

June 28, 2019

Lynne Neagle AM, John Griffiths AM, Llyr Gruffydd AM
Chairpersons, CYPE, ELGC and Finance Committees
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA.

Dear Chairpersons,

Assessing the impact of budget decisions

Thank you for the opportunity to give our view on the Welsh Government's response to your joint-report on 'Assessing the impact of budget decisions'.

We welcome that the Welsh Government has accepted, or accepted in principle, all of the Committee's recommendations. In particular, we note the Welsh Government's agreement that it will give priority to working with ourselves, and the Children's Commissioner, on the assessment process. We look forward to advising the Government as this work goes forward.

Cumulative impact assessment

The Commission was pleased to organise a recent briefing (March 14) at which Landman Economics briefed Welsh Government officials on a cumulative impact assessment model. Landman Economics has developed a model that enables Governments to analyse the cumulative impact of spending decisions on certain groups with protected characteristics in order for them to take decisions to mitigate against unequal outcomes. The Welsh Government demonstrated a willingness to explore this assessment model further, and we trust this will be the case. We believe the increased use of cumulative impact assessments would offer major benefits in assessing the impact of budget decisions.

Publication of Impact assessments

We note the Welsh Government's commitment to openness and transparency in the publication of its impact assessments. It would be beneficial to ensure impact assessments are routinely published on the Welsh Government website, in a timely manner and a common format. There have been inconsistencies on if, when and how such assessments are published. It would be helpful if this was addressed. In particular, we would welcome the

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The Commission welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English.

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early publication of impact assessments in order for assurance that an impact assessment has been carried out before decisions have been made.

Review of Integrated Impact Assessment

We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to reviewing its Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) tool. We have offered our support to the Welsh Government as part of this review.

It is essential that the particular legislative requirement to 'assess equality impacts' is central to the IIA process. We acknowledge the Welsh Government's desire for a streamlined approach and appreciate the potential benefits of various impact assessments being considered within the same framework. However, this must not come at the expense of evidence of detailed analysis of if and how people from protected groups will be disadvantaged (or otherwise) by a particular funding allocation or policy.

Aspects key to assessment of equality impacts include:

- A clear emphasis on outcomes and evidence that decisions have been changed if necessary, rather than simply a commentary on what has occurred.
- Evidence that both internal and external engagement with people from protected groups has been used to inform decisions. We suggest this engagement goes above and beyond the Welsh Government Budget Advisory Group on Equality.
- Evidence that relevant information that the Welsh Government holds has been taken into account in the assessment.
- Evidence that equality impacts have been considered from an early stage. The process should be seen as an ongoing, iterative one, rather than a one off intervention.
- Officials across departments having been given the training and resources to carry out assessment of equality impacts.

In our view, there is inconsistency in the quality of impact assessments carried out across Welsh Government departments. In particular, assessments can sometimes appear to have been carried out late in the process and be largely a commentary on decisions that have been taken. Also, there can be a lack of evidence of engagement with people with protected characteristics. Furthermore, information on people with protected characteristics is sometimes supplied but without detailed reference as to how this has informed the decision taken.

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The review of IIA offers opportunity for improvements to be made to both the process itself and its implementation.

Incorporation of UN human rights treaties and alignment of duties

The Gender Equality Review has provided opportunity to explore how various statutory duties can best be aligned. We look forward to the Review's Phase 2 report and playing our part in taking forward relevant recommendations. The Commission would welcome further exploration being given as to how the Public Sector Equality Specific Duties for Wales can be amended and strengthened to ensure they are focused on delivering outcomes for individuals. The Commission is jointly hosting a Symposium on July 11 with Welsh Government that will inform the Welsh Government's thinking in reviewing and making the specific duties more effective in addressing the greatest inequalities in Wales. We would welcome greater clarity on the timetable for the Welsh Government's stated intention to review the specific duties.

The Welsh Government has repeatedly stated it is considering how UN human rights treaties can be further incorporated into Welsh law and policymaking. We welcome this position and believe the Welsh Government should pursue this aim with urgency. However, little detail on this commitment has been made public, and the timetable for legislative change and implementation is likely to be lengthy. It would be helpful for the Welsh Government to provide further information on the nature of the research it will be carrying out in relation to this. Again, we offer our support to both Government and your Committees as this work is taken forward.

Yours sincerely,



Ruth Coombs

Pennaeth Cymru / Head of Wales

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