

Finance Committee Summary Engagement Report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

July 2024



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this document can be found on the Senedd website:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddFinance

Copies of this document can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

Finance Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **SeneddFinance@senedd.wales**

Twitter: **[@SeneddFinance](https://twitter.com/SeneddFinance)**

© Senedd Commission Copyright 2024

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading or derogatory context. The material must be acknowledged as copyright of the Senedd Commission and the title of the document specified.

Finance Committee Summary Engagement Report: Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

July 2024



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddFinance

Current Committee membership:



Committee Chair:
Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Plaid Cymru



Peter Fox MS
Welsh Conservatives



Mike Hedges MS
Welsh Labour



Rhianon Passmore MS
Welsh Labour

Contents

Chair’s foreword	5
1. Introduction	7
2. Stakeholder Event	9
3. Focus groups with organisations and individuals.....	17
4. Engagement with young people	18
Annex 1: List of stakeholder event participants.....	20
Annex 2: Citizen engagement findings	22

Chair's foreword

Later this year, the Welsh Government will publish its Draft Budget of approximately £24 billion for the next financial year, from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026; the fourth Draft Budget brought forward by the Welsh Government during the Sixth Senedd.

These budgetary proposals are essential to the delivery of public services in Wales. It was apparent to the Committee when scrutinising last year's Draft Budget, that the challenges of global economic uncertainties together with a real terms erosion of funding caused by inflationary pressures has had a significant influence on the spending decisions made by the Welsh Government. These pressures have not gone away.

Scrutiny is fundamental to identifying key areas in the Welsh Government's budgetary plans that require improvement, which is why, each year, the Finance Committee undertakes several engagement activities to gather views on where the Welsh Government should prioritise spending in its forthcoming budget.

Hearing directly from stakeholders and the general public across Wales about where the Welsh Government should be prioritising its spending, gives the Committee an important insight into how funding is impacting those who are most affected. The views gathered over the course of our engagement activities will influence our views on what the Welsh Government should consider when formulating its budget for 2025-26.

This year we visited west Wales to hold our annual stakeholder event at Canolfan S4C Yr Egin, Carmarthen. This follows similar sessions held in north Wales (Wrexham) last year and in south-east Wales (Llanhilleth) before that. It is important to us as a Committee that we listen to the views of people and organisations across Wales, and we are grateful to all the stakeholders that attended and took part in the discussions.

The Committee also held a series of focus groups comprising organisations and individuals across Wales. Again this is central to our work and we are grateful for their continued engagement with us.

The final strand of our engagement strategy is to hear directly from young people. This year, we arranged a dedicated Citizen Focus Group at Coleg y Cymoedd to gather the views of students aged 16-25. I would like to thank those who gave up their own time to speak honestly and openly about the issues concerning them. Members of the Committee were also present at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Meifod,

and it was a pleasure and a privilege to hear the views of young people from across Wales at our drop-in sessions - and reading the contributions written on our 'graffiti wall' and to our questionnaire.

The views and concerns expressed in this report will form a cornerstone of our Plenary debate on the Welsh Government's Spending Priorities for 2025-26 that will take place on Wednesday, 17 July 2024.

There will be further opportunities for organisations and individuals to engage with us on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26. Members of the Committee will be present at the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd over the summer. We also intend to issue a written consultation, followed by oral evidence sessions with key stakeholders and the Cabinet Secretary in the autumn, once the Draft Budget is available.

We hope that the Welsh Government will listen to the concerns raised and will focus its resources appropriately in its forthcoming Draft Budget so that we have services that are sustainable and address the concerns and priorities of the Welsh public.

As a matter of principle, the Senedd's scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget has to be guided in the first instance by the priorities of the people we serve. This report reflects the views and strength of feeling we heard in our engagement work, and it is now over to the Welsh Government to address them when formulating its Draft Budget proposal for 2025-26 later this year..



Peredur Owen Griffiths,
Chair of the Finance Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.** The Finance Committee (the Committee) is responsible for scrutinising the Welsh Government Draft Budget (the Draft Budget), which is normally published in the autumn. The Draft Budget for the next financial year 2025-2026 is expected to be around £24 billion. This is made up of funding from the UK Government through the Welsh block grant and money raised through Welsh taxes.¹
- 2.** Prior to the publication of the Draft Budget, the Committee undertakes public engagement with interested stakeholders and individuals to comment on expected draft budget proposals, as well as the Welsh Government’s strategic approach to setting the budget and prioritising resources.
- 3.** The information gathered during these public engagement sessions forms the basis for a Plenary debate, led by the Committee on the Welsh Government’s Spending Priorities, which is held prior to the summer recess. This type of debate was introduced by the Committee (with the agreement of the Business Committee) to ensure the Senedd had a formal opportunity to debate and influence the Welsh Government’s spending priorities prior to formulation of the Draft Budget.
- 4.** Our engagement work will also inform the Senedd’s scrutiny of the Draft Budget in the autumn, enabling the Senedd Committees to hold the Welsh Government’s spending decisions to account in line with the views and priorities of the Welsh public.
- 5.** This year, the Committee’s Plenary debate on the Welsh Government’s Spending Priorities will take place on 17 July 2024. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Cabinet Office (the Cabinet Secretary), Rebecca Evans MS, will respond to the debate.
- 6.** This year the Committee’s public engagement strategy consisted of the following:
 - an external stakeholder event at Canolfan S4C Yr Egin, Carmarthen (summarised in Chapter 2);

¹ Welsh Taxes include: Welsh Rates of Income Tax, non-domestic rates, Land Transaction Tax, Land Disposal Tax

- focus groups with organisations and individuals facilitated by the Senedd's Citizens Engagement team (summarised in Chapter 3 and Annex 2); and
- youth engagement events including; a focus group at Coleg y Cymoedd with students aged 16-25; and a drop-in session at the Urdd Eisteddfod (summarised in Chapter 4).

7. Further drop-in sessions will be held at the Royal Welsh Show (22 to 25 July) and the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd (3 to 10 August). As these will happen after the Committee's priorities debate, views collected at these sessions will feed into the Committee's pre-budget work in the autumn term.

8. The Committee would like to thank everyone that has contributed to its work.

2. Stakeholder Event

Background

9. The Committee's Stakeholder Event took place on 13 June 2024 at Canolfan S4C Yr Egin, Carmarthen.²

10. A targeted invitation was issued to previous stakeholder attendees and respondents to the Committee's latest Draft Budget consultation. 29 organisations participated in the event from a wide range of sectors. A list of organisations that participated can be found in Annex 1.



Summary of the discussions

11. There was a general view from participants that the long-term pressures of the Cost of Living crisis and high inflation rates, are still being felt across all services.

12. Stakeholders raised the following general concerns regarding the current fiscal context:

² Rhianon Passmore MS and Peter Fox MS, were unable to attend and sent their apologies. Altaf Hussain MS attended on behalf of Peter Fox MS.

- There is a general imbalance between funding front-line services and those that provide preventative services. This has led to short-term, reactive spending decisions by the Welsh Government, at the expense of longer-term, strategic budgeting;
- There is a lack of understanding by the Welsh Government of the impact of its spending decisions, particularly when it is cutting funding, and more assessment needs to be undertaken to inform its approach to setting budget priorities; and
- Welsh Government needs to commit to more long-term funding settlements for local government so they can pass long-term funding on to the organisations they support.

13. Other issues raised by participants at the event have been summarised under six sub-headings which were identified as main priorities:

The long-term effect of the cost of living crisis

14. There was a general feeling amongst participants that the impact of the cost of living is far-reaching and affecting most people in society:

- there is more reliance on public services to provide shelter, warmth and community facilities. However, there is a concern that these services are under pressure from funding cuts, which in turn is likely to put NHS services under increased pressure.
- women occupy an unequal position in the economy as they are more likely to work part-time, in low paid jobs, and are more reliant on public services.
- Hardship funds and cost of living schemes were generally seen as being effectively targeted and well received, however longer term measures and investment in the budget are needed to address the structural inequalities.
- Middle earners are being badly squeezed as their income exceeds the eligibility threshold for receiving additional support.
- Housing association residents face difficulties in accessing funding quickly in an emergency. The eligibility criteria to access the Discretionary Housing Payment and the Discretionary Assistance Fund were mentioned as areas of particular concern, and that an awareness

campaign to promote such funding mechanisms is required so that people do not miss out.

- The cost of living was noted as having an acute impact in rural communities because of ; the lack of accessibility to services, including digital services which are exasperated by poor connectivity; additional costs associated with poor public transport and infrastructure to access services; lack of affordable housing and low incomes.
- One participant stated that figures for entrants to Higher Education are the lowest they have been for a decade, demonstrating the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on the opportunities available, and in turn dampening the ambition of young people to seek further qualifications.

The importance of investing in preventative services

15. The importance of preventative spending was noted by several stakeholders and that there needs to be a more long-term approach by the Welsh Government in tackling issues, as this would be more cost effective:

- Stakeholders felt that the Welsh Government generally makes its spending decisions based on firefighting and reacting to situations and pressures, instead on focusing on longer-term strategic priorities, such as preventative spend.
- It was noted that with half of the Welsh Government's budget spent of health and social care, a more long-term, preventative approach was required which would transfer funding into other sectors. This would see more investment in areas such as sport and promotion of a healthier diet - which the Welsh Government often claims to be the greatest preventative health tool. However, participants also highlighted that they are also the areas that are first to receive funding cuts.
- With an aging population and a decrease in the working population, concerns were raised over the increase in demand on services such as the NHS. With the average life expectancy exceeding a 'healthy' life expectancy by 20 years, one participant emphasised that funding preventative measures to increase healthy lifestyles would address some of the pressures on the NHS in the long-term.

Budgetary pressures on educational services and the effect it is having on staff and pupils/students

16. A number of participants commented on the budgetary pressures felt by those working and studying in the education sectors:

- One contributor suggested that budgets were at a “breaking point”, with a number of schools facing compulsory redundancies and local authorities no longer having the resources to provide certain school services. In the absence of additional funding, stakeholders warned that things could get worse in 12-24 months’ time.
- It was noted that a more efficient use of teaching capacities should be encouraged, with less reliance on costly agency staff in schools who are not as effective as permanent teaching staff.
- We heard that the cost of the school day is increasing, particularly in terms of school uniform, visits, equipment and school meals (for secondary pupils).
- It was noted that income thresholds need to be raised in line with inflation, so that more pupils in secondary and further education can access free school meals. Stakeholders were also concerned about access to affordable meals, for those who receive free school meals, outside of school term time. However, it was also noted that the unintended consequences of universal school meals has led to families no longer claiming other entitlements, resulting in fewer free school meal learners and subsequently less funding for schools.
- Key services for vulnerable pupils, particularly relating to mental health and additional learning needs (ALN) support, are needed more than ever but often these are the services that have been cut or are seen as ‘nice to haves’. Further cuts in this area could be catastrophic for pupils’ learning outcomes and the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Cuts are also having a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable children and young people, particularly those on low incomes. It was felt that the current funding arrangements are leading to a reduction in the provision of services, which is exacerbating social inequalities.
- Concerns were raised, which echoed sentiments expressed in previous years, that issues relating to the COVID pandemic continue to be felt in

schools. Stakeholders said that the level of funding for the health and well-being of young people who suffered in the pandemic, especially in terms of their mental health, and the uncertainties around Pathfinder funding, were worrying.

- Further views were expressed in relation to mental health, describing the current provision as being a “postcode lottery” and that “generational” issues resulting from the pandemic and social media were contributing to children and young people accessing more mental health services. It was also suggested that there was a gap between the support offered by schools and services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – and that this needed to be addressed.
- Stakeholders commented on the year-on-year erosion of funding available for FE apprenticeships, citing examples such as professional apprenticeships in civil engineering as being good, cost effective models. It was also suggested that building capacity through skills and deploying existing skills to new carbon reduction jobs, would result in a win-win.

The challenges facing the NHS and social care sectors and the need for integration

17. The comments of stakeholders focused on the desperate and longstanding need to develop a sustainable and holistic approach to funding social care which is joined-up and rooted in collaboration with other frontline services, namely primary and secondary health care:

- The increase in funding for the NHS, which has not been proportionately reflected in local government budgets, and the negative effect this has had on funding social care, was raised as an important issue.
- The imbalance in funding between health and social care often leads to bottlenecks in the system, and that by addressing this, patients could be transferred quicker from hospitals into social care, and back home. It is often end users at an operational level are the ones confronted with the reality of lack of funding. Participants spoke at length about the collaboration needed to deal with the pressures at every point in the system.

- Participants spoke about the need for parity of esteem for social care workers, as there is for NHS workers, and that their value is recognised by ensuring they are paid a real living wage.
- The acute need to address issues with pay and recruitment in social care, especially as both social and health care sectors are in competition with each other at a time of staffing pressures and shortages, was identified as essential.
- Stakeholders felt that the transformation of health and social care services was inevitable, however public opinion and the political will to do so were seen as barriers. To overcome this, participants felt that it was necessary to base decisions on evidence, consultation and modelling, and that communication with the public and effective monitoring of the impact of any changes would be key to its success.
- Participants noted that productivity in the NHS needs to increase and that there is an overreliance on agency staff which had a bearing on the budgets of health boards.
- There were also concerns about the Welsh Government's lack of understanding about how funding is impacting productivity in the NHS. It was suggested that such assessments and data are used to inform its budgetary decision-making.
- Ageing infrastructure in hospitals means they are not fit for purpose and participants felt that capital investment is needed to develop smaller, state of the art hospitals.
- In terms of digital infrastructure, concerns were raised about healthcare systems being very old and that the workforce is using out-dated practices. However, it was noted that investment in digital infrastructure in health and social care sectors is one of the first areas to be cut. These cuts have an impact on the long-term transformation of services which would allow them to become more efficient and productive.

Building communities and not just homes

18. Housing was raised as an area of concern, with stakeholders focusing comments on the affordability, quality and low-carbon design of newly built homes, as well as appropriate planning considerations. Participants also spoke about the importance of supporting the Welsh language to encourage young people to live and work within their communities:

- The interlinking relationship between the cost of living, housing and climate crises, was discussed as an area which could be tackled by investing in building low carbon and good quality housing that is fit for purpose.
- One participant emphasised that increasing the low-carbon housing supply would have multiple benefits such as; lowering rents/competition; improving people’s health and wellbeing; making homes more energy efficient and lowering energy bills; and capitalising on the market for equipment, such as solar panels, that have never been cheaper than they are now.
- It was also noted, however, that the manufacturing for building low carbon housing aren’t particularly established in Wales and there is a lack of confidence in the industry in investing in low carbon housing.
- Good design and future proofing of housing so that they can be easily adapted to make them suitable for people with disabilities and health conditions, was discussed as key to ensuring that they were suitable for all.
- The importance of building homes in the right places, close to schools, transport, shops and green spaces was raised as essential element of effective planning, not only to reduce costs of building new infrastructure but also to reduce the carbon footprint and to drive up economic growth.
- If the Welsh Government remains serious about meeting its 1 million speakers target by 2050, participants spoke about the need to provide more funding for the Welsh language to reverse the historic decline in speakers. This was also linked to the lack of opportunities available for young people to encourage them to stay in their communities, compounding the detrimental effects on the language – especially in rural Wales.

Spending more efficiently and effectively to build the local economy

19. Stakeholders discussed how the Welsh Government could boost local economies, by targeting its funding in a more effective way that benefits whole communities. Concerns were raised however about the reduction of rates relief and how the difficult economic climate is having a disproportionate effect on women:

- Participants spoke about the crucial need to align policy levers so that, when investing in sectors such as health or in green transition, efforts would be made to maximise the benefits for local businesses and economies.
- Investment in innovation was discussed as an effective way of reducing the dependency of certain sectors on long-term financial support by the Welsh Government.
- There were concerns that the reduction in rates relief will have a huge impact on certain sectors such as leisure and hospitality businesses, leading to the closure of venues and job losses.
- Focusing support for young people, particularly in rural areas, to be able to live and work in their communities was identified as a key driver to boost the local economy. To achieve this, stakeholders felt that greater priority needed to be given to creating sustainable jobs, providing better transport links and building affordable housing.
- It was noted that women occupy an unequal position in the economy as they are more likely to work part-time, in low paid jobs, and are more reliant on public services. Hardship funds are important but there is a need to look long-term and address the structural inequalities and investment in the budget.
- Concerns were also raised that high childcare costs was preventing women from returning to the workplace, negatively impacting the economy. It was noted that Welsh Government childcare support was cut due to a less than expected uptake. However, the reasons behind this weren't properly investigated. There were concerns of possible gaps in the provision of Welsh Government childcare support, such as not being offered to children under three years of age.

3. Focus groups with organisations and individuals

20. The Senedd's Citizens Engagement Team conducted focus groups with interested organisations and individuals to consider where the Welsh Government should prioritise spending in 2025-26.

21. The aim of the engagement was to gain qualitative information about the experiences of participants and deepen the Committee's understanding of the issues affecting the people of Wales.

22. Fifteen focus groups were held and one interview was conducted with 84 participants covering 20 local authorities across Wales. Some participants were identified through gatekeeper organisations. This was to ensure the sample was representative as well as diverse.

23. This approach has been commissioned annually by the Finance Committee since the beginning of this Senedd, and it complements cross-committee engagement. Through these focus groups, the team heard first-hand from the citizens of Wales. This longitudinal approach enables the Committee to continue to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time and the trends that have developed over the last three years are summarised in the focus group report that can be found at Annex 2.

4. Engagement with young people

24. In previous years, the Committee has invited Members of the Welsh Youth Parliament (WYP) to participate in a workshop to discuss their concerns and views on where they feel the Welsh Government should be prioritising its spending.

25. As the WYP were not in session this year, the views of young people were gathered by different means.

26. The Committee invited young people to take part in a dedicated Citizen Focus Group, facilitated by the Citizens Engagement Team. The event took place at Coleg y Cymoedd on 16 May, and included students aged 16-25, who were studying a variety of subject areas. A summary of these discussions are incorporated into the focus group findings report at Annex 2.



27. Members of the Committee also sought the views of young people by holding a drop-in session at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Meifod (30 May 2024). People were invited to note what they felt should be the Welsh Government's priorities next year on a 'graffiti wall', and through completing Microsoft Forms questionnaires available on iPads at the event. Some of the priorities included:

- Mental health support in schools, especially around exam times;
- Measures to support the environment and mitigate climate change;

- Universal free school meals;
- Lowering the price of school uniforms;
- Welsh language provision to be available for people across Wales;
- Opportunities for young people to access creative arts in education;
- Sustainable farming;
- More facilities available for children to enjoy in their communities; and
- Fair wages for all.

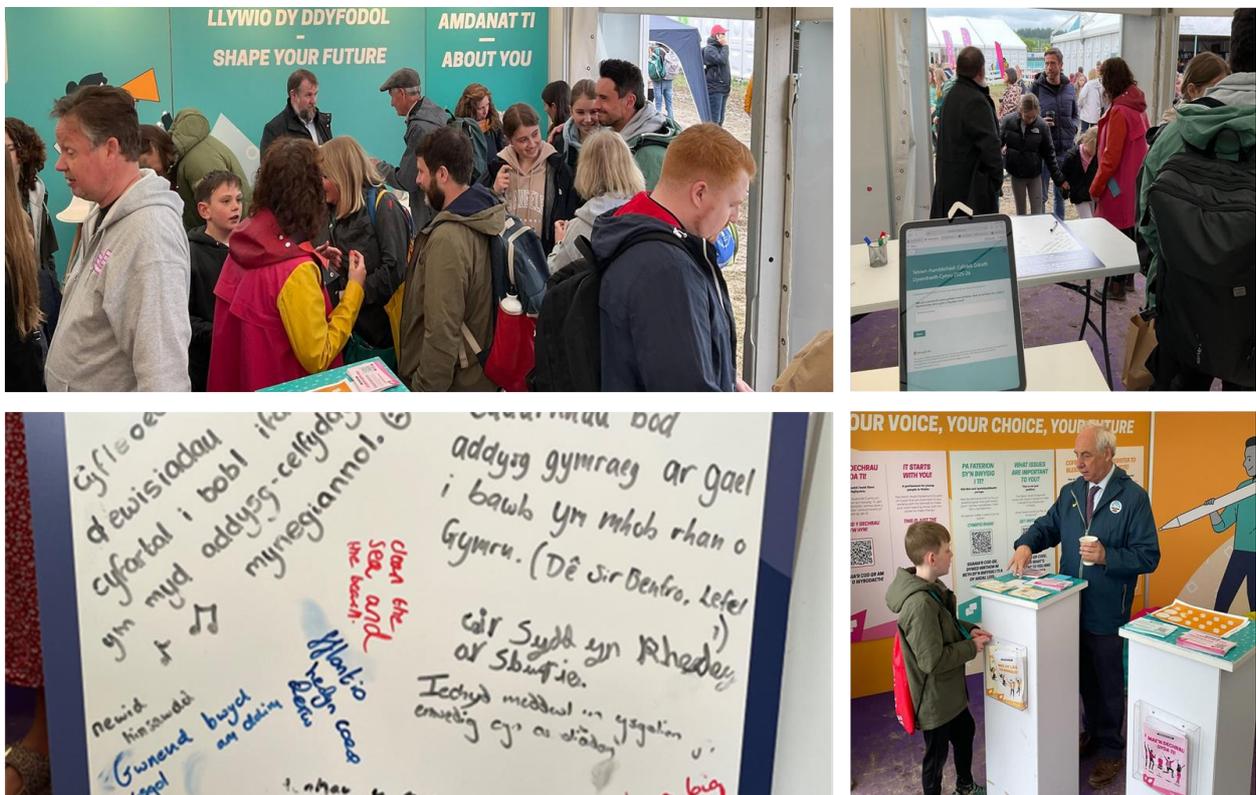


Figure 1: Committee members at the Urdd Eisteddfod, Meifod 2024

28. The Committee intends to hold similar public engagement sessions at the Royal Welsh Show in July and at the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd in August. Although these will take place after the Budget Priorities debate, any views expressed will be included as part of the Committee’s consultation exercise later in the year.

Annex 1: List of stakeholder event participants.

29. The following organisations participated in the stakeholder event at Canolfan S4C yr Egin, Carmarthen on 13 June 2024.

No	Organisation
1	Association of Chartered Certified Accounts (ACCA) Cymru
2	Caerphilly County Borough Council
3	Carmarthenshire County Council
4	Ceredigion County Council
5	Chartered Institute for Housing (CIH) Cymru
6	Children's Commissioner for Wales
7	Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol
8	Community Housing Cymru
9	Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services
10	Federation of Small Businesses - FSB Cymru
11	Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
12	Hywel Dda University Health Board
13	Institution of Civil Engineers - ICE Cymru
14	Learning Disability Wales
15	Marie Curie Cymru
16	Monmouthshire County Council
17	Music Venue Trust
18	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
19	Oxfam Cymru
20	Powys County Council
21	Ramblers Cymru
22	RSPB Cymru
23	Sport Wales
24	Universities Wales
25	University and College Union - UCU Cymru

No	Organisation
26	Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs - CFfl YFC Cymru
27	Wales Women's Budget Group and Women's Equality Network Wales
28	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
29	Welsh NHS Confederation

Welsh Government draft budget 2025-26: Engagement findings

July 2024

Annex 2: Citizen engagement findings

As part of the Finance Committee's annual scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget, the Citizen Engagement Team held a series of focus groups to gather the views of the people of Wales on where Welsh Government should prioritise spending for the next financial year.

This approach has been commissioned annually by the Finance Committee since its first scrutiny inquiry of the 2022-23 Welsh Government Draft Budget (Year One). The method was developed and delivered for the scrutiny of the 2023-24 Welsh Government Draft Budget (Year Two) and for the scrutiny of the 2024-25 Welsh Government Draft Budget (Year Three).

Findings within this engagement report refer mainly to this year's findings (Year Four). Trends that have developed since year one can be found within the summary below.

The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank all those who contributed to this programme of engagement.

1. Summary of findings

The headline points within this report are as follows:

- 1.** 15 focus groups were held and 1 interview was conducted with 84 participants covering 20 local authority areas across Wales.
- 2.** Health and Social Care was prioritised most frequently by participants, closely followed by Education and then Housing and Homelessness.
- 3.** Transport, Economy and Culture were also identified by most of the groups as priorities for funding.
- 4.** Many preferred to see more efficiency in the way funding was spent, rather than identify any areas in particular to receive a reduction.
- 5.** However when discussing areas that could receive a cut in funding, participants prioritised International Relations and the Welsh Language in the majority of cases.
- 6.** In monitoring any attitude changes since last year's study, participants were equally focused on increasing spending for Health and Social Care. Second to that, Education was still considered a very important area.
- 7.** However participants appear to have shifted their focus and priorities from Economy and Climate Change towards Housing and Homelessness. Compared to year three where Economy was identified as a higher priority and years one and two where Climate change was identified as a higher priority. Housing and Homelessness was mentioned this year more frequently than in all previous years and discussed in almost every group.
- 8.** Similarly to other years, International Relations and Welsh Language were also identified in all previous years as areas of low priority. This was mainly for the same reasons.
- 9.** In comparing attitudes towards available funds for the draft budget, participants in all previous years shared the opinion that funding should be maintained or increased. However this year, the majority of participants didn't want to see an increase of available funds but favoured maintaining funds with more efficiency, scrutiny of funding and transparency to taxpayers. Although a number of participants also argued for increasing available funds. Similarly to last year, participants did not want to see a reduction of available funds, as opposed to in year one and two where a small number felt this could be effective.

10. Views on using taxation or borrowing differed, with arguments made for and against both. However, the majority of participants only wanted to see an **increase of income tax for those who can afford it**, and any taxation of the general public was unpopular with almost every group.

11. This year, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“I would be happy to be taxed more if the extra funds generated were spent on public services in Wales.”* The **majority disagreed**, mainly for reasons linked to mistrust of where the funds would actually go, or because they felt people were already enduring hardship and couldn’t afford to pay more tax when wages have not increased enough to alleviate the issues of the cost of living crisis.

12. **Improving homes and investing in Welsh food production capacity** were felt to be the most important of the Future Generations schemes, followed by **connecting people**.

13. In previous years, these three schemes were also considered the most important with the addition of **investing in Welsh energy**. However although this scheme was discussed this year it was not described as important.

14. Innovative ideas to deal with future funding challenges included: Free transport offer for under 25 year olds; Reforming the way grant funding is allocated; Reviewing the Barnett Formula; Local authority reform; Seasonal tax rates for seasonal businesses.

15. In most of the engagement sessions, participants identified **older and younger people** as a group that may require more focused funding – this is the same as in year three.

16. Participants also highlighted a range of other groups such as **unpaid carers, people with hidden disabilities, and asylum seekers and refugees** as needing more help and support.

2. Engagement

Methodology

17. The Citizen Engagement Team held 15 focus groups and 1 interview during May and June 2024 with 84 participants. The aim of the engagement was to gain qualitative information about the experiences of participants and deepen the Committee’s understanding of the issues affecting the people of Wales.

- 18.** The aim is to continue undertaking focus groups throughout the course of this Senedd to form a cross sectional study to allow the Committee to monitor perspectives and attitudes over time.
- 19.** Participants were asked similar questions to those posed during previous years, with a few additions to reflect current challenges. The questions posed to each focus group were based on the overarching question: What do you want the Welsh Government to focus spending on? Appendix 2 outlines the detailed questions participants were asked.
- 20.** This engagement report outlines the key findings which arose during the focus groups that may be of relevance to the Committee's work. Themes are highlighted throughout while structured around the key areas of questioning.
- 21.** Themes within this report have been selected on the basis that they were recurring or prominent in discussions, thus enabling an insight into the participant's lived experiences. Where it's possible and appropriate, anonymised quotes have been selected to add context.
- 22.** This approach is intended to complement cross-committee engagement and enable Members to hear first-hand from the citizens of Wales.
- 23.** Participants were sourced through partner organisations from last year and new organisations to roughly cover the same demographics, and focus groups were organised to focus on particular policy areas.

Data collection

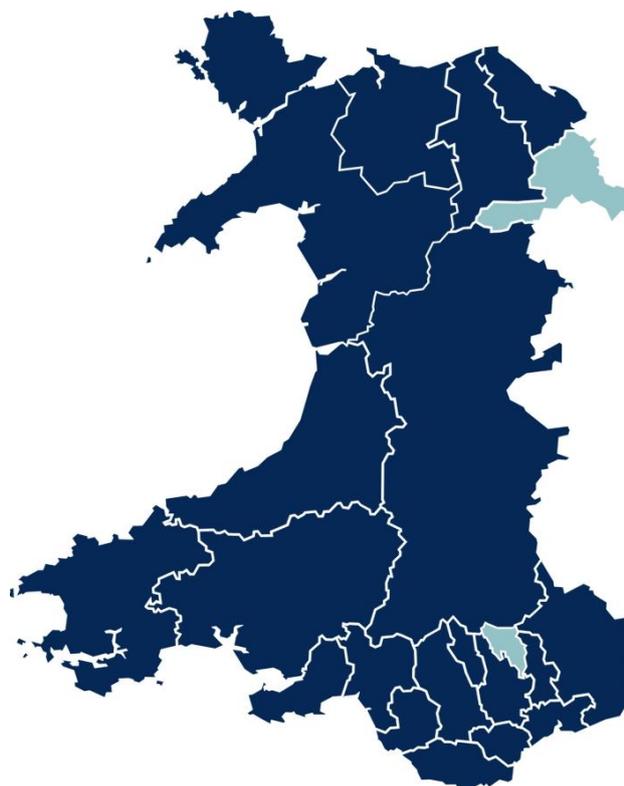
- 24.** In order to ensure the demographic was as representative as possible of the Welsh population, a pre-screening survey was implemented. Working with external organisations and running a brief digital campaign, the opportunity was communicated across Wales. 197 respondents completed the pre-screening survey from across 22 local authority areas. 95 participants were then invited to a focus group, with 30 accepting the invitation.
- 25.** 54 participants were identified through gatekeeper organisations. This was to ensure this sample was representative as well as diverse. Appendix 1 includes a full list of organisations that supported the engagement approach.

26. Participants who took part represented **20 local authority areas**. There were no participants from Blaenau Gwent or Wrexham as illustrated on the map in light green.

27. Participants came from a mixture of urban, suburban and rural areas.

28. Participants came from all Senedd regions.

29. The format of engagement was largely comparable across the focus groups, but varied slightly to respond to the views, experiences and ideas shared by contributors. Four focus groups were conducted face to face and 11 focus groups were conducted online.



3. Engagement findings: In which areas should Welsh Government **prioritise or deprioritise** funding in the next financial year?

30. Participants were asked to identify up to three areas they would like to see Welsh Government prioritise or deprioritise funding in the next financial year. The areas are listed below in the general order of highest to lowest priority.

31. Notably, a large number of participant said they approached their choices by selecting what they felt the basic needs of the citizens of Wales were.

“Welsh Gov often spends money on social agenda policies, i.e. 20 mph speed limits and more Senedd Members, but we should be looking at how we can get efficient use from our money, not social agenda projects [...] when you're short of money, you look at the basics first.”
Participant from the tourism sector

Health and Social Care

32. Health and Social Care were presented to participants separately this year however they were still both prioritised at all engagement sessions. With participants focusing on issues such as; a reduction of GP surgeries and local surgeries leading to lower level of GP care; insufficient hospital beds for emergency admissions and pre planned surgery/treatments; long hospital waiting lists; long A&E waiting times and conditions; inadequate ambulance resources and responses.

“There’s no provision for anything above and beyond the basic level of healthcare.” Parent linked to MENCAP

“A health system which is underfunded is dangerous” Young person

“Both child and adult social care needs to be reformed. Especially where not for profit care is supported.” Care leaver

33. Participants also expressed dismay at the lack of social care services for younger and older people. And they were aware of the impact on health services if social care services are inadequate.

“In relation to health and social care, I find the left hand doesn’t know what the right hand is doing. Social care is like going through a maze, just trying to find out what you are and aren’t entitled to.” Unpaid carer

“If you don’t sort out social care then health will continue to have problems. - we’ve had long promises about how to put this right but it’s never been addressed by successive governments.” Older person

34. However participants generally felt that the current challenges in health and social care could not just be addressed with additional funds, but higher earners within the Health sector should be robustly scrutinised.

“If I could make savings, I would like to see funding cuts for 6 figure salaries within the health service.” Unpaid carer

“I don’t think the NHS is working in any shape or form - I think it’s too management orientated.” Farmer

35. Mental Health was mentioned in several of the engagement sessions. Participants felt more should be done to offer preventative approaches to poor mental health either through community or cultural projects. Therapy services were described as insufficient due to long wait times to access them or only being able to access them for a limited period of time.

“We know that mental health services are woefully underfunded.”

Long term healthcare user

“Health especially, I’d like to see Welsh Government building communities to ensure prevention approaches within those communities. For example in my area, we run sessions like tai chi and groups to improve mental health.” **Older person**

36. 36.Unpaid carers were participants in many of the groups however a general need to better support unpaid carers was felt more widely across groups.

“Unpaid carers are going to be a major issue in future if not resolved in a sensible and democratic way. Many older and younger people are forced into an unfair situation where they are having to care for people and it might mean missing school or work and it needs to be looked at as a broad social issue.” **Older person**

37. Participants wanted to see a decrease in NHS waiting times. When moving from paediatric to adult care, the difference between waiting times for services was vast.

“The NHS needs more funding – mainly I want to see waiting times shortened – I’m currently on a waiting list for a mental health assessment, I was on a waiting list for children but since turning 18 years old I have moved to adult services. Since I moved over my wait has been doubled, and I was already waiting for a year and a half.”
Young person

Education

38. Education was also prioritised with participants considering an investment in education was important to secure the future of young people.

*"I want to see smaller class sizes, I don't think the teachers can cope and it's not fair on students who need more focused attention." **Care leaver***

39. One participant noted her daughter has been on the neurodiversity assessment list for four years, since she was two years old. She is now 13th on the list, but there is no guarantee that she will be assessed this year. Additional Learning Needs (ALN) assessment waiting times was raised by several participants.

40. Several participants who are school governors mentioned that future redundancies have been considered due to limited school funding.

41. Participants felt that the expense of higher education (HE) was putting young people off going to university. They want more funding available for HE to make it an appealing option for pupils to carry on with education.

Housing / Homelessness

42. Housing and Homelessness was mentioned in nearly every group and was not deprioritised by any participants. This year it has become a clear priority at these engagement sessions.

*"Good quality housing should be a basic human right." **Long term healthcare user***

*"Housing is important to give people their dignity." **Young person (aged 11) linked to MENCAP***

43. Third sector organisations supporting homelessness and general participants at the engagement sessions felt support for people who were experiencing homelessness are not adequate or suitable and need to be reviewed.

*"The help that's being offered to homeless people, is not the right kind of help." **Unpaid carer***

44. Several participants felt that third sector organisations are well placed to be funded to advocate for support for more vulnerable people within society including homeless people. One participant said, organisations who have people with lived experience working within them have been much more beneficial to them than central services linked to local authorities.

"We understand the cycle of addiction and we can reach the mind set of addicts and get them through the door with the power of lived experience." Participant linked to the Wallich

Transport

45. Linking and improving access between rural and urban areas of Wales was described as vitally important to younger and older people.

"I would advocate for buses every day of the week." Young person

46. Investing in buses was considered as more essential than train services for young people. With participants focusing on benefits such as; buses are able to get to more places than trains; it's easy to add more buses to into existing routes/systems; roads/infrastructure already exists; less staff are needed to run the service; and it's cheaper than trains to run.

47. Participants in more than one group mentioned how Rhondda Cynon Taff had conducted a short term free bus travel promotion for under 25's recently and it made a tangible difference to the participants who described spending "most of their money on bus tickets."

48. Participants felt that drivers were being penalised with the aim to lower carbon emissions however public transport or active travel routes were not good enough to replace the use of cars. This was leaving the general public in a difficult position where transport is not satisfactory for all types of users. One participant said too much money is being spent on cycle routes that aren't beneficial to everyone in Wales.

"Vast amounts are being spent on active travel when the public transport system is on its knees." Participant from the culture sector

49. Several participants wanted to see improved connection between north and south Wales.

"There is no hope of the Welsh economy growing when you can't travel from north to south without going through very small villages, many of them with 20mph restrictions now." Active traveller or Public transport user

50. Several participants want to see scrutiny of the transport budget especially focusing on active travel and investments into Sustrans.

*"I don't know where the money for Sustrans has gone – it certainly needs looking at." **Active traveller or Public transport user***

Economy

51. **Economy** shifted down participants priorities this year compared to last year. However many participants felt economy provided multiple benefits to society.

*"The tourism sector is the glue for a lot of communities. It provides education, training, and a career path for local people who may otherwise leave Wales for better economic outcomes." **Participant from the tourism sector***

*"Health and education can't exist without a strong economy." **Older person***

Culture

52. There were mixed views on the priority level of Culture. Many participants suggested this area should be deprioritised, however it was also seen by many as integral and can cut across a range of areas, fostering more joined up working.

*"Culture is intrinsic in terms of how it can engage with the health sector. But there's ability for it to support climate change. Culture is also a driver of the economy. It would be an oversight to not see culture as this. The cuts are really biting, with so many organisations at risk now, despite how these organisations are also alleviating lots of other social and economic problems." **Participant from the culture sector***

*"This year the arts have taken a 10.5% cut and I have seen the impact of that. Organisations are struggling to deliver on the things they are committed to. Some organisations have even had to go under because of this. Also, it always seems that the arts are the first sector to take a hit when it comes to cuts." **Participant from the culture sector***

Climate

53. Compared to year one and two, participants didn't highlight Climate Change highly this year, which is similar to last year (year three).

"I wonder if we should prune our ideas on climate change - can we really afford to be so radical and push ahead at such a fast pace?"
Older Person

54. Generally participants felt Wales was doing enough and that other countries needed to do more otherwise localised efforts would be wasted. Participants highlighted there was no longer a need to invest in awareness raising of climate change issues.

"Whatever Wales is doing [for climate change] is not going to solve the problem for the world." Parent linked to MENCAP

Agriculture / Rural Affairs

55. When prioritising agriculture, many participants talked about food production and becoming more self-sufficient in order to be more mindful of lower "food mileage". There was also a concern that Wales could be vulnerable if it wasn't able to grow food for the nation.

"Unless we can have a sustainable food model linked to rural affairs and agriculture then we won't have a sustainable food supply. I think it's vitally important that we are able to feed ourselves." Older Person

"Without food we can't live. Becoming more self sufficient in this country is a key priority and we have a strong farming sector but why aren't we supporting it more." Active traveller or Public transport user

56. One participant wanted investment into educating farmers to ensure that farming skills are not lost in the future. Also farmers wanted to feel listened to when it came to designing new support schemes affecting them.

"Welsh Government need to listen to the farmers (specifically on the Sustainable Farming Scheme), we don't think they are listening and

they want to apply a “one size fits all” approach that just won’t work.”
Unionised Farmer

Welsh language

57. Many participants deprioritised Welsh Language, expressing that although it was an important part of Welsh culture, there are other more pressing issues that relate to larger numbers of the population.

58. One participant didn’t want to see cuts to Welsh Language due to the benefits they have seen with people learning Welsh.

“I know so many people of all different ages and backgrounds who are able to learn Welsh now because of the affordable courses available now. You can do a 6 months course for £45, meaning that people’s prospects of the language is even better than just 10 years ago [...] I certainly don’t want to take away opportunities for people to improve their employment prospects and understanding of our culture. But I know there can be frustrations around the funding allocated to translation (for example)” **Participant from the culture sector**

International relations

59. Whilst the majority of groups felt International Relations should be deprioritised, a handful of participants didn’t want to see this. Suggesting how International relations can closely link to cultural development. They felt, currently International Relations can seem very focused on business but there should be a focus on culture too.

“We are not a significant player in that field (international relations) and I am concerned at the amounts of money that is spent in that area. Some of the events seem to be very lavish.” **Older Person**

Local Government Other Services

60. Generally people didn’t want to see frontline aspects from Local Government Other Services cut – as these were described as covering waste management services, environmental health, trading standards, local roads, planning, libraries, and not costs related to education or social care. However many participants were

keen to see management and executive roles scrutinised and many wanted to see a full reform of local authority areas (this was also raised in year three).

“More money is needed in local government to run services, not to pay for more local councillors who earn vast wages that they don’t deserve.” Unpaid Carer

61. Many participants also felt let down by current services within local government, finding third sector organisation more able and willing to help them when in need.

“Where people who have died through lack of access to social services, a lot of those cases appear to be because the person involved has not even been well enough to even engage with the services. They have been let down by social services and died of neglect.” Participant linked to the Wallich

Efficiency of spending

62. When asked to deprioritise areas, many participants voiced concerns over cutting certain areas of funding over others and wanted to see more scrutiny of the allocation of current funding, better governance and an improvement in efficiency of spending.

“It’s an impossible question. It’s more about Welsh Government being more transparent around these areas and running cost analysis to fully understand the benefits around what has been spent.” Older person

63. Local government and Health were both used as an example by a number of groups where they would like to see more effective spending and a limit on management jobs so there could be an increase on frontline jobs.

64. Many participants felt that policy making didn’t involve people with lived experience of the issue and some felt communication around recent initiatives, such as 20mph speed limits, the Sustainable Farming Scheme and Senedd Reform had not gone far enough to consult or communicate with the citizens of Wales and therefore created a negative reaction from the public.

“Welsh Government needs to listen to people who are affected [...] Communication and listening is very important to fully understand the issue.” Care leaver

“Meaningful coproduction should occur. And I don’t mean consultations where the decision has already been made and where they ignore what the public say.” Long term healthcare user

4. Engagement findings: Should Welsh Government use its taxation and/or borrowing powers to increase, decrease or maintain overall available funding?

65. Firstly, participants were asked if they were aware of how the Welsh Government budget was funded, and were provided with a breakdown of the amounts raised by certain taxes. The majority of participants had some awareness of how the budget was funded in terms of tax devolution, but not of the specific amounts and the specific taxes involved. A few participants were unaware of how the budget was funded. A small number of participants who mainly worked in sectors that pay business rates were fully aware of how the budget was funded.

66. Participants were then asked to comment on whether an increase, decrease or maintenance of available funds was preferable, and whether amounts of taxation or borrowing should be changed in order to achieve this. This year, participant didn’t want to see more funds being available and preferred to see them being “better spent.” Compared to last year, where more participants were keen to see more funds being made available to the Welsh Government. No participants felt it would be viable to decrease the available budget.

“Throwing money at things isn’t the solution, it’s how it’s spent rather than how much is spent.” Parent linked to Mencap

“I wanted to see Welsh Government make the budget go further.” Participant working in the tourism sector

67. Participants discussed how there was a lack of transparency about how taxes get spent. For example, there is potential for a tourism tax to be introduced, however participants within the tourism sector, expressed concern that “the

discussion has been about raising it and spending it, but not about what the outcomes are going to be.”

68. Participants said they wanted Welsh Government to act more like a business and be “*more efficient*”

69. Several participants wanted to see funds generated from combating tax avoidance/evasion (although they recognised this was mainly a UK Government task but it was something they felt affects the available funds for all devolved nations).

70. Several participant wanted to see a review of the Barnett formula.

“The Barnett formula is something that needs to be looked at so that Wales gets a fairer portion of money from UK Government.” Unpaid Carer

Taxation and borrowing

71. There were few comments on borrowing and the conversation focused more on taxation.

72. The majority of participant disagreed with the following statement:

“I would be happy to be taxed more if the extra funds generated were spent on public services in Wales.”

73. This was mainly for reasons linked to; mistrust of where the funds would actually be spent; or because they felt people were already enduring hardship and couldn’t afford to pay more tax when wages have not increased enough to alleviate the issues of the cost of living crisis.

“I don’t have faith at the moment that this additional tax would be spent correctly and efficiently enough. I hope that I will change my mind in the future. But at the moment I don’t have enough faith.” Active traveller or Public transport user

“People can’t afford to put food on the table let alone put more money in the governments pocket by paying more tax.” Active traveller or Public transport user

74. Where participants agreed with the statement, it was conditional based on ensuring the funds were allocated or ringfenced to frontline workers. Or they agreed to high earners being taxed more but not the general public.

"I would be prepared to pay more tax if I felt that things would improve and that the money was going to be spent on frontline services. But I'm not confident that this would happen. The Welsh Government would have to prove to me that they were spending sensibly before I would agree." Unpaid carer

5. Engagement findings: Should the aims outlined by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales be priorities?

75. Participants were asked about a number of schemes outlined as a focus by the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and whether they felt these were important to focus on at the moment. Almost all participants who were asked this question felt that the schemes were of importance.

76. Overall Improving homes and investment in Welsh food production capacity were felt to be the most important of the Future Generations schemes, followed by connecting people.

Improving homes across Wales - including decarbonisation of homes, building new low carbon affordable housing and a national programme to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes

77. Participants in the majority of the groups said this scheme was very important with the need to create fully accessible and energy efficient homes in light of the current cost of living crisis.

"Improving homes has multiple benefits." Unpaid Carer

"Building homes with accessibility in mind is vital." Long term healthcare user

Investing in Welsh food production capacity to reduce reliance on imports

78. Many participants felt that becoming more self-sufficient as a nation should be a priority for Wales due to climate change targets and the cost of living crisis. They suggested Welsh Government direct hospitals and schools to offer Welsh products only within their canteens. However those in the agriculture sector said this policy would need investment.

“If we have to produce food for Wales then it will require investment because currently a large amount for food production is exported.”
Unionised Farmer

Connecting and moving people - including improving digital connectivity, active travel (non-motorised ways of traveling for example on a bicycle) and public transport

79. This scheme was felt to be very important by the majority of participants with particular comments around improving digital connectivity, and improving transport infrastructure to ensure accessibility.

“Public transport has been hellish recently – as someone who uses a motorised scooter, not knowing when the trains or busses will return is a nightmare for me.” *Long term healthcare user*

80. However there were some negative views on the investment in active travel where participants felt rural areas were not set up to develop active travel routes and therefore funding may not be evenly distributed between rural and urban areas.

6. Engagement findings: Innovation in funding to deal with future challenges

81. Participants were asked for ideas of how Welsh Government could be innovative in the way it funds all sectors in order to deal with future challenges, such as the cost of living crisis, supporting business recovery and transitioning to a lower carbon economy.

Suggestions included:

82. Put pressure on the UK Government to review the Barnett Formula

- 83.** Reforming the way grant funding is allocated to avoid the short-term funding cycles and time spent on grant applications (this was mentioned in all previous years)
- 84.** Reforming the local authorities structure and the council tax system (This was also mentioned in year three)
- 85.** Offering free or subsidised transport for under 25 year olds. Or creating 24 hour public transport options for the cities of Wales. (This was also mentioned in year three). Bespoke transport options for disabled people
- 86.** Seasonal taxes for seasonal businesses so they can maintain permanent staff throughout the year and use quieter periods to invest in and training staff
- 87.** Allowing asylum seekers the chance to volunteer or work while awaiting their right to remain status. Contributing to better mental and physical health and integration within society
- 88.** Finding personal advocates for vulnerable people in society via third sector organisations who tend to employ people with lived experience and who can then directly relate to service users
- 89.** Transport more heavy goods by rail rather than road, improving climate outcomes and the state of the roads
- 90.** Welsh Government to provide a letter with a breakdown of where each individuals taxes have been allocated (as is practice in other countries)
- 91.** Supporting the creation of more online education – increasing access to courses for all ages and locations
- 92.** Mainstream education around domestic abuse to prevent young people being taken advantage of at an early age

7. Engagement findings: Should certain groups of society receive more or less funding to support a more equal society

- 93.** Participants were asked if Welsh Government should prioritise funding for certain groups of people in society and what the impact of that funding would be for those groups.

94. As with year three, in most of the sessions, participants identified **younger people** as a group that may require more focused funding.

“The young people are the most important. If you can’t build a proper foundation, like a building or a tree. The reason why a tree stands so strong is because of the roots underneath.” Asylum seeker / refugee

95. Participants also highlighted a range of other groups such as; **disabled people** but also they wanted to see a focus on **hidden disabilities** and increase awareness of **autism and people who are neurodivergent; unpaid carers; and asylum seekers and refugees.**

“Us unpaid carers, are pretty much worthless to the Government (UK and Welsh) regardless of everything we do.” Unpaid carer

“I think there’s a lot to be done to cater for disabled people’s needs and I feel like they are a “left behind community” and they need more help to be able to access things such as transport. I want to see a community approach.” Older person

96. One participant said, “if you properly resource and embed equality and human rights in every aspect of decision-making and delivery, you’re more likely to get things ‘right’, not disadvantage and exclude, reducing poor outcomes and costs to the economy”

8. Engagement findings: Young people’s views on Welsh Government **Budget Improvement Plan** resources:

97. The Welsh Government has produced resources aimed at helping young people understand the draft budget. This work is titled, **Welsh Government budget improvement plan**. The resources referred to were the Animation on the Budget Improvement Plan and the Budget Improvement Plan – leaflet for Young People.

98. Participants under 25 years old were asked for their views on the resources to understand their awareness of the resources and their likes and / or dislikes.

99. Of the young people asked, only one was aware of the resources before the engagement session.

"It's the first ever time I've seen them." Young person

100. Young people explained they felt the target audience for the animation was primary school or early secondary school age and it wouldn't relate to them. They said the use of colours and a video game concept worked well for a younger age group. However children said they liked the animation, but some felt it was too long and they lost interest.

101. Young people said the leaflet seemed to be written for an older age group but at a glance, the illustrations didn't work with the text. Even though they felt illustrations are a good way to break up text – however these felt *immature* for the target audience.

*"It's so childish, and I mean that in the most respectful way ever."
Young person*

102. However if these resources were designed for "young people", which is generally a term to describe the age range of 18-25 years old, then it wasn't detailed enough for them. For example, they could grasp the ambitions of the budget but they then wanted to know how Welsh Government were planning to achieve those things.

*"It's like there's all these big words and then a cartoon of a digger, the leaflet just doesn't work as it's trying to appeal to too many ages."
Young person*

103. The participants concluded that the animation and the leaflet together didn't work very well.

104. They felt that ideally Welsh Government should create resources for a younger and older age group to appeal to more children and young people.

Appendix 1

The Citizen Engagement Team would like to thank the following organisations for their support with this inquiry:

Association of Independent Museum	MENCAP
Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations	National Youth Advocacy Service
Carers Trust Wales	Nature Friendly Farming Network
Coleg y Cymoedd	Social Farms and Gardens - Welsh CSA Cluster Group
Credu	Tenant Farmers Association
Cymru Older People's Alliance	UKHospitality Cymru
Cyngor Gwynedd - Refugee and Asylum Seeker service	Versus Arthritis
Disability Arts Cymru	Voices from Care Cymru
Epilepsy Action	Wales Tourism Alliance
Fair Treatment for the Women of Wales (FTWW)	The Wallich
FSB	Welsh NHS Confederation
Lloyds Foundation	What next Cardiff / Valleys

Appendix 2

1. If you could choose up to three areas you think the Welsh Government should prioritise funding in the next financial year what areas would you choose:

- Agriculture / Rural Affairs
- Climate Change
- Culture (including arts, sports and heritage)
- Economy
- Education
- Health

- Housing/homelessness
- International Relations
- Local Government Other Services
- Social Care
- Transport
- Welsh Language

2. Why do you think the Welsh Government should increase spending in these areas?

3. If the Welsh Government is going to increase spending in some areas, it may need to cut spending in other areas. If you had to choose, which of the following areas do you think the Welsh Government should cut spending in the next financial year? Choose up to three areas: (refer to list above in question 1)

4. Why do you think the Welsh Government should reduce spending in these areas?

5. In addition to the money from UK Government, are you aware that the Welsh Government draft budget 2025-26 is also funded by the following:

- estimated £3.5 billion from Welsh Rates of Income Tax
- £1.1 billion non-domestic rates (often referred to as business rates)
- £240 million from Land Transaction Tax
- £30 million from Landfill tax
- And up to £150 million planned borrowing
- which constitutes around a fifth of total Welsh Government Funding?
- Yes
- Yes, I am aware of tax devolution but not the amounts and/or the specific taxes devolved
- No

6. Do you think Welsh Government should:

- a. Increase tax so that there is more available funding
- b. Increase borrowing so that there is more available funding
- c. Both increase tax and borrowing so there is more available funding
- d. Neither increase tax or borrowing so the current level of available funding remains
- e. Reduce tax so that there is less available funding
- f. Reduce borrowing so that there is less available funding
- g. Reduce both tax and borrowing so that there is less available funding

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement below and why?:

“I would be happy to be taxed more if the extra funds generated were spent on public services in Wales.”

Scale of agreement: Strongly agree / Partially agree / Neither agree or disagree / Partially disagree / Strongly disagree

8. How important do you think it is that the Welsh Government focuses spending on the following schemes:

- Improving homes across Wales - including decarbonisation of homes, building new low carbon affordable housing and a national programme to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.
- Connecting and moving people - including improving digital connectivity, active travel (non-motorised ways of traveling for example on a bicycle) and public transport.
- Investing in the creation of new greener jobs.
- Investing in nature - including prioritising funding and support for large-scale habitat and wildlife restoration; supporting natural flood defences; implementing the new national forest; and improving local food chains and distribution.
- Supporting businesses that will help Wales to lead the low carbon revolution.
- Investing in Welsh energy production capacity to reduce reliance on imports.

- Investing in Welsh food production capacity to reduce reliance on imports

Scale of importance: Very important / Fairly important / Not very important / Not at all important / Not sure

9. How can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds all sectors in order to deal with future challenges, such as:

- the cost of living crisis,
- supporting business recovery; and
- transitioning to a lower carbon economy

10. Thinking about the next financial year, should the Welsh Government prioritise funding for certain groups of people in society? If so which groups should be prioritised?

11. Why are these groups a priority?

12. Considering the impact of funding for these groups ...

What would be the impact of funding or additional funding for these groups?

What would be the impact of no further funding or a decrease in funding for these groups?

Policy based questions (Optional):

13. What are the key long term pressures on your sector, and what support is needed to deal with those?

14. How effectively does the support provided by the Welsh Government address the sector's needs?

15. How can the Welsh Government be innovative in the way it funds your sector in order to deal with future challenges?

Questions for Young people:

16. Welsh Government have produced resources aimed at helping young people understand the draft budget. This work is titled, [Welsh Government budget improvement plan 2024 to 2025](#).

a. What do you like and / or dislike about these two resources that have been designed for young people:

- [Animation on the Budget Improvement Plan](#)
- [Budget Improvement Plan – leaflet for Young People](#)

b. Have you seen either of these resources before today?