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Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair
Finance Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

17th February 2021

Dear Mr Gruffydd

Re: Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22

As Chief Executive of member-led mental health charity Hafal I am writing to you for clarification of the following Recommendation in the Finance Committee's Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget:

Recommendation 14. The Committee recommends that whilst tackling the increased levels of mental ill health linked to the pandemic, the Welsh Government ensures that investment is made in preventative measures which consider the wider determinants of mental health, such as skills and employability, education, housing, access to green space and physical activity.

We are concerned that this recommendation could be interpreted as support for mental health-specific funding (protected by the ring fence) to be used to fund such additional measures. We recognise the value of such measures in preventing mental ill health, but for the ring fence to have meaning it cannot include such measures which are matters for other budgets: of course the Welsh Government can fund other departments to undertake such measures but this should not be at the expense of mental health services funded under the ring fence.

As indicated in our response to the consultation, Hafal Members believe that funding for mental health services should not be diverted to support the responsibilities of other departments and agencies to play their role in protecting and enhancing the mental wellbeing of their clients, staff and the public.

I would seek your reassurance that the Committee does not support use of ring-fenced funds for such wider purposes.

Yours sincerely

Alun Thomas
Chief Executive