

## Agenda – Equality and Social Justice Committee

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Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 5 (Ty Hywel)

Meeting date: 15 September 2025

Meeting time: 13.30

For further information contact:

Rhys Morgan

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

[SeneddEquality@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddEquality@senedd.wales)

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### Pre- meeting

(13:00–13:30)

### Public session

(13:30 – 15:05)

#### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13:30)

#### 2 Stage one scrutiny of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill: evidence session one – Member in Charge of the Bill

(13:30–15:00)

(Pages 1 – 17)

Mark Isherwood, MS

Gareth Rogers, Bill Manager, Senedd Commission

Claire Thomas, Research Service, Senedd Commission

Gareth Howells, Legal Services, Senedd Commission

[British Sign Language \(Wales\) Bill, as introduced](#)

[British Sign Language \(Wales\) Bill – Explanatory Memorandum](#)

[British Sign Language \(Wales\) Bill – Bill summary](#)

#### 3 Papers to note

(15:00–15:05)



- 3.1 Correspondence from the Women's Equality Network Wales regarding new research on the child care needs of families in Wales**  
(Pages 18 – 20)
- 3.2 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair regarding the use of tasers on children by Police forces in England & Wales**  
(Pages 21 – 23)
- 3.3 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair regarding the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report: "Pre-appointment hearing: National Adviser for Violence Against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence"**  
(Page 24)
- 3.4 Correspondence from Joyce Watson MS to the Chair regarding the Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review**  
(Pages 25 – 27)
- 3.5 Correspondence from the Children, Young People and Education Committee to the Chair regarding the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026-27**  
(Pages 28 – 33)
- 3.6 Correspondence from the Petitions Committee to the Minister for Children and Social Care regarding Petition P-06-1530: "Save Childcare Provision in Wales"**  
(Pages 34 – 39)
- 3.7 Correspondence from the Independent Monitoring Authority to the Chair regarding a statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 836**  
(Pages 40 – 44)
- 3.8 Correspondence from the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership to the Chair regarding regulations in relation to Part 3 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023**  
(Page 45)
- 3.9 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to the Legislation, Justice and the Constitution Committee regarding Parc Prison**  
(Pages 46 – 47)

- 3.10 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair regarding the Equality and Social Justice committee report: “Turning up the heat before 2160: time to pick up the pace on tackling fuel poverty”**  
(Page 48)
- 3.11 Correspondence from the Minister for Social Security and Disability to the Chair regarding changes to support for disabled people and welfare reform**  
(Pages 49 – 62)
- 3.12 Correspondence from National Energy Action to the Chair regarding fuel poverty in Wales**  
(Pages 63 – 64)
- 3.13 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Legislation, Justice and the Constitution Committee regarding a Budget Cover Transfer between UK Government, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and Welsh Government**  
(Pages 65 – 66)
- 3.14 Correspondence from the Minister of State for Justice to the Chair regarding the criminal justice system in Wales**  
(Pages 67 – 70)
- 3.15 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip and the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing to the Chair regarding further information relating to the Committee's inquiry into the criminal justice system in Wales**  
(Pages 71 – 80)
- 3.16 Correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip to the Chair regarding governance reform proposals for the Fire and Rescue Service**  
(Page 81)
- 3.17 Additional evidence from Natural Resources Wales in relation to the post-legislative scrutiny of the well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**  
(Pages 82 – 83)

**3.18 Easy read version of the Welsh Government's response to the Committee's report: "Anything's achievable with the right support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap"**

(Pages 84 – 104)

**4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (vi) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**

(15:05)

**Private session**

(15:05 – 16:05)

**5 Stage one scrutiny of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill: consideration of the evidence**

(15:05–15:15)

**6 Social cohesion: consideration of draft report**

(15:15–15:45)

(To Follow)

**Break**

(15:45–15:50)

**7 British Sign Language (Wales) Bill: preparation for scrutiny**

(15:50 –16:05)

Document is Restricted

### Background

With major childcare expansion underway in England, there has been mounting pressure on the Welsh Government to improve the support available to families on this side of the border. We asked parents and carers of children under five about their experience of using childcare, the impact this has on their families and what would help them.

The headline findings presented in this briefing are based on an online survey of **780 parents and carers of children under five years old**.<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted by [Arad](#) on behalf of [Women's Equality Network \(WEN\) Wales](#) and ran from mid-March to mid-May 2025.

### Key findings

#### 1. Lack of childcare causes stress at home by negatively affecting parents and home life

- **84%** of respondents said their childcare arrangements have a somewhat or very **positive impact on their child**
- But almost **3 in 10 (28%)** of parents or carers said their **childcare** arrangements have a somewhat or very **negative impact on themselves**
- **41%** said their childcare arrangements have a somewhat or very **negative impact on their home life**.

#### 2. Adjustments and sacrifices to manage childcare make a dent in family finances that is felt by adults and children

- **60%** of respondents had to **reduce their work hours**
- **42%** had to **reduce spending on essentials** like food, rent or heating
- **35%** had to **reduce spending** on non-essentials for their children, like **clothing, toys or activities**.

<sup>1</sup>In total, 883 parents and carers responded to the survey. Of these, 103 did not have children aged 0–4. They were given the opportunity to share comments on childcare before exiting the survey.

### 3. Lack of childcare is hindering parents' work and education

- **89%** of respondents who **do not use any formal childcare (119 responses)** are **unable to work or study** as much as they would like
- Among those respondents who are using formal childcare, the figure of those **unable to work or study** as much as they would like is still as high as **60% (345 responses)**
- Figures are **worse for families with below average income**, with **two-thirds** of respondents unable to work or study as much as they would like (66%), compared to **a little over half (55%)** for families with **above average income**.

### 4. Childcare costs are hindering work and education, but so are issues with transport and inflexible hours

- **Cost of childcare is the main reason** preventing work or study (**83%**), followed by issues with **drop-offs, pick-ups or transport between settings (35%)** and childcare **not being available at the times needed (32%)**
- Among parents and carers of **three- to four-year-olds**, **almost half (45%)** said **difficulties with drop-offs, pick-ups or transport between settings** are a reason why they cannot work or study as much as they would like
- When asked what would enable them to work or study as much as they wanted, the vast majority said **more affordable childcare (83%)**, with **almost half (46%)** responding **more flexible childcare**, such as irregular hours or part-time care.

### 5. Families struggle to find clear information on childcare

- Nearly **70%** of all respondents struggle to find **information on financial support** for childcare (**69%**)
- **Almost half (45%)** struggle to find **information on childcare options** in their area.

### 6. The childcare needs of families who are already using childcare are not met

- **72%** of respondents (478 responses) would use more childcare if it was **affordable and available**
- This figure rose to **81%** among respondents with **children under the age of two** (179 responses).

## These initial findings point to the following key areas for action and policy development for the Welsh Government:

- Reduce the costs of childcare for families – especially for children under three years
- Improve information on financial support with childcare costs and on local childcare options
- Simplify the delivery and application process so that families can take up the support they are entitled to
- Work with the childcare sector on offering more flexible hours and improving cost transparency.

Further analysis will take place over the next months, with a final report and detailed recommendations being published in the autumn.

For an initial discussion of these findings, please contact [jessica@wenwales.org.uk](mailto:jessica@wenwales.org.uk).

## About Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales

Our vision is of a Wales free from gender discrimination where all have equal authority and opportunity to shape society and their own lives. We work with our vibrant coalition of organisational and individual members to transform society. Our work sits under three pillars: we will connect, campaign and champion women so our vision is realised.

This research is funded by the [abrdn Financial Fairness Trust](#).

Jane Hutt AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/358/25

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Equality and Social Justice Committee

Buffy Williams MS  
Children, Young People and Education Committee

17 July 2025

Dear Jenny and Buffy,

Thank you for your letter of 4 July drawing my attention to the Children's Legal Centre Wales briefing regarding the potential authorisation of Taser 10, for use by police forces in England and Wales.

I thank you for taking the time to write to me and below you will find my response to the five questions you posed:

- 1. What is the Welsh Government's position on the use of Tasers on children by police forces in Wales? What representations has the Welsh Government made to UK Ministers and police forces in Wales on their use on children?*

The Welsh Government does not wish to see the use of tasers on children, by police forces in Wales.

Our vision is for an evidence-based, trauma-informed criminal justice system in Wales, to 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.

This approach is exemplified by the Youth Justice Blueprint, which we developed jointly with the Ministry of Justice, Policing in Wales, the Youth Justice Board and third-sector partners. It recognises the commitment to the delivery of children's rights in Wales and the whole-system approach takes account of the relevant articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the design of youth justice services for Wales. It sets out the ambition for a rights-based and trauma-informed system, which will support services to deliver positive outcomes for children.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel (WYJAP), jointly convened and co-chaired by the Welsh Government and the Youth Justice Board provides advice and scrutiny to the Welsh Government regarding policy implementation to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people in Wales. A key area of strategic focus for WYJAP is partnership working with policing and the relationship between youth justice and child centred policing.

The use of tasers, the police and justice powers and procedures related to them are matters reserved to the UK Government. The Welsh Government is therefore not able to legislate and prohibit the use of such equipment. Policing, the use of force in custody, and the use of tasers and other such equipment is entirely the responsibility of the UK Government.

Welsh Government works in partnership with Policing in Wales and as such, I asked for their thoughts regarding the use of taser 10, and taser use on children in Wales.

Policing in Wales have provided the below information:

- At present, the taser 10 approach has not yet been approved or rolled out by Policing in Wales.
- The use of tasers is monitored nationally and is independently scrutinised on a quarterly basis which looks at stop search and use of force (and will include use of taser on children and young people).
- The use of taser incidents involving children (aged 11-17) is generally rare.

*2. What involvement has the Welsh Government had in formulating UK Government policy on the use of Tasers on children? How has the Welsh Government ensured that the rights of children and the devolved context are taken into account by the UK Government?*

As stated above, policing is reserved to the UK Government, therefore the Welsh Government have not been involved in formulating UK Government policy on the use of tasers on children.

*3. How will the Welsh Government ensure that the impact on children is properly assessed by the UK Government?*

I am aware that the Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP, Minister of State for Policing and Crime Prevention, received a written question in April 2025, querying whether a Child Rights Impact Assessment would be conducted before the potential authorisation of Taser 10 for use by police forces in England and Wales.

Dame Diana's response assured that the UK Government decisions on whether to approve Taser for police use were informed by robust, independent technical and medical testing and assessments alongside an equality impact assessment which sets out any implications for those with protected characteristics, including age.

I will be writing to Dame Diana, to express my concerns regarding the use of tasers on children. I will also seek assurances regarding the compatibility of this policy position with the UN Convention on Rights of a Child, coupled with requesting further information and assurances regarding how the UK Government intend to assess the impact on children.

4. *Will the Welsh Government or UK Government conduct and publish a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) on the policy and commit to doing so for all future changes to police enforcement technology that relate to children in Wales.*

As stated above, policing is reserved to the UK Government, and it would therefore be a decision for the UK Government to make. I will raise this issue with Dame Diana within my letter and can share the response with the Committee.

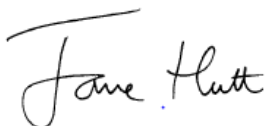
5. *How will the Welsh Government work with colleagues in the UK Government to improve data transparency and reporting around the use of Tasers and other police enforcement technologies particularly the need for disaggregated data for Wales?*

It is important that Welsh Government receives the justice data it needs to carry out effective policy and delivery work in the areas of the justice system we have responsibility for, and to continue our policy development work on full devolution (including policing) and the future of the justice system in Wales.

Likewise, as highlighted in the Thomas Commission it is crucial to ensure there is sufficient accessible information in the public domain about how the justice system is working in Wales. People should be able to easily understand how the justice system is working where they live.

I hope this information is useful. We will continue to engage with the UK Government on their reserved responsibilities relating to this issue and would be happy to share any updates or assurances we may receive, in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

# Agenda Item 3.3

Jane Hutt AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

17 July 2025

Dear Jenny,

**RE: The Equality and Social Justice Committee's entitled Report 'Pre-appointment hearing: National Adviser for Violence Against Women, Gender-based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.'**

I would like to thank members of the Equality and Social Justice Committee for the scrutiny of my preferred candidate for the position of the National Adviser for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). This is an extremely important part of the process, and I am pleased you were able to endorse the preferred candidate, Johanna Robinson.

I have today written to Ms Robinson inviting her to formally serve as the National Adviser for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025.

Yours sincerely,

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

22 July 2025

Dear Jenny,

## **Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review**

As you may know, the Reform Bill Committee's **Stage 1 Report** of the *Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill* recommended that the Commission should conduct a gender-sensitive parliament audit of the Senedd's culture, ways of working, and facilities, in sufficient time to inform decisions of the Seventh Senedd decisions.

As Senedd Commissioner with the portfolio for Equalities, I will be leading this work. The Senedd Commission have agreed the terms of reference for the audit, which I have annexed to this letter for information.

The overall aim of the audit is to ensure the Senedd actively supports inclusive representation and participation across all areas of parliamentary work. Specifically, it will:



- Take stock of the Senedd's progress to becoming a gender-sensitive and inclusive parliament over the past 26 years;
- Identify where further progress is needed to improve gender sensitivity and inclusion across all aspects of parliamentary work, particularly in parliamentary decision making;
- Ensure that the lived experiences and insights of Members shape decisions about future ways of working;
- Take an intersectional approach, recognising how gender intersects with other characteristics to shape access, participation, and power, and
- Provide timely and actionable recommendations to the Seventh Senedd Commission and Business Committee.

This work is being overseen by a board, comprising:



Peter Fox MS, Welsh Conservatives



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Siân Gwenllïan MS, Plaid Cymru

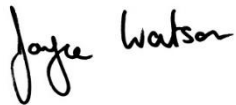
Mike Hedges MS, Welsh Labour

Jane Dodds MS, Welsh Liberal Democrats

The Board held its first meeting on 1 July 2025 and agreed to call this work the 'Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review' to give a clearer indication that the purpose of the project is to promote inclusivity. The intention is to report by the end of 2025. The recruitment of an external academic to undertake interviews and collect data is currently underway.

I will update the Senedd Commission and your Committee at appropriate intervals, however, I welcome your input at any time and I look forward to working with you.

Kind regards



**Joyce Watson MS**



## **Annex: Terms of reference for the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit**

The Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board has a remit to consider and report to the Senedd Commission by the end of 2025 on:

- the extent to which the Senedd, particularly in its parliamentary decision making, currently:
  - i. values and prioritises gender equality as a social, economic and political objective;
  - ii. actively supports inclusive representation and participation, recognising how gender intersects with other characteristics to shape access, participation and power, and
  - iii. reorients and transforms its institutional culture, processes and practices and outputs towards these objectives;
- identifies where further progress is needed to improve gender sensitivity and inclusion across all aspects of parliamentary work, particularly in parliamentary decision making, providing timely and actionable recommendations to the Seventh Senedd Commission and Business Committee.

In conducting its work, the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board will utilise an academic fellow to undertake data collection using rigorous and ethical mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative methods.

The Chair of the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board (Joyce Watson MS) will provide updates on the Board's progress to the Senedd Commission at appropriate intervals.

The audit will also consider the reviews and recommendations that have been made regarding representation in the Senedd. These include (among others): an **academic review of barriers and incentives to standing for election** commissioned by the Remuneration Board in 2018; the **Expert Panel on Electoral Reform's recommendations** about diverse representation in 2017, and the **Future Senedd Committee's** recent work on solutions to barriers to representation.



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## Children, Young People and Education Committee

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Jeremy Miles MS  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Dawn Bowden MS  
Minister for Children and Social Care

Sarah Murphy MS  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

23 July 2025

### Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026-27

Dear Jeremy, Dawn and Sarah,

As in previous years, we would like written information to support our scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2026-27. The annex to this letter sets out in detail the information that we would like to receive.

I would be grateful to receive the written information no later than two weeks prior to your appearance before Committee, the date of which will be arranged in due course.

Given the shared interest across committees in some of the areas listed in the annex to this letter, I have copied in the chairs of the Health and Social Care Committee and the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS  
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.  
We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

# Annex A: Request to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Minister for Children and Social Care, and Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing regarding the CYPE Committee's Draft Budget scrutiny 2026-27

## 1. Allocations for children and young people

Allocations in the Health MEG by Action, and Budget Expenditure Line (as directly relevant to children and young people):

- Draft Budget 2026-27.
- Final Budget 2024-25 allocations.
- 2025-26 First Supplementary Budget.
- Any indicative budgets set for beyond 2026-27.
- A description of any changes to baselines used in the Draft Budget 2026-27 from the First Supplementary budget June 2025.

In light of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language's announcement on 1 July that the 2026-27 budget will increase departmental budgets by inflation, rather than reflecting new policies and priorities, how the Cabinet Secretary and Ministers have been able to take account of emerging and escalating issues for children and young people since the 2025-26 budget was set.

## 2. Impact assessments

- **Combined CRIA across all portfolios:** The overall Child's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) undertaken to inform allocations in the draft Budget 2026-27.
- **CRIA for Health and Social Services MEG:** The CRIA for the Health and Social Services MEG for 2026-27.
- **Other impacts:** Details and/or examples of any changes made to allocations within the Health and Social Services MEG following considerations of equalities, sustainability, the Welsh language, and the Wellbeing of Future Generations.

A narrative update of the progress of the following, included on page 4 of your [response](#) to our report on the Draft Budget 2025-26:

Welsh Government officials are currently undertaking a review of the SIIA, the first review since its introduction in 2015-16, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and consider where improvements might be made in the future. It is anticipated the review will conclude in 2025. Welsh Treasury are leading on this review with input from the Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG).

### 3. Programme for Government

Allocations in the Draft Budget 2026-27 and the latest position on funding in the context of the latest Welsh Government Annual Report for:

PFG Commitment	Requested allocations and narrative detail
Advocacy services for parents whose children are at risk of coming into care.	Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27.
Fund regional residential services for children with complex needs.	Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27.
Eliminating private profit from the care of children looked after.	Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27
Specialist support for children with complex needs who may be on the edge of care.	Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27.
Fund childcare for more families where parents are in education and training or on the edge of work.	<p>Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27.</p> <p>Overall impact and allocations to support increases in the hourly rates paid to Childcare Offer providers from April 2025 of £6.40 an hour.</p> <p>How this Draft Budget reflects the Welsh Government's decision to review this rate annually from now on.</p>
<p>Phased expansion of early years provision to include all 2 year olds, with a particular emphasis on strengthening Welsh medium provision.</p> <p>(We note that in the response to our report on the Draft Budget 2025-26 you said "continued expansion beyond 2025-26 will depend on further funding being made available in future Welsh</p>	<p>Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2026-27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The % of 2 years old offered and taking up Flying Start childcare 12.5 hours by local authority.</li> </ul>

Government budgets and the capacity of the sector to respond to the requirements of further expansion.”)	- Confirmation that this Draft Budget 2026-27 includes funding of FS Childcare to all 2 year olds.
Flying Start (the four entitlements).	Allocations and accompanying narrative setting out desired outputs and outcomes for 2025-26 (revenue and capital).

#### 4. Children’s social care

##### Children’s Social Care workforce

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Any allocations associated with additional support to local authorities to address the instability of the workforce in children’s social care, such as vacancy rates and the use of agency staff.

##### Sustainable Social Services Grant Scheme

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The latest position on the Scheme and a breakdown of all grants relevant to children and young people if allocations have been made in this Draft Budget 2026-27.

##### Care Experienced Children Change Fund

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The latest position on the Care Experienced Children Change Fund and whether the Fund has come to and end in the current year. .

#### 5. Children’s health

Allocations in the Draft Budget 2026-27 and the latest position on funding for:

- Tackling NHS paediatric waiting times
- Improving children’s dental health
- Obesity strategy, including evidence of a joined-up, cross-Government approach to tackling the determinants of obesity
- Mental health services, including:
  - child and adolescent mental health services
  - urgent mental health support including NHS Wales 111 press 2 and the development of mental health hubs/sanctuary services
  - services to support perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships
  - eating disorder services

- Suicide prevention as it relates to children and young people
- Neurodevelopmental services
- Public health as it relates to children and young people, including vaccination
- Substance misuse, including vaping among children and young people

## 6. Cost of living and National Insurance changes

General commentary about the impact of cost of living on:

- **Health boards:** the delivery of services to children and young people by the Health Boards in Wales and the impact of the rising costs of energy on this provision.
- **Social services:** the provision of all social service activities of Local Authorities in Wales and any associated discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government.
- **Child poverty:** details of what discussions have taken place with other relevant cabinet colleagues in respect of allocations which have a significant impact on children's health and social care, for example the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip in terms of the budget of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and broader policy issues such as child poverty.
- **National Insurance contributions:** an update to the information provided on pages 10 and 11 of your response to our report on the Draft Budget 2025-26. To include how this Draft Budget reflects changes in employer National Insurance contributions and your assessment of the impact of this on the provision of health and care services to children and young people.

## 7. Costs of legislation relevant to the portfolio.

- Costs of implementing to Health and Social Care (Wales) Act 2025 as relevant to children and young people.
- Financial implications or anticipated in of any subordinate legislation relevant to children and young people within the H&SC portfolio.
- Information on the financial impact of any relevant UK Parliament legislation including the Welsh Government's associated LCM on the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

# Agenda Item 3.6

Y Dwyllgor Deisebau

## Petitions Committee

Dawn Bowden MS  
Minister for Children and Social Care  
Welsh Government  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

CC: Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair, Equality and Social Justice  
Committee

23 July 2025

Dear Minister,

**Petition P-06-1530 Save Childcare Provision in Wales – Demand Fair Funding and a Fair Process for Providers and Parent**

The Petitions Committee met on 14 July and considered the above petition, submitted by Lisa Owen.

Members agreed that I would write to you to highlight and seek a response to the petitioner's comments. The petition will be kept open pending your response. It was also noted that the Equality and Social Justice Committee has conducted a lot of work on this issue and it was agreed to also highlight the petitioner's views to that Committee for awareness – the Committee chair is copied in to this letter.

The full details of the Committee's consideration of the petition, including the correspondence and the actions agreed by the Committee can be found here: [P-06-1530 Save Childcare Provision in Wales – Demand Fair Funding and a Fair Process for Providers and Parent](#)

I would be grateful if you could send any response by e-mail to the clerking team at [petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales).

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair

**Senedd Cymru**

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**Welsh Parliament**

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Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

## **P-06-1530 Save Childcare Provision in Wales – Demand Fair Funding and a Fair Process for Providers and Parents - Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 04 July 2025**

Dear Petitions Committee

It was extremely disappointing to read the Minister's response as it is the same response we were originally given by the Childcare Offer team 6 months ago, so it appears that despite the information passed on from us through letters, via CWLWM and FSB (Federation of Small Business), nothing has been heard.

Funding Schemes which are Education, Childcare Offer and now the new Flying Start scheme are between Welsh Government and the Parent, so why are the childcare providers having to fund the difference between the rate Welsh Government have decided and the rate the setting needs to charge to be sustainable. If the parent chooses to pick a larger setting with extra facilities and therefore larger overheads instead of a childminder operating from their home or a playgroup that rents a hall, then they should pay the difference, which is as it has always been, simply parental choice.

Please note, we are not asking for an increased rate but for Welsh Government to give us back our businesses by allowing us to charge shortfalls if required, so we can protect the longevity of the business and the future jobs of our teams. We want them to engage with us about the sector because as the group of Child Care Providers that have come together trying to protect their businesses, has grown, we are finding more and more discrepancies in how funding is rolled out throughout Wales in the Child Care sector, but I know we are here to address the issue about the Fixed Rate and the refusal to allow us to charge the shortfall.

I have put the Ministers response in red and addressed it individually

**We know that affordable, available and accessible childcare enables parents to work. Our Childcare Offer supports our drive to increase economic growth, by supporting low-income parents, particularly mothers back into the workplace or to increase their hours of work. This assists our efforts to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.**

While it's appreciated that the Childcare Offer is to help parents to get parents back into work, in reality parents will have already gone back to work and have been paying our rate for at least a year when their child becomes eligible. From experience then these parents simply increase the number of hours their child attends. I completely support the fact that all parents should have support towards childcare, but I should not be expected to subsidise this through my income and at the risk of losing my business. How will it help the 200+ parents of my 100 children when I have to close my doors due to the losses incurred?

Since the introduction of Education hours, Childcare providers have been expected to implement these schemes and subsidise the difference in the rate that was offered and the rate we need to charge. There have not been many of settings that have chosen to provide the 10- 12.5 hours (depending where you are) of Education due to the extra staff you need to complete assessments, cover extra training and complete paperwork that is required. We factor those losses in when doing our financial forecasts. However with the introduction of

the Childcare Offer this now means the losses per child per hour increase from 10 – 30. 3 year old groups are quite large and generally 50% of your business.

I appreciate the support from childcare providers who choose to participate in our government-funded childcare programs. Although these schemes are voluntary, I respect and appreciate the vital role these providers play in offering accessible childcare to parents in Wales.

We “chose” to take part in the Childcare Offer because it supported our parents, although we didn’t realise how much paperwork would be required and that we would have to work more hours or employ an extra member of staff. When we enrolled, the rate the Welsh Government offered was far in advance of the rates our settings were charging. No we didn’t increase our rates, we simply knew we weren’t under any threat, but we didn’t know that they could freeze the rate for 3 years when they “chose” to which they did. If we withdraw, any grants that a setting may have applied for in the previous years will have to be paid back, so some settings have no choice to remain until they are forced to close. Yes they have changed the terms and conditions to state that the rate will be reviewed each year but to review doesn’t mean they will increase, so that isn’t at all reassuring. What happens when the wage rate increases each year say by 10% but the review gives us a 2% increase. We know we are playing our part and that is why we are fighting for a change in its delivery as we don’t want parents to lose out.

As you will know, in April this year we increased the hourly rate for childcare providers delivering the Childcare Offer for Wales by 28%, raising it from £5.00 to £6.40 per hour. Alongside the hourly rate increase, we implemented a 20% uplift in permissible food charges to support providers who offer meals to children receiving the Childcare Offer.

It is getting increasingly annoying that the Minister keeps writing that the rate was increased by 28%.

but missing out the fact that in April 2022 the rate was frozen for 3 years.

For 3 years our overheads increased each year and our income dropped, money we will never be able to re-coup, a position we now cannot ever be in again.

In April 2025 they increased the rate from 2022 by 28% when wages in that same period increased by 37% plus the increase in Employers National Insurance to 15%.

We focus on wages as a minimum of 60% of our turnover goes towards staff wages due to CIW staffing regulations so that is a substantial impact.

Yes there has been an increase in the meals and extras charges but the amount will depend on the hours the child attends and in no way makes any substantial difference.

I have just had my accounts for year ending 2025 completed and I can see the impact in my income. My income growth was around 20% per year which left me with an operating profit to allow me to re-invest and to keep a business reserve as required by a limited company.

The freeze dropped that income and my profit which has meant

- I have had to stop an investment project that I was going to do as I need to put that money in my reserves

- Going forward I will be unable to take on and train apprentices ( and we won an award last year for the way we train and the amount of people that we train) because every penny counts.
- Staff who qualify as Childcare Practitioners have received the Real Living Wage which I will be unable to do going forward.

These all stopped because Welsh Government will not allow me to charge what I need to be sustainable. Note my income hasn't dropped due to a drop in numbers of children, purely because of the Childcare Offer fixed rate.

Through the years that rate was frozen, that flat rate and the inability to charge the shortfall to parents, I lost about £75,000 in income, £50,000 of which was a pot I was building to build an extension for a disabled toilet, which will never happen now.

Note the Terms and Conditions for Childcare Offer state *"Financial Point 21 Clear procedures are in place to ensure financial stability. The provider will need to ensure that should financial sustainability be jeopardised, that the Council's Family Information Service and Childcare Offer Team is notified without delay so that support can be provided where reasonable practical"* well we have been doing that for 2 years and no-one cares.

Care Inspectorate Wales Minimum Standards Standard 17 states *"Financial procedures Outcomes Children and their parents are safeguarded by the registered person operating sound financial procedures. The registered person is responsible for ensuring that effective financial procedures are operated."* How can we do that when you have taken over the over control with no knowledge or interest how the individual settings operate.

The Ministers and Childcare Offer team response is that there are grants out there, but these are for specific items and not for loss of income due to the inability to be able to charge the shortfall. That is no way to run a business anyway.

**We are also providing additional funding to support the continued alignment of nursery education, and the Final Budget for 2025-26 included over £25m of additional funding for further expansion of high-quality Flying Start childcare across Wales.**

This does not answer our issue. Yes they increased the 10 hours of Education rate in line with the Childcare Offer rate but it still means we are operating at a loss. The funding for parents for 2 year olds is being rolled out through the Flying Start programme, a scheme started to support disadvantaged parents, which will now be watered down sadly. Many of us will not be taking on Flying Start settings due to the way we have been treated through the Childcare Offer and it will mean the whole setting is running at a loss.

**Registered childcare providers in Wales now have certainty regarding the business rates. I have announced permanent 100% Small Business Rates Relief for registered childcare premises saving settings circa £3m per annum.**

Yes we are all thankful for that because if they hadn't done that my business, along with many others, would have had to close almost immediately

Other discrepancies which Ministers have been made aware of but are being ignored While settings were losing money in Newport as Newport would not let us charge the shortfall, in the Vale of Glamorgan(that we know of), they were allowed to do so. So we lost money and they didn't. When Welsh Government were made aware, a meeting was arranged with Local Authorities and Welsh Government updated their guidance to LA's

They then updated provider T&C's and we had to agree to that update through the portal or we would not have been able to submit our current claim as we had to agree in the portal or could not go any further.

It shows that parents in the Vale were prepared to pay the shortfall for their choice of setting. Every parent in my setting has said they would pay just to ensure my doors stayed open. What parent would object to a bill dropping from £312 per week to £56 for the setting of their choice.

We ran a parental survey about the Childcare Offer – Out of 565 responses which includes Flying Start settings

Question : If your childcare provider had the option to charge the shortfall between the rate set by Welsh Government and the settings rate needed to cover costs, in order for their business to be sustainable, what would you do

211 – I would pay the shortfall to keep my child in the setting and allow them to continue offering the quality childcare at the setting I chose for them

196 – I would pay the shortfall only if it meant that the alternative is losing my child's place

175 – I would be unable to pay the shortfall, even if this meant losing my child's place at the setting

If your childcare provider is unable to meet costs, which of the following impacts would you be most worried about seeing

234 Closure ; 125 Reducing staff to minimum ratios; 110 employing less experienced staff; 51 inadequate resources; 25 limited activities and events; 24 lack of opportunity to re-invest into the setting

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Everyone I have spoken to outside Welsh Government completely understands our position and how simply this can be rectified. I hope you can see how unreasonable it is to expect a business to support your scheme and then be destroyed by it. I have run my setting for 25 years. We are one of 3 in Wales who gained excellent in all 6 areas in the new Joint CIW and Estyn Inspections. I am not rich, Nuseries are no longer "honey pots" due to the huge amount of regulations we have to adhere to and the training that we have to fund. Everyone is quick enough to say we are expensive but they are expensive to operate. You can't cut staff, turn the heating down, buy cheaper materials. It's a passion and we do what we do to survive. We don't want more money from you, we just want you to leave us alone to run our businesses as they need to be run. Engage with us as settings. CWLWM are not our representatives, they are yours. But if you don't want to take that time, then just leave us alone and let us charge the shortfall.

If you need any further information I am at your disposal.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Owen

4<sup>th</sup> July 2025

**Jenny Rathbone MS**

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Sent via email: [SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales](mailto:SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales)

25 July 2025

Dear Jenny Rathbone MS

**Legislation Monitoring by the IMA – Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules:  
HC 836**

As the Committee is aware, the IMA reports on legislation which impacts citizens' rights arising from the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement and EEA EFTA Separation Agreement and routinely publishes reports on its website (accessible here: [Legislation Monitoring Reports - Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements](#)).

In accordance with the commitment by the IMA to share with the Committee reports published in relation to statements of changes to the Immigration Rules (which make changes to the EU Settlement Scheme ('EUSS')), please find enclosed a copy of our report on the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 836, published by the UK Government on 24 June 2025. Our report is accompanied by a [Factsheet](#) on the changes to the EUSS, aimed at citizens.

Yours sincerely,



Rhys Davies

General Counsel

This report is only concerned with the compatibility or otherwise of the legislation with Part 2 of the Withdrawal Agreement and Part 2 of the EEA EFTA Separation Agreement. It does not consider the merits more generally of the policy contained in the legislation and does not consider the lawfulness of the legislation beyond its compatibility with the Agreements.

## Legislation Monitoring Report

<b>Title</b>	Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 836, 24 June 2025
<b>Date Legislation considered by the IMA</b>	30 June 2025
<b>Date Legislation in force</b>	16 July 2025 – for the purposes of changes considered in this report.
<b>Potential Right(s) Affected</b>	Residence
<b>What does the legislation do?</b>	<p>The Immigration Rules (“the Rules”) are statements by the Secretary of State as to how she will exercise her power to regulate immigration.</p> <p>The Statement of Changes in Immigration Rules (“SoC”) makes several changes to the Rules, not all of which are relevant to the EU Settlement Scheme (“EUSS”).</p>

The detailed rules for the EUSS are contained in [Appendix EU](#).

The EUSS enables EU, EEA EFTA and Swiss citizens living in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and their relevant family members, to obtain UK immigration status (either pre-settled status or settled status) to live in the UK.

Of relevance to the EUSS and the work of the IMA are the changes to the rules for pre-settled status holders on the continuous qualifying period of residence in the UK required to remain eligible for that status and to qualify for settled status.

The [Explanatory Memorandum](#) to the SoC explains that the purpose of the changes is to simplify the rules, following feedback from stakeholders concerning confusion on the part of pre-settled status holders, which may have led some to inadvertently break their continuous residence in the UK.

To remain eligible for pre-settled status and to qualify for settled status, pre-settled status holders must maintain their 'continuous residence' in the UK.

	<p>As explained in the Explanatory Memorandum to the SoC, <i>“Currently, ‘continuous residence’ generally means that they have not been absent from the UK for more than six months in total in any given 12-month period. There are some exceptions to this, such as a single period of absence of up to 12 months for an important reason, as well as some exceptions for absences related to COVID 19.</i></p> <p>Changes have been made to Appendix EU, which will apply to any applications to convert from pre-settled to settled status decided on or after 16 July 2025 and in due course to the automated conversion process. The changes enable a pre-settled status holder (where that leave has not lapsed or been cancelled, curtailed or invalidated) to be granted settled status where they have been resident in the UK for at least 30 months in total in the most recent 60-month period. This can be any 30 months within that 60-month period.</p> <p>The IMA has published a <a href="#">factsheet</a> which provides further information as to the changes.</p>
<b>Comments</b>	<p>The changes to the rules represent a change to domestic law, which is more generous than the position under the Withdrawal Agreements.</p> <p>Whilst the IMA welcomes the change, it is continuing to discuss the following with Home Office officials: –</p>

1. The position of pre-settled status holders in the UK whose leave had automatically lapsed before 21 May 2024. This was when changes were made to legislation to provide that pre-settled status could only lapse after more than five consecutive years' absence from the UK and Islands rather than more than two.
2. How any plans regarding the curtailment of pre-settled status of those who have ceased to qualify for it will interact with the changes.

Citizens who are experiencing difficulties in exercising their rights are encouraged to report a complaint through the [IMA Portal](#).

Further information about the IMA and guidance on how to report complaints can also be found on the [Website](#).

Jack Sargeant AS/MS  
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol  
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice  
Committee

30 July 2025

Dear Jenny

I'm writing to notify you that the Welsh Government has drafted Regulations in relation to Part 3 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 (SPPP Act). These Regulations were made available for public consultation on 22 July 2025, with a 12 week period for comment. The return date for responses is 14 October 2025.

The consultation documents are available here:

<https://www.llyw.cymru/caffael-cyhoeddus-cymdeithasol-gyfrifol>  
<https://www.gov.wales/socially-responsible-public-procurement>

As this is the first use of the regulation making powers in the SPPP Act, we wished to inform the Equality and Social Justice Committee that a consultation has been launched for the public to consider these draft Regulations.

Yours sincerely,

**Jack Sargeant AS/MS**  
Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership  
Y Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

# Agenda Item 3.9

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee  
Senedd

[SeneddLJC@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddLJC@senedd.wales)

5 August 2025

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July following the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee's and the Equality and Social Justice Committee's visit to Parc Prison. I am responding to your questions as they are part of my portfolio responsibilities.

As Cabinet Secretary, I set the strategic direction for health and care services in Wales and hold the Welsh NHS to account. Operational decisions relating to the planning and delivery of emergency ambulance services, are the responsibility of the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust in line with commissioning intentions set of it by the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee. This includes ensuring equitable access to emergency ambulance services. I expect people in prisons to receive a response based on their clinical need in an appropriate timeframe to support optimal outcomes.

The Welsh Ambulance Service aims to respond to all 999 calls as quickly as possible, in order of clinical priority, but there are times when high levels of demand or delays elsewhere in the system can mean there is not always an ambulance available immediately to dispatch to a 999 call. This can lead to some other calls waiting longer than we would normally expect.

On 30 June, I [announced](#) the ambulance service will trial changes to its clinical response model from 1 July. These changes are designed to save more lives and improve people's outcomes following a cardiac arrest, a serious illness, incident or accident.

The new model also sees the introduction of a rapid clinical screening process for 999 calls, which is undertaken by a senior paramedic or nurse and takes place immediately after the initial assessment by a 999 call handler. The introduction of a screening process enables a more tailored approach to an individual's need based on their presenting condition. It will also help to ensure that vital emergency ambulance resources are available respond to people most in need.

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[Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Further to these changes, on 16 July, I [announced](#) additional changes to the emergency ambulance performance framework to ensure an outcome-focused approach across all contacts with the Welsh Ambulance Service. This aligns to our overarching strategy for urgent and emergency care in Wales, to enable the right care, in the right place, first time.

The ongoing high level of ambulance patient handover delays at emergency departments is impacting on the ability of the Welsh Ambulance Service to respond to 999 calls in the community. My expectation is that health boards deliver the [Ambulance Patient Handover Guidance](#) – this is one of the five priorities ('enabling actions') for urgent and emergency care in the NHS planning framework for 2025/2026.

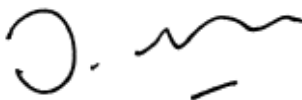
To support delivery of the evolving ambulance response model, which is predicated on greater ambulance availability through improved patient flow, we have set up a new clinically-lead National Handover Taskforce. The taskforce will identify and oversee action to improve handover performance, learning from UK wide and international best practice.

Encouragingly, we have already seen local strategies to improve ambulance patient handover performance coming to fruition over recent weeks, which has supported improved ambulance responsiveness. In the Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board area, there were 33% fewer ambulance hours lost, and 69% fewer patients delayed more than an hour when compared to June 2024. The 15-minute handover performance was 47% and we expect to see this improve. The approach behind initial successes will be shared with all health boards.

The committee may wish to direct its specific questions about ambulance response times to calls from Parc Prison to the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust.

Regarding prescribing matters, prison pharmacies are expected to comply with professional standards for [medicines optimisation in secure environments](#), as described by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. All prisons in Wales are subject to an external review against these standards. Health boards have prepared action plans in response to the findings of the external review and are working to implement recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

# Agenda Item 3.10

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: JH/PO/386/25

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair, Equality & Social Justice Committee  
Senedd Cymru

5 August 2025

Dear Jenny,

The Equality and Social Justice committee report "*Turning up the heat before 2160: time to pick up the pace on tackling fuel poverty*" includes a recommendation to update the data that informs estimates of fuel poverty and publish up-to-date fuel poverty estimates by September 2025.

In our reply to the committee, we indicated that the revised fuel poverty estimates were expected to be published in September. I can now confirm the headline summary results are scheduled for release on 7 August. I will issue a Written Statement following publication.

I will continue to provide updates as we make further progress on your recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

# Agenda Item 3.11



**Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms MP**  
**Minister for Social Security and Disability**  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
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[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Welsh Parliament

7 August 2025

Dear Jenny

Thank you very much for writing to me, and for your work on your inquiry into the disability employment gap. I was interested to read your report published in March and I agree with your assessment that too many people face physical, and institutional barriers to the world of work.

I also appreciate your engagement with our recent benefit reforms and associated consultation, which as you know were published in the form of the *Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working* Green Paper in March of this year.

At the heart of our reforms is the principle that those who can work should work. If you need help into work the Government should support you, and those who can never work should be supported to live with dignity.

The Green Paper is an important staging post on a journey of reform which builds on the vision and approach set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper in November 2024. We urgently need reform to give people a better future – to stop people from falling needlessly into inactivity.

You have raised a number of important points.

Firstly, as you say it is right that the UK Government should work with employers to increase accessibility to employment for disabled people. Our Green Paper emphasises this point specifically, and highlights how, as part of our Plan for Change, we have taken action since July 2024 to help people get into work and on in work. We are working in partnership with employers to create more accessible, healthier workplaces and prevent people falling out of work in the first place.

There are a number of resources available to employers to support them in ensuring workplaces are accessible and to meet their duties under Equality Act 2010. There is information available on gov.uk on workplace adjustments and disabled employees, as well as through ACAS and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.

We are working closely with disabled people and employers, and through insights from Sir Charlie Mayfield's Keep Britain Working Review, to understand and remove the barriers disabled people face to work. Insights from those discussions will inform our final proposals. We are also consulting in the Green Paper on how you provide additional support to employers through Access to Work in the future.

As you mention, DWP also runs the Disability Confident Scheme to support employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. The Scheme encourages employers to create disability inclusive workplaces and to support disabled people to get work and get on in work. It provides employers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people in the workplace. It is a voluntary scheme, developed by disabled people, employers and disability organisations representing disabled people. My officials have been discussing ideas for making the Disability Confident scheme criteria more robust with stakeholders, including significant engagement with Welsh Government officials.

You are right that, despite having deployed additional staff to help process applications for Access to Work, alongside efforts to streamline our procedures, the number of applications waiting to be processed is continuing to grow. The Green Paper consultation will also inform the chosen future direction of Access to Work. Once this is established, we will consider timelines and work closely with stakeholders to ensure an appropriate transition.

Alongside the reform proposals introduced in the Green Paper, we are considering further options to reduce the waiting time for customers. The Access to Work scheme hasn't changed significantly since it was established in 1994. We consulted on the future of the Access to Work scheme so that it better helps people to start and stay in work through reasonable adjustments, such as aids, appliances and making use of assistive technology.

We are considering responses to the consultation and will set out our plans in due course. In the meantime, we are considering if there are changes within the existing policy framework that can be made to our operational delivery to prevent misuse, improve efficiency and ensure value for money for taxpayers.

The reforms we have set out are not a cost saving exercise. They are about creating a more proactive, pro-work system that actually supports individuals. The current system is failing on multiple fronts, producing poor employment outcomes, low living standards and high costs to the taxpayer.

These changes and the others will create a fairer system, that supports the most vulnerable, provides disabled people with dignity and supports those who can work back to work, narrowing the disability employment gap.

We have listened to concerns raised and tabled amendments (now passed) to the Bill. We are adjusting the UC payment rate to ensure all existing recipients of the UC health element – and any new claimant meeting the Severe Conditions Criteria and those who qualify under Special Rules for End of Life – will see their combined

standard allowance and LCWRA rise at least in line with inflation every year from 2026/27 to 2029/30. We've also committed that those with severe, lifelong conditions will not be called for a UC reassessment.

We urgently need to remove perverse benefit incentives which trap people out of work. The Universal Credit Bill has now been passed by both Houses of Parliament. We are rebalancing from the health top up to the standard allowance, removing perverse incentives and opening up access to support from jobcentres.

Additionally, as I set out in the House of Commons on 1 July 2025, this Government has listened to the concerns raised by Members from across the House about proposed changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Clause 5 of the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill would have amended the legal framework underpinning PIP assessments, specifically by implementing a new requirement that claimants must score a minimum of four points in at least one daily living activity to be eligible for the daily living component of PIP.

In light of the concerns raised, we removed clause 5 from the Bill in Committee. Any changes to PIP eligibility will come after a comprehensive review of the benefit, which I shall lead, co-produced with disabled people, organisations that represent them, clinicians, experts, MPs and other stakeholders, so a wide range of views and voices are heard. The review's aim is a fair PIP assessment, fit for the future.

In terms of our impact assessment, the purpose of this analysis is to understand the overall impact of the measures where they are the responsibility of the UK Government (Great Britain for Universal Credit and England and Wales for PIP). The Equality Analysis is undertaken to understand the impact on policies of the whole package on people with protected characteristics, which does not include region or country breakdown. It is worth being aware that it does not include the positive impacts that we expect our major investment into employment support to have – and we know that, for many families, good work is the best route out of poverty.

This is the biggest employment support package for disabled people and people with health conditions in more than a generation. Backed by £1 billion a year of new, additional funding by 2030 and a total of £2.2 billion over four years, which will include funding for Wales, we will build towards a guarantee of personalised work, health and skills support to improve returns to work and prevent economic inactivity, as part of rebalancing spending towards work over welfare. With a focus on early intervention and prevention, the 'Pathways to Work' guarantee will improve returns to work and prevent economic inactivity through tailored support that brings together the health and skills systems – and roll out of the new support offer will begin from April 2026. We will respect devolution settlements linked to skills, health and employment support and continue to engage with the Welsh Government on the detail of the employment support package to ensure devolved and reserved provision work effectively together.

On our longer-term commitment to devolve non-Jobcentre Plus employment support funding to the Welsh Government, we continue to work with Welsh Government officials to determine the timings and practical arrangements. We are keen to do this, as per our manifesto commitment – and, at a meeting with the First Minister in June, we agreed we would look to take this forward as soon as is practically possible.

We will continue to work with the Welsh Government to understand the views of people in Wales and were glad to hear their views through the consultation. We encouraged people from Wales to respond to the consultation and hosted dedicated events for Wales, both in-person and online.

Finally, we know that disengaging from employment and learning during early adulthood can have a lasting detrimental impact on your career prospects and be detrimental to someone's health and well-being. There are nearly one million young people (16-24) not in Education Employment and Training, and the number is rising.

The current benefit system is part of the problem. Young people who are categorised as unable to work are usually left with no engagement and no support. This risks them failing to continue learning or failing to stay connected to the labour market at the start of their adult life. We know that less than 1% of people labelled as 'can't work' move into work each month – and many people are stuck on benefits for a long time at an average of over 7 years. There is also strong evidence on the long-term scarring effects of youth unemployment, including lower lifetime earnings and reduced employment prospects.<sup>1</sup>

This is why we want to change the benefit rules to support and underpin the Youth Guarantee, to ensure all young people are learning or earning. As we set out in the Get Britain Working White Paper, the Youth Guarantee involves expecting virtually all young people covered by the guarantee (aged 18-21) to be engaging with work or training related activity in the future. The Welsh Government has developed a similar Young Person's Guarantee, which has been a success and made a tangible impact on youth employment and entrepreneurship across Wales. The Guarantee has supported over 48,500 young people aged 16–24, helping more than 6,000 into employment and enabling over 700 to start their own businesses.

As you mention, we welcomed views on raising the age someone can access the UC Health Element to 22, which would remove any potential disincentive to work during this time. It would also be on the basis that resources may be better spent on improving the quality and range of opportunities available to young people through the guarantee, so they can move towards a life of learning, training or work rather than a life on benefits. We are now carefully considering responses to the

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<sup>1</sup> Gregg, P., & Tominey, E. (2005). The wage scar from male youth unemployment; Raeside, R., V. Egdell and McQuaid, R, (2014) [Wage Scarring – The problem of a bad start](#). (Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University); David N. F. Bell, David G. Blanchflower (2011). Young people and the Great Recession; Strandh, M., et al., (2014). Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course; [Youth unemployment produces multiple scarring effects - EUROPP](#)

consultation before we set out our plans. If we proceed with this change, we will consider what special provisions need to be put in place for those young people where engagement with the guarantee is not a realistic prospect.

I'd like to thank you once again for writing - and for all your work and commitment to these important issues. Our reforms are designed to protect the most vulnerable while giving disabled people equal choices and chances to work. We will continue to listen carefully as we develop our reforms and I always appreciate you letting me know your views.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen Timms". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Rt Hon. Sir Stephen Timms MP  
Minister for Social Security and Disability

CC:

Jane Hutt MS CBE, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip,  
Welsh Government Rt Hon

Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales

Debbie Abrahams MP, Chair, Work and Pensions Select Committee, House of  
Commons

Collette Stevenson MSP, Convener, Social Justice and Social Security Committee,  
Scottish Parliament

Colm Gildernew MLA, Chair of the Committee for Communities, Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Sir Stephen Timms MP  
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

Dear Ministers,

23 May 2025

### Support for employment of disabled people and welfare reform

We thank Sir Stephen for engaging constructively with our inquiry into the disability employment gap. The Department for Work and Pensions' input alongside other contributors culminated in our report: 'Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: tackling the disability employment gap' which was published on 6<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the UK government has announced significant changes to the benefits system alongside several proposals for reform in the future.<sup>2</sup> These announcements have changed the overall context for our report and are likely to have a significant impact on individuals and families in Wales.

Prior to the announcement on March 18th we wrote to you to promote our report and to ask you to consider how the UK Government might respond to our findings. Given the significance of the changes announced subsequently however, we felt that it was important to urge the UK Government to address the specific barriers that disabled people face in accessing employment – identified in our report – *before* changes to eligibility and support for disabled people are implemented.

We have been contacted by individuals and stakeholders expressing deep concern about the proposed changes on disabled people and the impact they will have on our local economies.<sup>3</sup> We share these concerns and feel strongly that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), alongside employers, and other tiers of government must work much harder to get their houses in order before implementing reform. We urge

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<sup>1</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, '[Anything's Achievable with the Right Support:](#)', 6 March 2025

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, Volume 764. [Welfare Reform](#), Tuesday 18 March 2025

<sup>3</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, Papers to note 5.8 and 5.9, 28 April 2025

the Government to acknowledge these concerns and keep the people affected at the heart of its decision-making.

Our detailed views and reasons are attached in the Annex to this letter and we hope that you will give them due consideration. We appreciate that many of the issues covered are reserved, but the implications are of such potential significance to Wales that we expect the UK Government to heed our voice, and that of others, as it develops policy and as part of its consultation on the Green Paper.<sup>4</sup>

We thank you in advance for considering these issues and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



**Jenny Rathbone MS**

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Welsh Parliament

CC:

Jane Hutt MS CBE, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip,  
Welsh Government

Rt Hon Jo Stevens MP, Secretary of State for Wales

Debbie Abrahams MP, Chair, Work and Pensions Select Committee, House of  
Commons

Collette Stevenson MSP, Convener, Social Justice and Social Security Committee,  
Scottish Parliament

Colm Gildernew MLA, Chair of the Committee for Communities, Northern Ireland  
Assembly

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#), 18 March 2025

# Annex A: detailed views of the Equality and Social Justice Committee, Senedd Cymru

## Background

1. We would like to state our views on the reforms set out in the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions' Statement of 18 March 2025 and the Green Paper.<sup>5</sup> These views are informed by our inquiry and report on the Disability Employment Gap, and other sources which are referenced where relevant.<sup>6</sup>

## Supporting disabled people into employment

2. From the outset we think it is important to stress that we share the UK Government's stated aim of supporting people who are able to work, to do so, as emphasised in our report. We feel strongly, however, that the DWP, alongside employers, and other tiers of government must work much harder to get their houses in order before implementing welfare reforms. This means taking urgent action to prioritise and radically improve the support available from government and employers to enable disabled people to gain and retain employment opportunities before removing entitlements to welfare support.

3. Our report lays bare the significant barriers that disabled people face accessing employment. They include:

- **Employer attitudes:** we found widespread misconceptions and negative attitudes towards employing disabled people. The damaging role and impact of these is not sufficiently reflected in the UK Government's reforms and we would welcome more emphasis and a more robust approach to challenging them by the DWP and at all levels of government.
- **Duties under the Equality Act 2010:** our report suggests that employer awareness of, and compliance with, duties under the Equality Act is unacceptably low. This includes the requirement to make reasonable adjustments. Shockingly, a survey on behalf of the Personal Finance Research Centre at Bristol University (PFRC) and RNIB Cymru suggested that over a quarter of disabled people – 26 % – had employers who had failed to make reasonable adjustments for them.<sup>7</sup> Much more needs to be done to promote

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<sup>5</sup> Hansard, Volume 764. [Welfare Reform](#), Tuesday 18 March 2025; Department for Work and Pensions, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper](#), 18 March 2025

<sup>6</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, ['Anything's Achievable with the Right Support'](#), 6 March 2025

<sup>7</sup> Figures provided by PFRC and RNIB Cymru in their written submissions, please refer to these for full details including sources and methodology: [DE03 - University of Bristol](#), [DE24 - RNIB Cymru](#)

and enforce guidance regarding these legal duties and to promote the benefits of flexible and hybrid working.

- **Deficiencies in UK Government support schemes:** our report highlights extensive problems with the Disability Confident scheme. Disability Confident's reputation is poor and it is widely considered to lack robust accreditation especially at lower levels. We reserved judgement on whether the scheme can improve its credibility and deliver tangible benefits but this needs urgent reform in the interim.

**4.** In Wales, the disability employment gap varies considerably from 11.6% in the Vale of Glamorgan to 42.6% in Neath Port Talbot.<sup>8</sup> As noted in the Green Paper, research has found that as many as 200,000 people on incapacity benefits across Great Britain could work now with the right support and over a million believe they could work in the future if their health improved.<sup>9</sup> However, it is vital that employers and employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis equality legislation before efforts are made to support individuals into employment.

**5.** We call on the UK Government to work with employers to address the specific barriers that disabled people face in accessing employment identified in our report and which we have highlighted specifically in this submission. The UK Government must set out in more detail how it intends to work with employers to address this before changes to eligibility and the level of support disabled people receive should be considered.

**6.** Furthermore the DWP's performance in this area is poor. Our report highlighted that the Access to Work scheme is currently experiencing lengthy delays of up to 20 weeks.<sup>10</sup>

**7.** Among the changes to support for disabled people and people with health conditions announced is £1 billion of new funding which will go towards guaranteeing support for anyone who wants help to get into or return to work. Likewise the emphasis on early intervention and introducing an expectation that most people in receipt of the health element of Universal Credit (UC) will need, as a minimum, to periodically discuss needs and goals and the support services available to them are positive. We welcome both of these measures, however, we note that these are likely to take several years to fully implement with timescales suggesting a target of 2029-30 before coming fully on stream.

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<sup>8</sup> Figures taken from Office for National Statistics '[Labour Market Status of Disabled People survey](#)' LMS008

<sup>9</sup> UK Government, '[Work aspirations and support needs of health and disability customers](#)', 6 Feb 2025

<sup>10</sup> Equality and Social Justice Committee, '[Anything's Achievable with the Right Support](#)', 6 March 2025

**8.** We welcome the £10 million recently allocated to Wales for the economic inactivity trailblazer, which will provide tailored support aiming to help economically inactive people in Blaenau Gwent, Denbighshire and Neath Port Talbot into employment.<sup>11</sup> We note the role the Welsh Government will have in the trailblazer, alongside local leaders, and hope the Senedd will be kept up to date with regards to these developments.

**9.** We also acknowledge that the UK Government is currently in discussions with the Welsh Government on the devolution of non-Job Centre Plus employment support to Wales. Provided there is sufficient funding attached, this will present opportunities to support disabled people, as well as other unemployed and economically inactive people, into employment in ways that meet the needs of Welsh communities. We would welcome an update on these proposals.

#### Flexibility and assessment

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**10.** As our report sets out, flexibility is key to supporting disabled people gain and retain employment. We therefore welcome the proposal designed to enable disabled people and people with health conditions to try a job without losing their entitlements and for those rights to be enshrined in law.

**11.** We note that proposals to merge the Work Capability Assessments and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) assessments could help to reduce complexity and duplication in the system. However, we also note concerns about the potential impact on disabled people from charities such as Scope.<sup>12</sup> We also support the resumption and increase in face-to-face assessments, and the commitment that those with the most severe, life-long health conditions will not face re-assessment at any stage in the future.

#### Changes to Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit

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**12.** It is predicted that the proposals to reduce the rate and entitlement to the health element of UC, and changes to eligibility for PIP will have a considerable impact on current and future recipients. According to the Bevan Foundation there are as many as 275,000 people in Wales who receive PIP and 110,000 people who receive Universal Credit and have Limited Capability for Work Related Activity (LCWRA).<sup>13</sup> The UK Government intends to introduce these changes at speed with changes to PIP and Universal Credit scheduled for August and November 2026 respectively.

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<sup>11</sup> UK Government, [£10 million boost to employment support in Wales to Get Britain Working again](#), 23 April 2025

<sup>12</sup> Scope, [Changes to disability benefits: what you need to know](#) | Disability charity Scope UK

<sup>13</sup> Bevan Foundation, [Bevan Foundation responds to Green Paper on benefits](#), March 2025

**13.** We do not support this timetable until progress is made to tackle barriers which contribute to the disability employment gap, with evidence that comprehensive support is in place. Such an approach risks raising the anchor before checking the sails and we urge the UK Government to look again at the timing and sequencing of these changes. As part of this the UK Government must consider either:

- a. postponing the changes to the health element of UC until proper support is up and running; or,
- b. designing robust transitional arrangements which ensure that no one currently in receipt of these payments faces an abrupt loss of income overnight.

## The case for reform

**14.** We acknowledge that there has been a substantial increase – over 45% since 2018/19 – in the number of people claiming health related benefits in recent years. With 9.3 million people economically inactive, 2.8 million of whom are classed as long-term sick, the UK has some of the highest rates of any of the world’s G7 leading economies.<sup>14</sup>

**15.** The Green Paper argues that the level of spending on disability-related benefits proves that the UK is an “outlier” and that spending must be placed on a more sustainable trajectory. We agree that action is needed in instances where there is evidence of perverse incentives in the current system. However, while the impact of other factors such as NHS waiting times is acknowledged, there is a risk current proposals fail to capture the complexity behind why the number of people claiming continues to grow. Some of the changes, as highlighted by the Resolution Foundation, appear to be primarily designed to save money and to help meet fiscal rules rather than for principled reasons.<sup>15</sup>

**16.** We acknowledge the need to reduce potential flaws in the system that create perverse incentives or have unintended consequences. We note the UK Government’s argument that the imbalance between UC at the standard and the LCWRA rates may be an example of this which needs addressing. However, we also note the claims by some that the changes to UC and PIP eligibility look principally designed to save money. Given the potential impact on Welsh individuals and communities we call on the UK Government to ensure that spending on disability benefits is determined by the level of need and not by a desire to meet fiscal targets.

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<sup>14</sup> ONS Labour Market Statistics [LFS: Economically Inactive: UK: All: Aged 16-64](#)

<sup>15</sup> Resolution Foundation, [A dangerous road? Examining the ‘Pathways to Work’ Green Paper](#), 19 March 2025

## The impact on Wales

**17.** Current publicly available assessments of impact published by the UK Government are inadequate and lack detail. We can surmise that cuts to disability-related benefits will be disproportionate in Wales due to a range of factors. And yet the only official, publicly-available, impact assessment is on an England and Wales basis.

**18.** We know that the population of Wales is generally older, more rural and has more ill-health than other parts of the UK on average. The historic importance of mining and other heavy industries - wealth from which benefitted the whole of the UK - left a legacy of higher deprivation, ill health and reliance on disability-related benefits than other parts of the UK. Fiscal transfers in the form of welfare payments play an important role in alleviating the impact of this legacy and the high rates of inequality that exist within the UK. Overall, we know that the rate of claimants in Wales is higher than in England (calculated to be around 11% of working age adults in Wales compared with 7% in England).<sup>16</sup>

**19.** While the UK Government is yet to publish an impact assessment for Wales, analysis from stakeholders starkly illustrates the potential impacts of the proposed reforms on Wales. Policy in Practice suggests that they will hit Wales and north-east England the hardest. It estimates that nearly 190,000 people in Wales will be affected by the reforms, with a potential financial impact of £470 million. According to their analysis four of the 10 worst affected local authorities in Great Britain are in Wales: Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot and Caerphilly.<sup>17</sup> Constituency analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation chimes with these conclusions, highlighting that nearly 20% of the working age population receives either PIP or the LCWRA in the Blaenau Gwent, Aberafan Maesteg, and Rhondda and Ogmore constituencies.<sup>18</sup>

**20.** Given these findings, it is critical that the UK Government gives clarity on how it anticipates Wales will be impacted. To inform both policymakers and the public debate around these changes, it is vital that you publish a disaggregated impact assessment for Wales. Failure to do so undermines the spirit of the Concordat between the DWP and the Welsh Government.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, this information will help us to understand the potential knock on effects. One such example could be an increase in demand for services that are currently funded via the Barnett formula. We are concerned by the prospect of cuts to the welfare budget falling disproportionately on Wales which would then result in increasing demands on the services funded

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<sup>16</sup> Wales Governance Centre, [Spring Statement 2025 - the implications for Wales](#), 27 March 2025

<sup>17</sup> Policy in Practice, [New analysis: How disability benefits changes will affect your local area](#), 24 April 2025

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [PIP & LCWRA Constituency Map](#), 16 April 2025

<sup>19</sup> Welsh Government, [Concordat between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Welsh Government](#), 24 February 2025

according to a formula which is widely considered to be flawed. That approach is likely to risk further exacerbating the disparities between the nations and entrenching inequality in its poorest parts.

## Impact on children and young people

**21.** The impact on children, young people, and child poverty have been important considerations in our work in this Senedd. We therefore note with concern the proposals to end health-related UC payments entirely for those under 22 years of age. The Resolution Foundation notes that the risks to living standards of these young people “are acute since people under 25 already receive lower rates of UC than older adults.”<sup>20</sup>

**22.** It is vital that young people transitioning from education to the world of work are adequately supported, however, our report found evidence of a postcode lottery. The planned expansion of support provided by the Youth Guarantee (in England) is highlighted as the counterbalance to the proposal to cut UC, however, this will require effective coordination with the Welsh Government to ensure that resources are aligned correctly. We are concerned by the potential implications of this change and expect the UK Government to provide much more detail about the potential implications for Wales before proceeding.

**23.** If all the cuts announced are implemented, the Office for Budget Responsibility has estimated a reduction of £4.8 billion in welfare spending by 2029-30.<sup>21</sup> The net impact of these reforms, according to the Impact Assessment will mean a further 250,000 people, including 50,000 children, fall into relative poverty.<sup>22</sup> We are also concerned to hear reports that DWP analysis finds a further 700,000 households already living in relative poverty will also be negatively impacted by these reforms.<sup>23</sup>

**24.** *Our concerns about these changes in relation to children and to levels of child poverty are particularly acute. Children have no control over their circumstances and lack any means of redress. More children and young people live in poverty in the UK than any other age group.<sup>24</sup> We recognise the need to reduce youth unemployment and economic inactivity and its potential scarring effects. We want to see all children and young people to fulfil their potential. However, we are concerned that these*

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<sup>20</sup> Resolution Foundation, [A dangerous road? Examining the ‘Pathways to Work’ Green Paper](#), 19 March 2025

<sup>21</sup> Office for Budget Responsibility, [Economic and fiscal outlook](#), March 2025

<sup>22</sup> Department for Work and Pensions, [Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms - Impacts](#)

<sup>23</sup> The Guardian, [Disability benefit cuts to hit 700,000 families already in poverty. DWP forecasts show](#), 7 May 2025

<sup>24</sup> House of Commons Library, [Poverty in the UK: Statistics](#), April 2025

*aims are undermined if rates of child poverty continue to increase as has been suggested as a result of these policy changes. We therefore urge the UK Government to think carefully about the impact of these policy changes on children and young people in particular.*

**25.** *In conclusion we note the analysis which suggests Wales (alongside north east England) will be hardest hit by these reforms. In line with the Intergovernmental Concordat, we call on the UK Government to produce and publish a Wales-specific impact assessment of the planned and proposed changes to the welfare and benefits system as a matter of urgency and to share this with the Committee in its response to this letter. We would be grateful if a response could be shared within 30 days of the date this letter was issued.*

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Welsh Parliament

May 2025



# Agenda Item 3.12

07/08/25-Email from Maisie Chatfield (National Energy Action) to Rhys Morgan

Dear Rhys,

New official estimates from Welsh government published today reveal **that one quarter of all households in Wales (340,000) were in fuel poverty in October 2024**. These are households unable to keep their home warm at any reasonable cost, needing to spend more than 10% of their income to adequately heat their home. In addition to this, 63,000 households were estimated to be living in severe fuel poverty, equivalent to 5% of households.

In 2024/25, the average household energy bill based on standard energy consumption was estimated to be £1,850. This is 37% higher than 2021/22, when the average household bill was £1,360. The Welsh government will publish detailed analysis in October (including comparisons with other UK nations, trends over time, fuel poverty by household and dwelling characteristics, and a more detailed discussion on the factors that drive fuel poverty).

In response, National Energy Action Head of Wales Ben Saltmarsh says, *'Fuel poverty has deepened dramatically in recent years. Too many are living in cold homes, rationing essentials, and mired in debt – with grave physical and mental health consequences. Children are growing up in conditions that can damage their life chances for decades.*

*'Paying over £1,700 a year for a basic utility isn't normal – and in many parts of Wales it's even higher, since north Wales faces the highest energy costs in GB and south Wales is not far behind. With some of the oldest and least efficient housing in northern Europe, keeping warm at home is simply unaffordable for hundreds of thousands.*

*'Ahead of the 2026 Senedd election, today's figures lay bare the scale of the challenge – but also the opportunity. With significant expected consequential funding from the UK government's Warm Homes Plan, all political parties in Wales must commit to considerably increasing investment in energy efficiency should they form the next Welsh government. We can – and must – make the homes of those most in need warmer, greener, and healthier places to live.'*

National Energy Action also recommends:

- The next Welsh government maintains the provision of emergency crisis support, including help to top up prepayment meters and purchase off-gas fuel such as oil and LPG.

- The UK government provides deeper energy bill support in future for people who cannot afford a warm and healthy home.
- The energy regulator, Ofgem, supports low-income and vulnerable households to help repay their energy debt. Much of this debt was accrued during the height of the energy crisis and has no realistic chance of being repaid without support.

The full press release can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please do get in touch.

Cofion cynnes,

**Maisie Chatfield**

Jane Hutt AS/MS

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA/JH/1886/25

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Mike Hedges MS

Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

Welsh Parliament

Cardiff Bay

Cardiff

CF99 1SN

11 August 2025

Dear Mike,

In accordance with the inter-institutional relations agreement, I am writing to notify you that a Budget Cover Transfer between UK Government, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and Welsh Government, to support digital inclusion activity in Wales has been agreed.

The funding is made up of £185,418 (revenue) and £254,950 (capital) which will further our work aligned to the Digital Strategy for Wales, Mission Two, and the Well-being of Future Generations Act National Indicator, Status of digital inclusion.

The funding is for Financial Year 2025-2026 only.

- Welsh Government will share learnings and best practice for how the funding is used to support digital inclusion with UK Government and devolved Governments.
- Welsh Government will continue to be in open, engaged, dialogue with UK Government and devolved Governments on approaches to tackling digital exclusion and work aligned to the Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS).

I have also copied this letter to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs, Huw Irranca-Davies MS and the chairs of the Social Justice Committee, Health and Social Care Committee, Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee, Local Government and Housing Committee, Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

[Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Jane.Hutt@gov.wales)  
[Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke above the first letter 'J'.

**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip



Ministry  
of Justice

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Equality and Social Justice committee  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

**MoJ ref:** ADR126281

20 August 2025

### Criminal Justice in Wales

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for your letter on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 with additional questions on behalf of the Equality and Social Justice committee. The UK Government is committed to working with the Welsh Government on justice matters and I am happy to provide the following information.

- 1. As HMP Berwyn was designed as a rehabilitation-focused prison, what are the main barriers preventing it from delivering on that vision—particularly in terms of education, purposeful activity, and stability— and what steps are being taken to address them?*

Stability within a prison is a key enabler of a rehabilitative regime. Recent population pressures across the prison estate have meant that the population at HMP Berwyn has been changed to support the national estates demand for prison places.

His Majesty's Independent Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) report of HMP Berwyn published in May 2025 highlighted a number of areas of positive practice, including the prison's "bright and welcoming wellbeing hub for learners" where "prisoners benefited from and valued these facilities for education and work" as well as noting that the "vocational learning workshops were of exceptional quality...they provided industry-standard environments for learners to develop valuable skills and accreditations, for example in construction workshops, a training kitchen, barber shop, warehousing and logistics."

The Inspectorate also noted that "a wide range of organisations were located together in an impressive resettlement hub, which enabled effective communication and joint working. Prisoners could attend the hub to discuss their resettlement plans as they prepared to return to the community." However, it is recognised that further improvements could be made, as detailed in HMP Berwyn's recently published action plan in response to HMIP recommendations. The following progress has already been made:

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- Education and Workshop provisions in HMP Berwyn have been reviewed to ensure that each is being maximised to its full potential.
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement with businesses in the community to develop further opportunities for prisoners to engage in activity that supports the local labour market and provides skills needed to gain employment upon release.

Additionally, a new Governor has been appointed to HMP Berwyn who will bring great value to the prison and the management team as well as oversee progression of the HMIP action plan.

2. *Please can you confirm how many of the 1,300 Probation Officers employed in a recent recruitment drive were recruited into Welsh prisons?*

Over the last 4 years, 4,632 trainee Probation Officers (known as PQiPs – Professional Qualification in Probation) have started since Probation unified in June 2021; of which 315 have been allocated to Wales. These trainees become Probation Officers after qualification. Some are placed in prisons, but the majority are allocated to Probation Delivery Units in the community. A Breakdown of this is shared below.

	National	Wales
2021/22	1518	145
2022/23	1514	127
2023/24	543	10
2024/25	1057	33

Allocation of trainees in Wales has been based on vacancies and expected demand; to note, Wales has traditionally not been carrying a high level of vacancies in Probation Officer roles.

In addition, as you rightly note, we have made a ministerial commitment to onboard 1,300 PQiPs this financial year, these will be recruited in two cohorts (commencing September 2025 and March 2026). This recruitment activity is ongoing and PQiPs are allocated based on business and operational need, taking into consideration the candidate’s preference.

3. *Please can you provide data on re-offending by prisoners with home postcodes in Wales – including, where possible, a breakdown of Welsh prisoners serving/having served sentences outside Wales?*

Data regarding reoffending rates for individuals released from custody who held a Welsh postcode at the time of their most recent conviction has been requested and will be produced as an ad-hoc statistical table by 1st September 2025.

Data availability does not allow for the further breakdown requested. I will ensure that officials share the data with the Committee when released.

I hope this information assists the Committee and should you require any further information then please do let us know.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James". The script is cursive and fluid, with the 'J' and 'M' being particularly prominent.

**Lord Timpson**  
**Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending**

Lord Timpson  
Minister of State for Prisons  
Ministry of Justice

1 August 2025

Dear Lord Timpson,

### Criminal Justice in Wales

Many thanks to you and Ian Barrow for your appearance at the Equality and Social Justice Committee on 14 July. Members of the Committee were most appreciative of your time and the information you were able to share with us.

We will be considering our next steps in terms of scrutiny of the progress being made on improving the effectiveness and value for money of criminal justice in Wales in the autumn. In the meantime, the Committee would be grateful if you could please provide the following additional information:

1. As HMP Berwyn was designed as a rehabilitation-focused prison, what are the main barriers preventing it from delivering on that vision—particularly in terms of education, purposeful activity, and stability—and what steps are being taken to address them?
2. Please can you confirm how many of the 1,300 Probation Officers employed in a recent recruitment drive were recruited into Welsh prisons?
3. Please can you provide data on re-offending by prisoners with home postcodes in Wales – including, where possible, a breakdown of Welsh prisoners serving/having served sentences outside Wales?

I would welcome a response within the usual timescales.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

CC:

Jane Hutt MS CBE, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip, Welsh Government

Ruth Jones MP, Chair of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, House of Commons

Jane Hutt AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Sarah Murphy AS/MS  
Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd Meddwl a Lles  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/413/25

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Equality and Social Justice Committee

26 August 2025

Dear Jenny,

I was glad to attend the Equality and Social Justice Committee meeting on 14 July 2025 on Criminal Justice in Wales. The Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing extends her thanks for your well wishes.

We welcome your questions and have provided our respective responses below.

### Questions for the Cabinet Secretary

#### 1. Whether the mapping of costs related to criminal justice will include a breakdown by service type and geographic area within Wales and how that data might inform future funding decisions or devolution discussions?

Identifying expenditure on criminal justice in Wales is complex, and different elements of this are being taken forward in different ways.

Justice-related activity within Welsh Government cuts across portfolios and is allocated funding from within a number of Budget Expenditure Lines (BELs) across different Main Expenditure Groups (MEGs). In many cases, expenditure will largely be on costs of staff whose time is not precisely divided between justice and non-justice related activity, or forecasts of expenditure cannot be disaggregated in this way. The granularity of detail on budget allocations for justice-related activity does not, therefore, go beyond BEL level.

We have touched on this issue in correspondence on previous budgets with the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee during the annual budget process. Information provided to that Committee included BELs that were only partially delivering justice related activity.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In the Welsh Government response to the LJC Committee's report on the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2025-26, we sought to enhance the clarity of spending by providing a narrative associated with the budget lines, to indicate which activities under that BEL contribute to justice. However, there were limits to the extent to which narrative could clarify the overall quantum of spend on justice related activity within a specific BEL.

Different challenges arise in mapping out reserved justice spending, including that this is not our data to map. Instead, it is held by multiple institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service and the UK Treasury. Mapping spending is further complicated by the England and Wales delivery model which can obscure the geographic location of spending. It is therefore necessary to prioritise particular areas for this mapping work.

For example, we are taking active steps to map out devolved and reserved spending on local youth justice services, as part of our preparatory work to facilitate the devolution of youth justice. The first item of the work programme of our Justice Research Programme is to establish the various funding streams available to youth justice teams within local authorities, and to explore opportunities to maximise the effectiveness of this funding. This work will be valuable in assessing the potential financial implication of devolution.

As the committee knows, we are also taking steps to create a Memorandum of Understanding on probation services, exploring the Manchester MOU model with partners to assess its applicability for Wales. This model might assist in providing greater visibility on funding streams to the probation services, both in reserved provision and devolved services that are used in the probation space.

Beyond these areas, it is our ambition that the ongoing work to secure greater disaggregated data will enable spending to be better allocated to Wales or to England and thus allow for more accurate mapping of reserved justice spending in Wales.

Finally, in the longer term, it is our expectation that any further devolution of justice would enable clearer budgetary allocation on justice related activity, and indeed this degree of greater accountability within Wales is one of the arguments for that devolution.

## **2. The timeline for the publication of information relating to the mapping of justice service costs?**

As stated above, the mapping of justice related costs is complicated and we do not necessarily anticipate compiling a full picture as a single piece of work. Work is underway to progress discussions around the devolution of youth justice and probation, as set out in the Written Statement published by the Deputy First Minister on 7 August, and so these are examples of areas where we anticipate having a better map of justice service costs by early 2026.

## **3. Whether the Welsh Government would hold executive powers in the proposed model in areas like probation and youth justice and how those powers would relate to the UK Government's role?**

The exact nature of the Welsh Government's future powers, and the delineation between UK and Welsh Government, in youth justice and probation are topics for discussion with the UK Government.

In relation to youth justice, as the Written Statement referenced above makes clear, we have agreed that officials in both governments would work together to explore options where responsibilities in the youth justice system could be realigned. This included strategic oversight, partnership and governance arrangements and funding of youth justice services as starting points. We also agreed to explore formalising the governance through which UK and Welsh Governments engage. Both legislative and executive functions in relation to youth justice will necessarily be part of that discussion.

In the immediate term, we are seeking greater operational involvement in commissioning of probation services, akin to the model currently in place in Greater Manchester: the powers required to achieve this are also subject to discussion.

These areas of discussion do not reflect the limits of our ambitions; they reflect starting points and we would expect further discussions to follow.

It remains Welsh Government policy that the justice system should in due course be devolved in its entirety, which includes both executive and legislative powers.

**4. Which data sets will be disaggregated - particularly on race, ethnicity, gender, and Welsh prisoners in English prisons, and confirm whether this data will be published publicly or retained as internal management data?**

We agree with the Committee that all of the areas named are important areas where greater transparency would be beneficial, but we are still at the stage of identifying the feasibility of extracting individual discrete data sets from unpublished data sets owned and operated by the Ministry of Justice. We are also working with Welsh Government policy teams to determine the key areas where an absence of disaggregated data most impacts their work and would, if rectified, have greatest potential to add insight to policy making. The aspiration is to achieve the greatest transparency possible.

**5. Clarity on when the data relating to pregnant women will be available?**

As above, we are still at the stage of identifying the feasibility of extracting discrete data from unpublished data sets owned and operated by the Ministry of Justice. However, where data relates to very small numbers of people, there is a legal obligation on the data holder, in this case the Ministry of Justice, not to release any data capable of identifying individuals. Pregnant women might be one such area of concern.

**6. Whether there is a timeline or action plan in place for achieving a national minimum standard for speech and language support in youth offending teams, and whether dedicated funding will be made available by the UK or Welsh Government to ensure consistent access across Wales?**

In January, as part of a wider Debate on Speech and Language Therapists in the Senedd I spoke about Speech Language and Communication needs in the criminal justice system. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and social Care confirmed that Local Health Boards are responsible for determining population health needs and for determining the best way to meet their population's needs.

All Local Health Boards in Wales provide speech and language therapy as a health treatment where it is clinically required. This service is available to all children who are assessed as requiring speech and language therapy in Wales, including children in contact with the justice system, subject to a referral process. Not every child with a speech, language and communication need may require or benefit from specialist therapy. There are a number of other interventions that can support the resolution of SLCN without needing a specialist therapist.

I also set out that it would be for youth justice service teams to provide any further services relating to speech language and communication needs, beyond that delivered by their Local Health Board, in order to deliver on their reserved statutory role.

Local authorities which consider there to be a need for additional provision can employ their own speech and language therapists directly or commission and fund provision via another employer, such as the NHS or private sector. They have access to a number of funding streams which could be used to support this, and our work with local authorities ahead of last year's summit highlighted several examples of where this is already working well. This includes local authorities using the UK Government's Turnaround funding scheme, which has been renewed into 2025-26, to fund provision.

**7. What specific interventions the Welsh Government is planning—or calling for—to reduce the number of Black and care-experienced children entering the youth justice and probation systems? How will the WG measure the impact of these interventions over time, particularly in terms of reducing disproportionality?**

Medr, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, funds tertiary education and research, including school sixth forms, apprenticeships, further education, higher education, and research and innovation. A UK Home Office guide: [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement](#), suggests that success in learning is one of the most powerful indicators in the prevention of youth crime.

We are determined that every child in Wales has the support they need to reach their full potential, access the highest standards of education and to thrive. We acknowledge that some children and young people may experience barriers to learning, particularly within ethnic minority communities. Therefore, it is crucial that the Welsh Government provides support to remove these barriers and ensure equity of outcome.

We are providing a total of £11m to local authorities in 2025-2026 via the Minority Ethnic, Gypsy, Roma Traveller (MEGRT) grant to fund these important support services. This funding has supported the development and embedding of a wealth of expertise and good practice in education settings across Wales. The purpose of the MEGRT grant is to support children and young people who experience barriers to learning, the curriculum and education. These may include linguistic or language barriers, cultural barriers, and/or systemic and institutional barriers.

We remain committed to improving educational outcomes for care-experienced children, whilst recognising the importance of looking holistically at their needs in school. We also want a focus on progress along the child's own learning pathway and for them to build positive relationships with adults and their peers. We are working with stakeholders to produce a suite of good practice guidance documents. These will support local authorities and schools to embed good practice identified as being effective in supporting the needs of care experienced learners. The voice of care experienced children and young people is reflected in the guidance.

Our commitment to care experienced young people's education is matched by a range of support in schools and for post 16 education. Through the Pupil Development Grant, just over £5.6m will be available in this financial year to specifically support care-experienced children in school. The funding aims to raise their attainment by reducing the barriers they often face to achieving their full potential. All children looked after in reception to year 11 also qualify for the School Essentials Grant. It can be used to buy essentials such as uniform, stationery and equipment. The Welsh Government also provides a range of financial support to enable learners to continue their studies in Further Education Institutions.

Along with the work of schools and colleges, £11.4m will be provided to local authorities via our Youth Support Grant in 2025-26 to enable the delivery of a rich and diverse youth work offer, helping ensure young people can fulfil their potential and provide safe spaces to enable them to access the support they need and develop their voice, influence, and place in society. As part of these activities, all local authorities are expected to provide specific activities focusing on equality and inclusion, and to ensure provision reflects the needs of young people regardless of background or circumstance.

The Welsh Government also jointly convenes and co-chairs the Wales Youth Justice Advisory Panel (WYJAP) along with the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB). Its primary purpose is to bring together senior leaders and enable collective leadership and oversight of the youth justice system. At the January 2025 meeting the Panel reviewed and refined its' strategic focus and agreed three areas for immediate focus; partnership with education and the role of schools as a place of safety, early identification and intervention, partnership with Health and the needs of children who come into contact with the youth justice system and how their needs can be met and partnership with policing and the relationship between youth justice and child centred policing. Minister Dakin attended the most recent WYJAP meeting on 14 July, in support of our continued partnership.

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan was refreshed and launched on 5 November 2024, taking into account the recommendations of the Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into the implementation of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. It builds on the foundations in the original plan, in conjunction with the lessons learnt over the first two years and will focus on cross-government delivery, leading to tangible improvement in the outcomes for ethnic minority people in Wales.

The ArWAP goals and actions for 2024-2026 will deliver tangible, measurable outcomes that directly and positively impact on the lives of ethnic minority people at the grassroots level. Achieving this will require the embedding of anti-racism within organisations and dismantling racist structures, requiring changes to their governance and operational frameworks. The refreshed ArWAP takes into account the recommendations of the Equality and Social Justice Committee inquiry into the implementation of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: [Anti-racist Wales \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales).

With regard to measuring the impacts of these interventions over time, with particular focus on reducing disproportionality, I visited the Cardiff Probation Office on 10 July, where I met with officials from HMPPS in Wales. I was pleased to hear that the Probation Service in Wales has a disproportionality taskforce that uses data analysis to drive activity aimed at addressing areas where there are disproportionate outcomes.

Using data sets to identify priority areas for activity, departmental leads are commissioned to either explain the disproportionality or take action to change the outcomes (or both). Activity is monitored via the taskforce and outcomes tracked every 3 months to monitor impact. The Probation Service in Wales have ambitious plans to continue to expand the scope of the disproportionality taskforce by bringing in additional data sets over the course of 2025 and we remain closely engaged as this work progresses.

## **Questions for the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing**

### **8. What steps is the Welsh Government taking to negotiate a fair and sustainable funding settlement with the UK Government for prison healthcare, especially in light of rising healthcare demands?**

The Welsh Government receives the majority of its funding from the UK Government in the form of a block grant and a proportion of its annual funding from devolved taxes. The Welsh Government does not receive specific funding from the UK Government for prisoner healthcare on an annual basis. In 2014-15, the Welsh Government received a recurrent transfer of £2.544m to support prisoner healthcare in public prisons in Wales. No additional specific funding has been provided to Welsh Government (by the UK Government) in relation to prison healthcare.

Where health boards have direct funding arrangements in place with HMPPS for prison health care, there is more flexibility to agree some elements of funding locally to meet needs. This includes for HMP Berwyn as a relatively new prison, and HMP Parc which is a privately run prison.

I do recognise that the needs of the prison population in Wales are changing, with increased need for the health service. This is something I have already raised with UK Government Ministers.

### **9. What is the formula for determining the level of funding allocated to prison healthcare by health boards? What oversight is there, if any, of quality assurance? How does the Welsh Government ensure consistency and adequacy across Wales?**

Once funding is received from the UK Government, as you will be aware Welsh Ministers, through the annual budget process, will determine the Welsh Government's departmental spending plans. NHS allocations will subsequently be made to health boards. The prison population is included in population estimates used as a basis to determine the percentage shares of NHS allocations across health boards in Wales. It is a matter for individual health boards to determine the funding allocation to prisons in their area.

However, the arrangements are different for Parc Prison and Berwyn. For example, primary care at HMP Parc is funded through a memorandum of understanding between HMPPS and Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB. For Berwyn, there is a memorandum of understanding between the Welsh Government, HMPPS and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB).

While justice and responsibility for prisons is a reserved function, the provision of health services within the prison estate is for Welsh health boards to determine. A Partnership Agreement for Prison Health is in place. The agreement sets out the priorities for improving prison health and states that “prison should be a place where an individual can reform their lives”. It commits us to a “shared objective of ensuring those in prison can live in environments that promote health and well-being and where health services can be accessed to an equivalent standard of those within the community”.

The priorities are built around the agreement that this is a whole prison approach to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of prisoners in Wales. The Welsh Government’s policy aim is to ensure parity with health and social care services available in the community. We are committed to improving support in the prison estate in Wales, within the context of an increased prison population with higher levels of need in Wales, of the wider demands on the NHS and our overall funding settlement.

For health services specifically, health boards plan services based on local needs, which would include the secure estate, where applicable. There are well established local partnerships arrangements between health, social care and prisons to provide oversight for the local delivery of these services.

**10. Will the Welsh Government publish a breakdown of how much each health board allocates annually to prison healthcare?**

As above, NHS allocations are made to health boards in Wales. The prison population is included in population estimates used as a basis to determine the percentage shares of NHS allocations across health boards in Wales. It is a matter for individual health boards to determine the funding allocation to prisons in their area.

Yours sincerely,



**Jane Hutt AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



**Sarah Murphy AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog dros Iechyd Meddwl a Lles  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Jane Hutt MS

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Sarah Murphy MS

Minister for Mental Health and Well Being

1 August 2025

Dear Jane and Sarah,

### **Criminal Justice in Wales**

Further to the Equality and Social Justice Committee meeting on 14 July 2025 on Criminal Justice in Wales, I thank the Cabinet Secretary for attending and am requesting clarification on the following:

- 1. whether the mapping of costs related to criminal justice will include a breakdown by service type and geographic area within Wales and how that data might inform future funding decisions or devolution discussions?*
- 2. the timeline for the publication of information relating to the mapping of justice service costs?*
- 3. whether the Welsh Government would hold executive powers in the proposed model in areas like probation and youth justice and how those powers would relate to the UK Government's role?*
- 4. which data sets will be disaggregated - particularly on race, ethnicity, gender, and Welsh prisoners in English prisons, and confirm whether this data will be published publicly or retained as internal management data?*
- 5. clarity on when the data relating to pregnant women will be available?*
- 6. whether there is a timeline or action plan in place for achieving a national minimum standard for speech and language support in youth offending teams, and whether dedicated funding will be made available by the UK or Welsh Government to ensure consistent access across Wales?*
- 7. what specific interventions the Welsh Government is planning—or calling for—to reduce the number of Black and care-experienced children entering the youth justice and probation systems? How will the WG measure the impact of these interventions over time, particularly in terms of reducing disproportionality?*

Minister for Mental Health and Well Being, I am so sorry you were unable to attend the session as I know how committed you are to this area of your portfolio; I do hope you are feeling better now. As you were unable to attend the session, please could you answer the following queries:

- 8. What steps is the Welsh Government taking to negotiate a fair and sustainable funding settlement with the UK Government for prison healthcare, especially in light of rising healthcare demands?*

9. What is the formula for determining the level of funding allocated to prison healthcare by health boards? What oversight is there, if any, of quality assurance? How does the Welsh Government ensure consistency and adequacy across Wales?

10. Will the Welsh Government publish a breakdown of how much each health board allocates annually to prison healthcare?

I would welcome a response within the usual timescales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'J'.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

CC:

Ruth Jones MP, Chair of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee, House of Commons



Jayne Bryant AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

Agenda item 3.16  


Jane Hutt AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y  
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip  
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref PO/JP0416/25

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair  
Equality & Social Justice Committee

29 August 2025

Dear Jenny

The Senedd debated the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report "Sound the Alarm: The Governance of Fire and Rescue Services on 9 October 2024. During that debate the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government indicated her intention to consult on governance reform proposals for Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) during 2025.

The consultation, covering options for FRS governance and finance reform that can be introduced through secondary legislation and policy change in this Senedd term, was published today and can be found at:

[Reform of fire and rescue authorities in Wales 2025 | GOV.WALES](#)

The consultation follows a period of engagement with key stakeholders, including the members of the Social Partnership Forum for Fire and Rescue Services, which has helped to shape the options within.

The consultation will run until 24 October 2025.

Yours sincerely



**Jayne Bryant AS/MS**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## Additional evidence

### Setting well-being objectives

#### Our approach

When developing Nature and People Thriving Together: Our corporate plan to 2030, we consciously choose to take a systematic approach to embed the requirements of the Act from the outset. We adopted a project approach and mapped out how we would consider each of the 5 ways of working as we worked with our Board and Executive Team to develop the vision, mission, values and well-being objectives. We used the guidance on the sustainable development principle and setting well-being objectives to test ourselves at each stage.

This systematic and detailed approach allowed us to show our “workings” and iteratively refine and adapt our approach responding to evidence and feedback as it emerged. For example evidence from the Nature and Us Vision for the Natural Environment of Wales informed the development of the 3 WBOs, as well as publications by the UN on the nature, climate and pollution crises with new targets and approaches to nature loss and climate net zero.

The Board and Executive Team wanted the Corporate Plan to provide real clarity to colleagues and partners on our strategic direction and what we were focussed on to 2030. For this reason we chose to simplify the language and avoid the perception of multiple and competing priorities by using the language of Well-being Objectives and steps to take in our corporate plan.

#### Working with the Wales Audit Office

Under the Act the Wales Audit Office are required to carry out examinations to assess the extent to which public bodies have acted in accordance with the the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives.

The development of our well-being objectives was subject to examination. Following discussions we agreed to the examination being in “real time”, with WAO colleagues observing the process of setting the well-being objectives, allowing discussion and feedback.

We found the examination process very helpful, with the live discussions and feedback helping us to adjust and adapt our approach.

The WAO report on the setting of our well-being objectives can be found here:



3522A2023\_nrw\_wb 3522A2023\_nrw\_wb  
o\_examination\_repo o\_examination\_repo

## Opportunities to share experience and insight

Through applying the 5 ways of working we actively reached out to partners to involve them in the process of developing our well-being objectives and sought to identify opportunities for collaboration in the setting of the formal WBO and steps to take.

Nevertheless there are opportunities to strengthen this by working more collaboratively across public bodies as we **plan how** we will develop our respective well-being objectives – to share perspectives, timelines, approaches and resources so we can strengthen our collective approach, avoid duplication and involve our communities in a more meaningful way. One example, is the Nature and Us Vision for the natural environment in Wales. This resource, produced by NRW, gives really powerful insight into what our citizens want for nature and the environment in Wales and could be used by other public bodies as they consider how they contribute to the Resilient Wales Goal.

A “forum” of public body officers responsible for developing the well-being objectives and corporate/business plans could facilitate and enable greater collaboration on **how** we apply the 5 ways of working in the setting of our respective well-being objectives, sharing plans and timelines, key resources and insights on what works well.

## Annual Report and Accounts

The 2024/25 Business Plan is the first that is fully aligned to Corporate Plan Nature and People Thriving Together. All commitments in our 2024/25 Business Plan relate to our well-being objectives and specific steps to take. In the 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts we have sought to maintain the line of sight from our corporate plan, well-being assessment, business plan and performance reporting. In doing this we have assumed a level of knowledge of the WFG Act and have cross-referenced to key documents. It is difficult to balance the guidance on the application of the WFG Act with the other extensive guidance for the preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts, notably Financial Reporting Manual (FReM).



# Disability and Employment

Our response to 'Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap'



# How to use this document



This is an Easy Read version of:

**“ESJC Report: Anything’s Achievable with the Right Support. Tackling the Disability Employment Gap - Welsh Government Response.”**



You might need help to read it. Ask someone you know to help you



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Where the document says **we**, this means **Welsh Government**. For more information contact:

**Website:** [www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)

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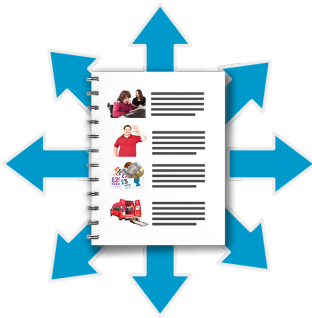


The **Equality and Social Justice Committee** wrote a report called:

[“Anything’s Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap”](#).



You can [read the Easy Read report on the Senedd website](#).



The report lists **7 recommendations** to support disabled people with employment.



A recommendation is something that the Committee thinks we should do.



This document is our response to what they think we should do.

# Recommendation 1



People who can work, and want to work, should get the support they need.

Welsh Government should:



- Finish the work of the Disability Rights Taskforce by May 2025.



- Finish changing policies based on the [Locked Out report](#) by May 2025.



- Publish the Disability Rights Action Plan by May 2025.



- Make the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People part of Welsh law by April 2026. We call this the UNCRPD for short.



**Our response: We agree with the idea, but we need to think about how it can happen.**



The Disability Rights Taskforce had its last meeting in January 2025.



At this meeting, they talked about the Disabled People's Rights Plan.



The Locked Out report and the new plan say it is important to work closely with disabled people.



A draft Plan will be published in May 2025. Draft means it can be changed.



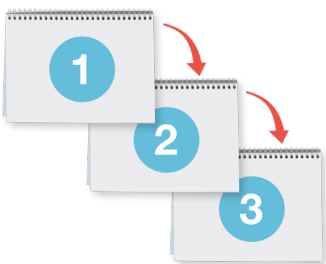
This plan will last for 10 years and involve all parts of Welsh Government.



The plan talks about what needs to be done to make sure disabled people are treated equally and fairly.



It looks at the differences between disabled and non-disabled people in work and pay.



It includes steps to make things fairer.



The plan also links to the law called the Equality Act. We will make sure disabled people are treated fairly in the workplace.



We will set up a group called an External Advisory Board. They will check our plans run well.

A group has been set up to look at:



- how to make the UNCRDP part of Welsh law,



- and how disabled people's rights could be protected.



This work will help make sure people's rights are protected. And make sure changes work in the best ways.

## Recommendation 2



**Look in detail at how Business Wales supports businesses to employ more disabled people.**



Welsh Government should review:

- the advice and guidance that is available
- how advice is shared with employers
- how businesses get support.



**Our response: We agree with the idea, but we need to think about how it can happen.**



Business Wales reviewed their services in 2023.



They work with our Disabled People's Employment Champions. They advise businesses about employing disabled workers.



Business Wales will review the guidance that is given to employers. They will continue to work with the Champions to improve awareness.

# Recommendation 3



The Welsh Government should set targets to measure the progress Champions make.



The Welsh Government should set goals for the Champions and write a report every year.

The report should talk about things like:



- the number of times they speak to employers



- how many people get jobs because of the Champions' work.



This should be in place by July 2025.



**Our response: We agree with the idea, but we need to think about how it can happen.**



We have published goals for the Champions.



We will write a report every 6 months that talks about the work they have done.



We think this will work better than giving information about numbers alone.

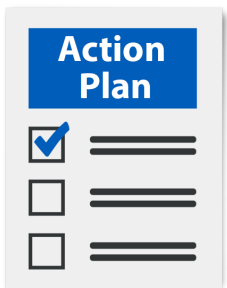
# Recommendation 4



**Ask the UK Government to improve the Disability Confident Scheme.**



The Welsh Government should say what improvements should be made.



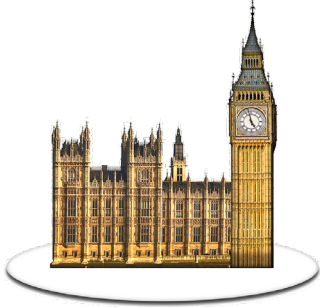
It should say how the changes will be made and by when.



If they do not make the changes, they should look into a new scheme.



**Our response: We agree.**



We are speaking to the UK Government about making changes to the Disability Confident Scheme.



We are also working with the Disability Rights Taskforce to look into creating a Welsh scheme.



We are talking to some employers about being Disability Confident. This is about helping disabled people in work.



We had 3 events with the Department for Work and Pensions to help organisations work together better.



We will report again at the end of the year.

# Recommendation 5



The government, councils and NHS organisations are employers. They can do more to close the Disability Employment Gap.



They should review how they work. And check it against the new Disability Action Plan coming out.



They should set goals to have Disability Confident Leaders.



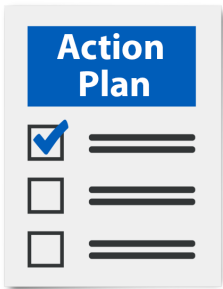
They should make sure disabled people are treated equally and fairly in the workplace.



This should be done by the end of 2025.



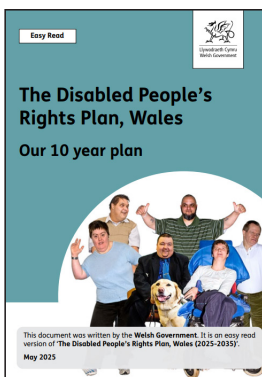
**Our response: We agree with the idea, but we need to think about how it can happen.**



We think it is important for public sector bodies to follow these actions.



Public sector bodies are organisations like the NHS and councils.



There will also be actions they can follow in the Disability Rights Plan.

# Recommendation 6



**Schemes to support disabled people should be more flexible.**

The Welsh government should:



- Make support programmes more flexible.



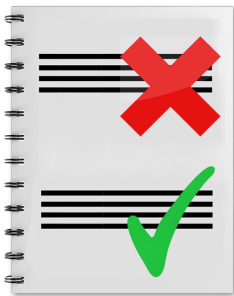
- Raise the age limit for schemes like Jobs Growth Wales+.



**Our response: We agree.**



This will help make sure disabled young people get the support they need and when they need it.



The changes can be made as part of the next Jobs Growth Wales scheme.



We are going to make sure these schemes work together better:

- Jobs Growth Wales
- ReAct+
- and Communities for Work Plus.

# Recommendation 7



**The Disability Disparity Evidence Unit should work with the disability rights sector more.**



The disability rights sector means organisations, groups and people who try and improve the rights of disabled people.



Welsh Government should report on this work by May 2025.



**Our response: We agree with the idea, but we need to think about how it can happen.**



The Disability Disparity Evidence Unit has worked with people from the disability rights sector.



More work is planned. For example, looking at the impact of the Disabled People's Rights Plan.



They will keep working with the disability rights sector for its future plans.