

Cafodd yr ymateb hwn ei gyflwyno i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Flaenoriaethau'r Chweched Senedd](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Sixth Senedd Priorities](#)

HSC PSS 49

Ymateb gan: | Response from: Rhwydwaith Cydraddoldeb Menywod Cymru | Women's Equality Network Wales

Blaenoriaethau cychwynnol a nodwyd gan y Pwyllgor Initial priorities identified by the Committee

Mae'r Pwyllgor wedi nodi nifer o flaenoriaethau posibl ar gyfer ei waith yn ystod y Chweched Senedd, gan gynnwys: iechyd y cyhoedd a gwaith ataliol; y gweithlu iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol, gan gynnwys diwylliant sefydliadol a lles staff; mynediad at wasanaethau iechyd meddwl; arloesi ar sail tystiolaeth ym maes iechyd a gofal cymdeithasol; cymorth a gwasanaethau i ofalwyr di-dâl; mynediad at wasanaethau adsefydlu i'r rhai sydd wedi cael COVID ac i eraill; a mynediad at wasanaethau ar gyfer cyflyrau cronig tymor hir, gan gynnwys cyflyrau cyhyrsgerbydol.

The Committee has identified several potential priorities for work during the Sixth Senedd, including: public health and prevention; the health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing; access to mental health services; evidence-based innovation in health and social care; support and services for unpaid carers; access to COVID and non-COVID rehabilitation services; and access to services for long-term chronic conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions.

C1. Pa rai o'r materion uchod ydych chi'n credu y dylai'r Pwyllgor roi blaenoriaeth iddynt, a pham?

Q1. Which of the issues listed above do you think should be a priority, and why?

We believe that any priorities identified by the Health and Social Care Committee should be considered through a gendered approach to ensure the Committee's work is fully informed and in a position to address relevant differential impacts on women/girls and men/boys in these areas. For further detail on specific priority areas, please see response to Q2.



Blaenoriaethau allweddol ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd

Key priorities for the Sixth Senedd

C2. Yn eich barn chi, pa flaenoriaethau allweddol eraill y dylai'r Pwyllgor eu hystyried yn ystod y Chweched Senedd mewn perthynas â:

- a) gwasanaethau iechyd;**
- b) gofal cymdeithasol a gofalwyr;**
- c) adfer yn dilyn COVID?**

Q2. In your view, what other key priorities should the Committee consider during the Sixth Senedd in relation to:

- a) health services;**
 - b) social care and carers;**
 - c) COVID recovery?**
-

Gwasanaethau iechyd

Health services

Women make up some 52% of the population in Wales and are more likely than men to be primary care-givers for younger and older generations (1) whilst also making up almost 50% of the UK workforce, with rates of women in full-time employment rising faster than that of men (2). Given these significant responsibilities, women's health is fundamental to the well-being of Wales as a nation and yet, historically, it has been neglected: women's health – including maternity provision – was not even mentioned in Welsh Government's existing long-term plan for health and social services, 'A Healthier Wales' (3), despite the stated aim of becoming a 'feminist government' (4) and undertaking a Gender Equality Review which saw health as a top priority for women across Wales (5). While COVID-19 is a global health pandemic, the restrictions that have come with it have compounded pre-existing health inequalities faced by women in Wales. If not adequately addressed as we move beyond pandemic restrictions, women's health will be impacted further.

Health conditions which solely affect women and those assigned female at birth, such as endometriosis, which costs the UK economy £8.2bn annually (6), and menopause which will affect 52% of the population at some point in time, as well as those disease areas which have a disproportionately negative impact on females, including auto-immune, cardiovascular, osteoporosis, and dementia, incur a significant cost burden to Wales. The ONS reports that women live fewer years in good health than men (7) and are more likely to be in poverty, requiring both social and financial support. As such, we are calling on the Health and Social Care Committee to both prioritise and incentivise the effective management of women's health during this Sixth Senedd, thereby demonstrating a real commitment to the wellbeing of future generations of women and their families. Access to women's health services across Wales are

currently patchy and inconsistent (8); this must be drastically improved upon, as a priority, by the next Welsh Government. Women must have access to high quality and the most appropriate healthcare services in a timely manner.

Women's health-related priorities should include:

- supporting the development and implementation of a women and girls' health Quality Statement and Plan for Wales (currently being developed by a third sector coalition facilitated by BHF Cymru and FTWW)
- a life-course approach to women's health which includes but, crucially, extends beyond the traditional focus on maternity
- consistent high-quality service provision, including specialist tertiary care, accessible to residents the length and breadth of Wales
- investment in high quality research into women's health and treatment and ensure that Wales-based clinical trials have a 50:50 between women and men (excluding medical procedures exclusively for women/men)
- investment in enhanced training for healthcare professionals in Wales on women's health areas, e.g. enhanced training for all GPs on menopause
- a public health approach which focuses on education / awareness and prevention and early intervention in women's health
- encouraging the development of appropriate workplace policy and practice
- sustainable resourcing of specialist third sector organisations enabling a fully co-productive approach to women's health strategy and service design in Wales
- integration of the women's health implementation group (WHIG) and programme (WHIP) into long-term NHS Wales planning
- ensure the continuation of telemedicine for abortion consultations and ensure the authorisation of abortions should require one signature, not two, from a health profession, e.g. a nurse, midwife, or doctor (not doctors exclusively).
- ensure the provision of a pan-Wales diagnostic and management service for endometriosis, which includes the provision of specialist nurses in every health board
- open at least two dedicated recurrent miscarriage clinics in Wales
- ensure all patient facing healthcare practitioners receive mandatory training to include specific health conditions and processes related to the health needs of people with protected characteristics.
- make co-production of service design and delivery, including information and resources, a priority, in keeping with the spirit of the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

References:

- 1) [10 facts about women and caring in the UK on International Women's Day - Carers UK](#)
- 2) [Employment in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)
- 3) [A healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care | GOV.WALES](#)
- 4) [advancing-gender-equality-plan.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

- 5) [Gender-Equality-a-roadmap-for-Wales.pdf \(chwaraeteg.com\)](#)
- 6) [Endometriosis APPG Report Oct 2020.pdf \(endometriosis-uk.org\)](#)
- 7) [Health state life expectancies by national deprivation deciles, Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) (Section 4)
- 8) <https://wenwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Feminist-Scorecard-Report-2020-Eng.pdf>

See also our [Manifesto for Closing the Gap on Gender Inequality in Wales](#) for further information on what Welsh Government should do to ensure women have access to high quality appropriate health services in a timely manner.

Gofal Cymdeithasol a gofalwyr

Social care and carers

See below.

Adfer yn dilyn COVID

COVID recovery

WEN Wales, in partnership with the Fawcett Society, UK Women's Budget Group, Close the Gap, Engender and Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group, analysed the impact of COVID-19 on parents and young people in Wales. The results of this research clearly show that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic both financially and in terms of mental health. It further shows that financial and mental health disparities are directly linked to women's role in unpaid and low paid care work. If steps are not taken urgently, many more will fall into poverty. The Health and Social Care Committee has a crucial role to play in scrutinising Welsh Government's plans for recovery from the pandemic to ensure it is a *Wales' green AND caring recovery*, especially in relation to three priority areas:

1. The health and social care workforce, including organisational culture and staff wellbeing
The pandemic has brought to the forefront the crucial importance of both paid and unpaid care work. Our most recent research on young people in Wales shows that 7 out of 10 young voters across the political spectrum want to see greater investments into social care. 69% of 18–30-year-olds in Wales agree that social care for older people and people with additional needs should be free. Support is even higher among female voters, with 75% of young women agreeing that social care should be free. The Health and Social Care Committee should ensure that Welsh Government's recovery plan addresses the social care sector to ensure caring is appropriately valued as a profession through better pay and working conditions. The Committee should especially ensure that Welsh Government's recovery plan improves conditions for BAME women who are overrepresented in lower paid roles in these sectors, are subject to identity-based bullying and harassment at work and have fewer training and career progression opportunities.

2. Access to mental health services

Our research on young people in Wales confirms [previous findings](#) that women are more likely than men to experience poor mental health as a result of the pandemic. 68% of young women report that their mental health has got worse during the pandemic, compared to 45% of young men. Among young disabled women, a staggering 80% report that their mental health has got worse. The Health and Social Care Committee should monitor Welsh Government's recovery plan to ensure it provides appropriate and long-term investments in mental health provisions for those disproportionately affected by the pandemic, from front-line staff to the general population.

3. Support and services for unpaid carers

Women's caring responsibilities increased during lockdown. Before March 2020, 29% of women and 11% of men did most of the caring for adult relatives or friends and at the time of our survey, 35% of women and 12% of men did most of this care. Before March 2020, 27% of BAME women, compared to 13% of BAME men, were responsible for the care of adult dependents; now 26% of BAME women are doing the majority of adult care compared to 13% of BAME men. When we asked those who had been furloughed what they thought contributed to their employers' decision to place them on furlough, households with lower incomes were three times as likely (12%) as those with higher incomes (4%) to state that they were furloughed so they could look after an adult. Wales has an aging population that requires workers to be carers, often for elderly relatives and children at the same time. The Health and Social Care Committee should hold Welsh Government to account to ensure it invests in a caring economy that values and rewards currently unpaid care, in line with the recommendations in the [Women's Budget Group's report *Creating a Caring Economy: A Call to Action*](#)

Unrhyw faterion eraill

Any other issues

C3. A oes unrhyw faterion eraill yr hoffech dynnu sylw'r Pwyllgor atynt?

Q3. Are there any other issues you wish to draw to the Committee's attention?

About the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales: Our vision is of a Wales free from gender discrimination where all women and men 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.