projects. By this I mean projects which are open to the community as a whole, rather than targeted at certain vulnerable groups.

These are in some cases supported by PLANED (Pembrokeshire Local Food Partnership) and PAVS. As a sustainable food initiative which is setting up a community kitchen in Fishguard, we have been heavily supported by the Pembrokeshire Local Food Partnership and PAVS. This has helped our organisation, a CIC, access training, develop partnerships and understand our roles within the CIC.

This type of support from Welsh Government (WG) help create more robust models which can generate longer term benefit in the community. It is therefore essential that the Pembrokeshire Local Food Partnership remains a priority for WG and funding is secure to retain this vital resource.

Our organisation would struggle to operate given that we are mainly volunteer led without the input from PLANED and PAVS.

- **What are the main barriers to addressing food poverty in a sustainable, preventative way that provides healthy and nutritious food for all, and how can these be overcome?**

Through our public consultation at Fishguard Town Hall in Feb 2025 our results showed that the main barrier to accessing healthy food was the cost of ingredients.

Having a healthy meal was also impacted by lack of cookery skills and limited time to cook.

As part of our community kitchen we will be addressing these issues through regular workshops to teach basic cooking skills, preserving, storage, cooking on a budget etc. This will be provided by qualified staff and our aim is to make the classes as accessible as possible to all members of the community. We will also offer workshops through partner organisation like POINT Youth Centre so that we access all age groups.

With regard to the cost of ingredients, we fully support our local producers and recognise that in many cases their products are now becoming cheaper than the local supermarkets in Fishguard and Goodwick.

Local producers markets need to be supported through county councils and local town council initiatives with regular promotion and recognition that weekend markets are vital for wider access and benefit to the local economy.

WG , should also be tackling the monopoly of supermarkets in small towns where prices are widely recognised as unaffordable. Creating small trader units for local businesses who sell local produce or have a business plan to develop eg. a local bakery should be a priority.

• **Which examples of good practice successfully tackle food poverty by supporting provision of healthy and nutritious food? How should the Welsh Government and partners support this good practice to spread and scale?**

Good practice to tackle food poverty require linking up land which can also be part of a community enterprise to grow and feed local people. We have an example of a community garden in Goodwick which allows people to access a plot (allotment) at a very affordable rent and this a family or 1-2 families can grow and learn with the support of the community garden.

Our community kitchen has 2 plots which are being developed for growing as we know long term we need cheap, local and nutritious food as a basis to feed people in need. We do not wish to operate solely on surplus food from supermarkets as much of it is over processed and unhealthy.

WG should seek to provide land or purchase land for communities to develop their own community gardens as a long term exercise in reducing food poverty. Projects like community gardens provide wider support through outdoor and healthy lifestyle plus building friendships, skills and connections.

• **Does the Welsh Government's approach to tackling food poverty sufficiently balance the need for emergency support with a preventative approach that provides sustainable, long-term solutions? If not, how should it do this?**

As an organisation we see the need for longer term, sustainable models which put control of land, food and resources in the hands of the community as a fundamental necessity.

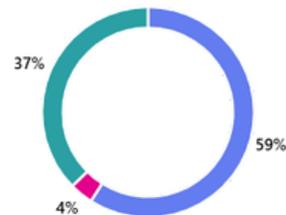
Planning for any possible future supermarkets must be assessed under a scheme which recognises the impact on health (availability of cheap processed food), impact on local economies and locking in low paid work as a standard rather than providing grants, access to business properties to new businesses which are derived from local food production.

## Responses Overview Active



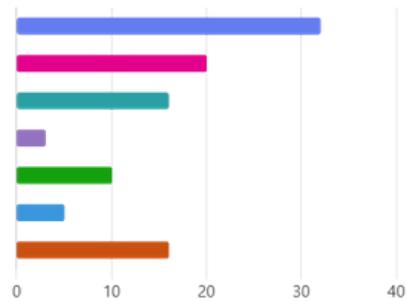
1. Would you, your household, or someone you know be interested in using a community kitchen?

● Yes	49
● No	3
● Maybe	31



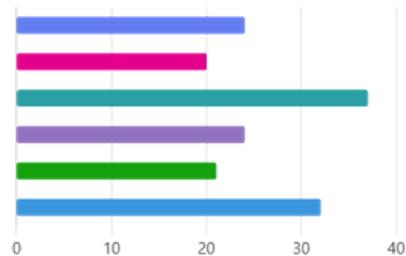
2. What challenges, if any, make it difficult for you to access healthy or affordable food? (Select all that apply)

● Cost of ingredients	3
● Lack of time to cook	2
● Limited cooking skills	2
● No access to kitchen facilities	0
● Limited mobility	1
● Lack of personal or public transport	6
● Other	3



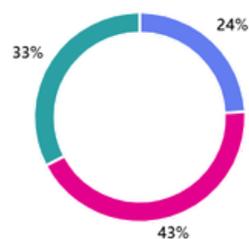
3. How would you like to be involved in the community kitchen? (Select all that apply)

● Volunteering (e.g. cooking, organising events)	2
● Sharing recipes or cooking skills	4
● Attending workshops, events or social meals	2
● Donating food, money or kitchen equipment	0
● Helping with planning or providing ideas	3
● I don't want to be involved directly but i support the idea	7



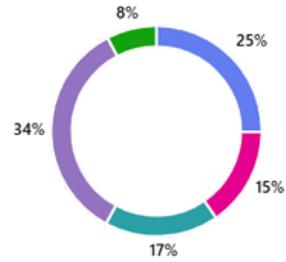
4. Do you have any specific skills or resources you could share with the community kitchen project?

● Yes (please specify below)	2
● No	3
● Other	4



5. What would encourage you to use or visit the community kitchen regularly? (Select all that apply)

- Affordable meal pricing 4
- Family friendly environment 6
- Convenient location (e.g. near public transport) 2
- A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere 8
- Other 3



6. Do you have any suggestions for partnerships, organisations or individuals we could involve in this project?

31  
Responses

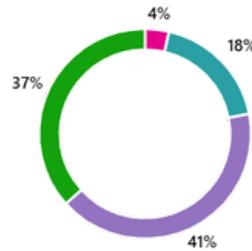
Latest Responses

9 respondents (29%) answered Food for this question.



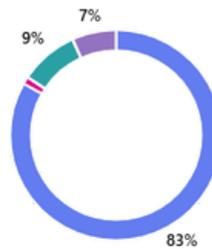
7. What is your age group?

- Under 18 0
- 18-24 3
- 25-44 15
- 45-64 34
- 65+ 30



8. What is your connection to Fishguard and Goodwick?

- Resident 7
- Visitor 4
- Local business owner 1
- Other 8



9. Thank you for your input! Your feedback will play a key role in shaping the project.  
If you would like to stay updated or get involved, please leave your contact details, name and email below

44

Responses

1 respondents (2%) answered Cymru lovely for this question.

Lister - Community hospital kitchens Ceri Daviesparents and children  
polite face foodsurvivalfoodhygiene co  
young offenderswoman customerCymru lovelyPlaid CymruHowell Colella  
covid hubbyperfectly welcoming ordinator of that cafeloud voice



Michelle Crotty  
Chief Executive

**Jenny Rathbone AS**

Via email [SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales](mailto:SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales)

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN  
London WC2A 2LL

10February 2026

Dear Chair,

### **Experiences of the criminal justice system**

Thank you for your letter dated 15 January seeking to understand judicial reasoning behind sentencing and remand practices in Wales, particularly for cases involving women offenders. I am responding on behalf of the Lady Chief Justice as Chief Executive of the Judicial Office, which supports the independent judiciary and advises the Lady Chief Justice on her statutory responsibilities and leadership of the courts judiciary in England and Wales.

Whilst I am unable to comment on individual judges' decision making it may be useful to point to the guidance available to all judges and magistrates. The Sentencing Guidelines for the Crown Court and Magistrates' Court are available on the [Sentencing Council website](#). Judges and magistrates must follow any relevant sentencing guidelines, unless they are satisfied it would be contrary to the interests of justice to do so. This is in the context of the purposes of sentencing as reflected in the Guidelines and set out in section 57 of the Sentencing Act 2020 (as amended). Reasons for sentencing decisions will also be given in open court.

The [General guideline: overarching principles](#), other relevant overarching guidelines and the individual guidelines set out factors the court must follow when sentencing. The General guideline provides a stepped approach to determining the appropriate sentence, including consideration of any relevant factors which may increase or reduce seriousness, or which may reflect personal mitigation, such as primary caring responsibilities or pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal care. The Sentencing Council links directly to the [Equal Treatment Bench Book](#) which highlights the impact of custody specifically on women.

As far as remand considerations are concerned, judges and magistrates will follow structured decision-making processes as set out in the [Bail Act 1976](#).

Changes resulting from the Sentencing Act 2026, including a presumption to suspend short custodial sentences and amendments to remand decision-making, will be reflected in updated guidance and training.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Crotty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

**Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb  
a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol**

**Equality and Social Justice  
Committee**

Michelle Crotty  
Chief Executive  
Judicial Office for England and Wales

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**Welsh Parliament**  
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14 January 2026  
15 January 2026

Dear Michelle Crotty,

**Experiences of the criminal justice system**

The [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) recently considered evidence in relation to experiences of the criminal justice system at its meeting on [15 December 2025](#).

The [Fact File report](#) presented by Dr. Rob Jones highlights that the number of Welsh prisoners on remand rose by 10 per cent in 2024 (804), together with the use of short custodial sentences.

We would appreciate your help to understand the judicial reasoning behind the sentencing and remand practices in Wales, especially for women. Specifically,

- What are the key principles or circumstances under which judges consider short custodial sentences appropriate, given evidence suggesting limited rehabilitative impact?
- What factors most commonly influence decisions to remand defendants in custody, especially in cases involving women?

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We would appreciate a response by 13 February.

Yours Sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone AS

Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol  
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

**TO:** Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a  
Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol  
Equality and Social Justice  
Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99  
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SeneddEquality@senedd.wales

**12 FEBRUARY 2026**

**RE: Response to Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee**

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee highlighting the sharp increase in women in Wales remanded in custody by magistrates' courts.

We at the Magistrates' Association have campaigned for years on alternatives to custody for women defendants and have previously conducted research with magistrates on women defendants in Wales in 2022, which was shared with the Committee at the time.

The Magistrates' Association is a membership body of magistrates across England and Wales. While we develop policy and research alongside our members, and support our members through learning and development, it is important to note that we do not set the rules or guidelines regarding either custody or sentencing, but rather draw on perspectives from our over 11,000 strong membership. It may be that you will also want to approach HMCTS, the Judicial Office and/or the Sentencing Council.

To address both issues raised in your letter – an increase in remand and reasons behind short custodial sentences – we have split this letter into two parts.

**Remands at magistrates' courts**

We note the 25% increase in women remanded at magistrates' court in Wales in 2024, with this number creeping up from 280 women defendants in 2023 to 350 in 2024. This appears to be part of a wider trend across both England and Wales. As remands data shows, there was a national increase of women remanded in custody at magistrates' courts of 29.6% between 2023 and 2024<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> From 3,528 in 2023 to 4,571 in 2024 (Ministry of Justice, Criminal Justice System Statistics Quarterly: December 2024 (Remands data tool)).



As the Committee will be aware, whilst there is a general right to bail, there are a number of reasons why magistrates may make the decision to remand defendants in custody. These include, but are not limited to

- Risk of absconding;
- Risk of reoffending whilst on bail;
- Risk of witness interference;
- A history of non-compliance to bail conditions;
- A lack of alternative recommendations from probation;
- Risk of causing harm to another or;
- For their own protection.

Magistrates must also satisfy themselves that these risks cannot be suitably ameliorated through bail conditions.

Magistrates are guided by the same legislation in England and Wales and adhere to their power of remand as set out under Section 128 in the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980. They receive initial training on remand as well as continuation training to ensure that their knowledge and skills are kept up-to-date. The Judicial College provides training and develops learning products and tools for magistrates. There are clear flowcharts on bail decision-making. These set out the process for deciding whether unconditional or conditional bail should be granted and, if both of these fail, then circumstances in which bail should be refused. You can find copies of these flowcharts on the Crown Prosecution Service website:

- [The Magistrates' Court - Simple Bail Structure - Card 1 - Adult Defendant: Indictable Only or Either-Way Imprisonable Offence](#)
- [The Magistrates' Court - Simple Bail Structure - Card 2 - Adult Defendant: Summary Imprisonable Offence](#)
- [The Magistrates' Court - Simple Bail Structure - Card 3 - Adult Defendant: Non-Imprisonable Offence](#)

Please note there are different procedures for youth defendants.

There is a significant lack of statistical data on magistrates' bail decision making. This makes it difficult to assess why there has been this national increase in women offenders remanded in custody. Without detailed case data, it is hard for us to comment on the drivers behind this national trend.

In 2022 I gave [oral evidence](#) to the House of Commons Justice Select Committee on the role of adult custodial remand in the criminal justice system and spoke on the increase in remand then. When questioned about the cause of this increase, my answer was and unfortunately remains that we do not have the data available to explain this and can only guess at the drivers of this upward trend. We are pressing for greater data to be made available across the justice system, to aid policy development, and will be publishing a report on this soon.



## Short custodial sentences

It is important to acknowledge that magistrates must ultimately apply the law as set out by Parliament and adhere to guidance when making sentencing decisions. When in court, magistrates rely on their own knowledge and take appropriate direction from legal advisers, as well as use Sentencing Council guidance, particularly a digital tool used for building pronouncements. Magistrates use their judgement to assess law and guidance against the individual cases they deal with day-to-day.

The Sentencing Council's [imposition guideline](#), which magistrates follow, is clear that custody is reserved for cases where other avenues have been exhausted. It is only when the 'custody threshold' is met that a custodial sentence would be imposed. This threshold is met when the seriousness of the offence means a fine or community order cannot be justified. However, the guideline cautions that:

- "Even where the seriousness of the offence indicates that the threshold for a custodial order has been passed, a custodial sentence should not be imposed if in all the circumstances of the case it is appropriate to impose a community order, for example, if a community order achieves the purposes of sentencing.
- "Custody should not be imposed on an offender who is pregnant or within the postnatal period (within 12 months after giving birth) where the impact on the offender or dependents, including unborn children, would make a custodial sentence disproportionate to achieving the purposes of sentencing."

Magistrates must also consider aggravating or mitigating factors, such as previous convictions or whether the offence was committed on bail, as well as any guilty plea and whether any ancillary orders are required. The bench should also ask the probation service to prepare a Pre-Sentencing Report, which sometimes indicates that probation would not recommend a community sentence either due to lack of available requirements or the offender's history of breaching orders.

When addressing the effectiveness of sentencing, the imposition guidelines acknowledge gender differences in offending and sets out guidance for female offenders, as well as mothers with dependents, pregnant women or post-natal women. This highlights the links between women offenders and complex trauma, the lack of female prisons and the risk of homelessness post-sentence.

The imposition guidelines acknowledge that there will be circumstances in which short custodial sentences are "unavoidable". This will likely be due to a combination of factors including, but not limited to, the offence sentencing range and seriousness, the offender's history of non-compliance with orders, re-offending whilst on license or there being a significant risk of harm posed to the public.

This shows that custodial sentences of a month or less would be issued in circumstances where there are no other options available to magistrates. Examples could include repeat offending with multiple breaches of a



community order, a low-level offence committed whilst on license or persistent traffic offending, such as drunk driving.

## Final considerations

There is a likelihood that recent changes to the policy and legislative landscape could slow this upward trend. Sir Brian Leveson's Independent Review of the Criminal Courts recognises that the "under-representation of women and children in custody has led to fewer and fewer remand and treatment facilities offering non-custodial options" and recommends expansion of funding for community-based facilities for women.

The Sentencing Act 2026 introduces a presumption against short custodial sentences and bolsters community orders. If implemented effectively, this could widen magistrates' community orders 'toolbox', therefore giving them greater options in sentencing. However, we have also cautioned about the importance of maintaining judicial discretion in the "exceptional circumstances" where a short custodial sentence should be issued which is also recognised in this legislation.

Further, the Act makes amendments to the Bail Act 1976 limiting custodial remand in cases where immediate custodial sentence is unlikely. It also adds several factors that should be taken into consideration when making bail decisions which are relevant to women offenders – namely whether the defendant is pregnant, a primary carer for another person or has been the victim of domestic abuse. We welcome these changes, which will assist magistrates in their decision-making.

Another promising development is the women-focused and problem-solving magistrates' court in Swansea, which was highlighted to this Committee by the Lady Chief Justice. We have long advocated for a smarter sentencing system and problem-solving courts - such as the one in Swansea - are key to making this vision a reality. Learnings from Swansea should be taken and used to identify opportunities for replication elsewhere.

The Magistrates' Association Chair David Ford JP is a magistrate currently sitting in Cardiff. He shares your concerns about these trends in England and Wales and is open to discussion as to how the MA could contribute to better understanding this trend.

Please note that I shall be retiring from the Magistrates' Association next month. My successor will be Catherine Feast, and she can be contacted at [catherine.feast@magistrates-association.org.uk](mailto:catherine.feast@magistrates-association.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,



**Tom Franklin**  
**Chief Executive**



Tom Franklin,  
Chief Executive,  
Magistrates' Association

14 January 2026

Dear Tom Franklin,

### Experiences of the criminal justice system

The [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) recently considered evidence in relation to experiences of the criminal justice system at its meeting on [15 December 2025](#).

The [Fact File report](#) presented by Dr. Rob Jones highlights that the number of women remanded at magistrates' court in Wales increased by 25 per cent in 2024. This appears to contrast with the commitment in the Women's Justice Blueprint to 'build confidence' in alternatives to remand.

We would appreciate if you could help us understand the factors influencing remand decisions in Wales, and the circumstances under which short custodial sentences—particularly for women—are considered appropriate. In light of evidence of poor outcomes associated with these disposals, what key principles or objectives guide magistrates in making these decisions?

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We would appreciate a response by 13 February.

Yours Sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee



Comisiynydd  
Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

# Agenda Item 4.7

Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol Cymru  
Tramshed Tech, Stryd Pendyris  
Caerdydd, CF11 6BH

**Future Generations  
Commissioner for Wales**

Tramshed Tech, Pendyris Street  
Caerdydd, CF11 6BH

By email

18 February 2026

Dear chair and members of the Equality and Social Justice Committee,

I write to provide further information following the evidence session on 9 February 2026. You have requested more information regarding the work being undertaken to strengthen Welsh Government's response to the recommendations of my [Future Generations Report 2025](#).

The Cabinet Secretary initially responded to the report on 25 July 2025 through a [written statement](#). Welsh Government subsequently provided their response to the recommendations, which the Committee has seen as part of their [papers for the evidence session](#) on 1 December 2025.

Welsh Government responded positively to the recommendations with very few rejections. However, there were some areas where I thought Welsh Government should take further action in their leadership role and do more to hold public bodies to account. As such, my team and I have had constructive conversations with Cabinet Secretaries and officials on this initial response.

In some cases, Welsh Government were able to act immediately. For example, the Cabinet Secretary agreed to write to all public bodies encouraging them to produce an organisational volunteering strategy (R27). Welsh Government also changed their response from "not applicable" to "accept in principle" to the recommendation that responsibility for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act ("WFG Act") remains with the Prif Weinidog (R3).

Otherwise, I have recently provided further commentary on where I think their response could be strengthened. For example:

- I am challenging Government on their response to the recommendations relating to prevention. Welsh Government should be leading the way on preventative spend and putting prevention at the heart of the new Programme for Government. They should be giving public bodies incentives and holding NHS organisations to account. The Auditor General for Wales is also pursuing a strengthened response from Welsh Government on recommendations made in his [2025 report](#) regarding investing in prevention.
- On my recommendations relating to budget (R44-47), I have pushed for Government to change their position on ring-fencing funding for prevention (currently "rejected"). I have also asked Welsh Government to map their budgets against the well-being goals and national indicators - an important element of any nation's well-being framework model which is missing in the Wales approach despite us leading on other elements.



- Welsh Government have only “accepted in principle” the recommendation for all public bodies to use the agreed definition of prevention to map their spend (R47). Welsh Government’s response is justified on the basis of them wanting to promote a flexible approach. I have asked for Welsh Government to strengthen their response as my recommendation does not preclude a flexible approach. It is intended to give visibility and to quantify preventative spend, as well as providing a baseline that can be tracked overtime.
- I have recommended that public bodies upskill the teams in the ‘corporate areas of change’ of their organisations (R4). I have asked that Welsh Government not only do this themselves but continue to introduce and implement policy and legislation that aligns with the WFG Act in this respect – for example, the Social Partnership and Procurement Act is changing how we spend public money. Welsh Government should be providing other incentives and holding finance directors, performance managers and other corporate officers across all public bodies to account for delivering on the WFG Act.
- Recommendation 7 of my report calls on Welsh Government to develop an integrated land and marine use framework. I have fed back that their initial response does not address this recommendation and stated that the framework should be developed in line with the review of [Future Wales: The National Plan 2040](#) in 2027.
- Recommendation 12 states that public bodies must prioritise climate resilience, net benefit for biodiversity, and pesticide reduction in how they manage their estates, including their buildings, tenant farms, parks, roadside verges and other land assets. Welsh Government have accepted this, stating that they will include it in their Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan. But I have stated that I would like to see these issues embedded fully within the Government’s own asset strategy.
- We have suggested Welsh Government change their response to “accept” or “adopt” (rather than “accept in principle”) to recommendation 16 that Wales becomes a Marmot Nation. It is not clear why this recommendation has not been adopted in full.
- I have asked the Cabinet Secretary to make a joint statement on public bodies signing the Placemaking Charter (R26). Initially, a response to this recommendation was missing from Welsh Government’s response – perhaps because it is aimed at public bodies and Public Services Boards. However, this is an example of where Welsh Government should be seeing itself as a public body as well as showing its leadership role in incentivising others to act.
- On encouraging Real Living Wage accreditation in the private sector (R28), I have suggested that Welsh Government could support further momentum by identifying the top sectors of the economy with the biggest gap in accreditation and developing a focussed action plan, with partners, to promote the Real Living Wage in these sectors.



Comisiynydd  
**Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol**  
Cymru

**Future  
Generations**  
Commissioner  
for Wales

**Comisiynydd Cenedlaethau'r  
Dyfodol Cymru**

Tramshed Tech, Stryd Pendyris  
Caerdydd, CF11 6BH

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**Future Generations  
Commissioner for Wales**

Tramshed Tech, Pendyris Street  
Caerdydd, CF11 6BH

My team have offered to provide briefings and to work collaboratively on several of the recommendations.

I understand Welsh Government intend to publish a further response to the report in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Walker

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales