



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.