



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref

John Griffiths MS
Chair,
Local Government and Housing Committee

29 January 2024

Dear John

Thank you for the invitation to give evidence to you about the draft budget on 18 January. During the session I promised to write with further information about a small number of areas.

Work with local government to ensure that those entitled to support with council tax receive it

From 21 March to 7 May 2022, the Welsh Government ran a campaign to raise awareness about council tax support. The campaign was similar to the Green Pig campaign launched in 2019. Targeted ads were used to inform the public about council tax discounts and exemptions they might be entitled to. The different groups of people targeted were:

- All adults – English
- All adults – Welsh
- Carers
- Disabled Individuals
- Individuals receiving Universal Credit
- Low-income households
- Individuals with a severe mental impairment
- People who live alone
- Students

Awareness slips were distributed to local authorities to include in council tax reminder letters and summonses, along with posters for authorities to display in prominent settings. The Welsh Government also sent a digital toolkit to external stakeholders and organisations. Overall, the public response to this campaign has been positive.

The Welsh Benefits Charter was recently launched on 22 January by the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip. [Welsh Benefits Charter | GOV.WALES](#)

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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.

The Charter is a set of underpinning commitments to work together towards a person-centred, compassionate delivery of Welsh Benefits and is central to our work on streamlining the Welsh Benefits system. It applies to all the grants and payments to individuals that are governed by Welsh Government such as Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Free School Meals, Schools Essentials Grants and so on.

All 22 Local Authority leaders signed up and endorsed the Charter at the Partnership Council meeting in November 23 demonstrating the collective commitment to improving access to financial support for individuals.

The introduction of the Charter will ensure that the take-up of benefits is visible and transparent which will drive improvements to the accessibility of the system, enabling more people in Wales to take up their entitlement to financial support and ensure the efficient and consistent administration of Welsh benefits across Wales.

The launch of the Charter is the first step of the journey working towards a coherent Welsh Benefits system and not the end point. We will be working with an external steering group to develop practical actions towards our vision of a system where a person only has to tell their story once to access all their entitlements.

The group will have strategic oversight of the work to streamline the Welsh Benefits system and will use the Charter commitments to produce an implementation plan with targeted actions. The Group brings together experts from across central and local government and third sector. We recently appointed Fran Targett, with decades of experience in the field, as the Steering Group's Chair to drive the work forward at pace. The first meeting will take place on 14 February.

Range of sources of evidence / data to understand public's views on services

The National Survey for Wales is one of the Welsh Government's main ways to know about people's views of public services. It has run since 2012, collecting information from around 12,000 people a year on a wide range of topics including views of health services, social care, schools, and local authorities. The results are used to inform decision-making by Welsh Government and other public organisations across Wales.

The Welsh Government also collects and publishes a wide range of statistical data about public services, including schools, the NHS, social care and housing.

Annually, the Chief Statistician produces the Well-being of Wales report which provides an overall assessment of Wales' progress towards the seven well-being goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

There are further sources from other government departments which provide additional evidence. The Office for National Statistics is responsible for the Census of Population for England and Wales, through which the Welsh Government has access to a wide range of detailed information about the Welsh population.

A number of other surveys run by other government departments also cover Wales, and the Welsh Government provides some funding to boost the sample within Wales. These include:

- The DWP Family Resources Survey from which we can monitor levels of poverty and household finances in Wales.

- The ONS Annual Population Survey which provides a range of data about the labour market and the characteristics of the population in Wales.

Providing funding to boost the size of the sample in Wales for these surveys enables analysis of the data for Wales which would not be possible with the smaller sample size.

An update on discussions between the Minister for Health and Social Services and Deputy Minister for Social Services and local government colleagues in relation to healthcare funding pressures.

The Minister for Health and Social Services and Deputy Minister for Social services meet with Local Government colleagues as part of their quarterly meetings with the WLGA. The last meeting that Ministers had with the WLGA was on 15th January 2024 and prior to that it was on 19th October 2023. Topics discussed included:

- The non-residential care cap.
- winter preparedness,
- system resilience and 'Further Faster',
- the Draft Budget for 24-25, and
- Feedback on Welsh Government priorities and the recent rebalancing programme consultation, including development of a national office, national framework and National Care Service

In relation to continuing healthcare (CHC) and responsibilities that fall to the NHS, there are clear guidelines set out in the Continuing NHS Healthcare Framework. The Welsh Government published the "Continuing NHS Healthcare – the National Framework for Implementation in Wales", in 2021. It sets out the Welsh Government's policy for eligibility for CHC and the responsibilities of NHS organisations and Local Authorities. It has been operational since 1 April 2022.

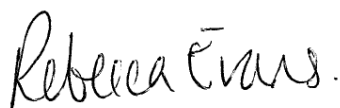
The framework sets out a process for the NHS, working together with LAs and other partners, to assess health needs, decide on eligibility for CHC and provide appropriate care. Local Authorities and Health Boards are required to fully implement the requirements of the National Framework.

CHC is one element of a range of services that Local Authorities and NHS bodies need to have in place to support people with health and social care needs.

The Welsh Government expects LHBs and their partners to work together to deliver the best possible outcomes for the citizens of Wales. The fundamental principle being effective partnership working, integration and implementation of the Framework.

I hope you find this extra information useful.

Yours sincerely,



Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Finance and Local Government