



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Draft Budget scrutiny 2025-26

13 January 2025

Evidence in respect of the budget allocations made through the Social Justice MEG; including evidence of how equality and social justice are driving priority-setting and budget allocations across Welsh Government.

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1. Budget Overview

This chapter provides an overview of allocations made through the 2025-26 Draft Budget to the Social Justice MEG.

1. I have taken decisive action to allocate my budgets in areas that will address inequalities and tackle poverty to support individuals and families across Wales who are most in need. Alongside the **£6.8m of additional revenue** funding received through the 2025-26 Draft Budget, I have also **repurposed a further £9.2m revenue** within my portfolio, allowing me to make **revenue allocations of £16m** in total. Allocations have been made in line with our many Programme for Government commitments which aim to address and reduce inequalities. Comparatively, these are small investments, but their impact will be far reaching and significant on the individuals who require support most.
2. In addition to these revenue allocations, a **further £3m capital** has been allocated to my portfolio, **increasing my capital budget by 20%** compared to the 2024-25 Restated Final Budget. A further **£750k has been repurposed** within the MEG which has allowed me to make substantial budget increases to both the Community Facilities Programme budget and the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget. A further **£1.5m of Financial Transaction Capital** has also been allocated to my portfolio which will provide additional support to the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's Community Asset Loan Fund.
3. The table below provides high level information on changes made to the Social Justice MEG through the 2025-26 Draft Budget. A breakdown at BEL level is provided at Annex A. Annex B includes explanations at BEL level of changes made through the 2025-26 Draft Budget as well as the changes that were made as part of the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25. Changes made at the First Supplementary Budget of 2024-25 were not baselined.
4. 2025-26 baseline adjustments will baseline allocations due to be made at the Second Supplementary Budget of 2024-25 to provide additional financial support to meet the impacts of the 2024-25 pay award and the additional costs as a result of the changes to the SCAPE discount rates which have impacted unfunded public sector pension schemes since the change was enacted in April 2024. A baseline adjustment has also been made to the Fuel Poverty budget to regularise a change required due to the portfolio restructure that took place earlier this year.

SOCIAL JUSTICE							
	2024-25 Final Budget Restated	2025-26 Baseline Adjustments*	2025-26 Revised Baseline	Changes Draft Budget 2025-26	2025-26 Draft Budget	Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2024-25 <i>**not baselined**</i>	2024-25 1st Supplementary Budget
	(A)	(B)	(C = A + B)	(D)	(E = C + D)	(F)	(G = A + F)
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Near Cash	133,354	-596	132,758	6,279	139,037	4,559	138,417
Non Cash	213	0	213	294	507	420	633
Resource	133,567	-596	132,971	6,573	139,544	4,979	139,050
Capital	14,540	0	14,540	3,350	17,890	128	14,668
FT Capital	-42	42	0	1,461	1,461	0	-42
Total Capital	14,498	42	14,540	4,811	19,351	128	14,626
Total	148,065	-554	147,511	11,384	158,895	5,107	153,676
AME	226	0	226	0	226	0	226

- Near cash budgets have increased by £6.3m as a result of this Draft Budget. This is the result of an allocation of £6.8m from reserves as well as the transfers in and out of the MEG to other areas, these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Non-cash budgets have increased by £0.3m as a result of changing requirements in year, again these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Capital budgets have increased by £3.35m as a result of the allocation from reserves of £3m as well as the transfer of £0.35m into the MEG from the Housing and Local Government MEG, these are detailed in Annex A and B.
- Financial Transaction capital budgets have increased by £1.5m following the allocation of budgets from reserves; other smaller changes are due to profiled repayments on this loan capital. Again, these are detailed in Annex A and B.

How equality and social justice is driving priority setting

- Our Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) of the 2025-26 Draft Budget outlines the evidence which was considered and informed our decisions. The SIIA identifies key trends and reflects the strategic and cumulative impacts of decisions across a range of areas, including giving due consideration to the statutory requirements. This helped to reduce any disproportionate effect on any one specific group as well as identifying opportunities to maximise positive impacts to reduce inequalities across our society.
- The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units undertook a review of recent evidence (including the Wellbeing of Wales report, the National Survey for Wales and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings) to better understand who would be the most impacted by budgetary changes. It explored a range of key policy areas including poverty and socio-economic status, health, education, housing, employment and the environment. This involved drawing out where people who belonged to equality groups / those with protected characteristics had multiple intersecting characteristics that meant they would be more susceptible to negative impacts from cuts to certain services compared to people without multiple intersecting equality characteristics. This evidence underpinned Cabinet discussions and decisions when considering budget allocations and making spending decisions.
- Equality and social justice considerations are integral to the priorities the Government has set for the rest of this Senedd term. The priorities were shaped by the listening exercise carried out over the summer months and announced by the First Minister in September. The four key priority areas are:

- **Iechyd da** – Cut NHS waiting times, including for mental health; better access to social care and improve services for women’s health.
- **Green jobs and growth** – Green jobs to make families better off, tackle the climate crisis and restore nature; accelerate planning decisions to grow our Welsh economy.
- **Opportunity for every family** – Boost standards in our schools and colleges; provide more homes for social rent.
- **Connecting communities** – Transform our railway and deliver a better bus network; fix our roads; local choice on 20mph.

12. These are existing policy areas. Delivery is ongoing and is being undertaken in accordance with the relevant statutory and impact assessment requirements.

Previous recommendations of the Committee

13. Your letter specifically requested an update in relation to recommendations 2, 4 and 7 of your 2024-25; the updates are set out below.

Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment

14. We have extended the engagement period for the review of the SIIA to ensure that we gain evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and now anticipate it will conclude in 2025. In addition to our ongoing discussions with the Welsh Government Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) we are engaging with other Governments including Iceland, Canada, Scotland and Northern Ireland to draw on experience and best practice from around the world. We have also engaged with key groups such as the Women’s Equality Network in Wales. Over the next few months, we will be accelerating this engagement and seeking wider views from across Wales before discussing emerging recommendations with BIIAG members.

Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group

15. We have continued to work with the BIIAG to further develop our approach to embedding prevention and preventative spending into the budget process. The BIIAG decided to establish a bespoke workstream to consider how it might apply to biodiversity and to test new approaches which could later be applied to other policy areas. The group are specifically exploring a biodiversity toolkit which has been developed and are considering the outcomes and learning that has taken place in using this tool. The group will continue this work stream over the coming months, and we hope will bring forward recommendations on how a whole budget approach to preventative activity could be effectively introduced. Further embedding of the preventative approach will also be key to the Welsh Spending Review work being undertaken.

Police Community Support Officers

16. Work is ongoing against the Committee's recommendation last year, and officials are working on a report which will bring together a review of the current literature on PCSOs and some high-level primary research with frontline policing staff. The approach has been developed with policing leads so it can be delivered in partnership.
17. Taking additional time for the work has supported this partnership approach and allowed us to ensure outcomes and findings are considered in more detail. I will ensure the Committee is sighted on the work, which is likely to be relatively high level, as soon as it is completed and ready to share.

2. Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units

Additional revenue of £0.3m has been allocated to the Data Units as part of the 2025-26 Draft Budget to meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.

Informing budget decisions

18. The Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units provided a macro-level summary of the evidence on equality to highlight who would be the most impacted by spend in order to inform Cabinet decisions. This involved synthesising a range of available evidence in relation to the First Minister's four key priorities (a healthier Wales; green jobs and growth; opportunity for every family; and connecting communities). People belonging to equality groups with multiple intersecting characteristics are more likely to face negative impacts from budget decisions on certain policy areas and services compared to those without such characteristics. This evidence is shown in the Strategic Context of the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment of the 2025-26 Draft Budget.
19. The main role of the Evidence Units is developing the evidence base so others can consider and negate the equality impacts more effectively for their policy areas. The Evidence Units have produced several key pieces of evidence that are used in policy decisions and budget decisions as part of the macro-level evidence summary. For example, the analysis for the Well-Being of Wales 2024: More Equal Wales chapter, and the Census analysis on differences in outcomes such as health, education and economic status by equality characteristics. The development of measurement frameworks for the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the Disability Rights Taskforce will further enhance the available evidence.
20. Through this Draft Budget I have allocated an additional £0.3m to this budget to ensure the published workplan can be delivered and to allow the Units to fill evidence gaps and meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.
21. Key priorities for 2025-26 for the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units are to meet emerging evidence needs in the areas of
 - Cross-cutting: for example, measuring the impact of equality action plans, developing granular equality pay gaps, options for boosting the National Survey for Wales.
 - Disability: for example, barriers to employment for disabled people, incorporating the social model of disability into data collection.
 - Race: for example, lived experience research projects including one to, understanding Gypsy, Roma, Traveller evidence needs.
 - Equality: understanding needs around sex/gender data collection, developing advice and guidance for mainstreaming equalities data collection across government.

3. Tackling poverty, cost of living and reducing inequality

A key priority within my portfolio has been to use all levers available to reduce inequalities and tackle poverty supporting as many individuals and families as possible.

Tackling poverty

22. Despite the rate of price increases falling, lower income groups are likely to continue to struggle with the impact of higher price levels on their living standards. On average households in the bottom two income quintiles spend a greater proportion of their income on food, rent and energy. Through this Draft Budget I have made a number of allocations to tackle poverty.
23. The **Financial Inclusion** budget offers direct crisis support to individuals experiencing financial crisis with no other means of support. I have allocated an **additional £1m** to the **Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)**, increasing the financial inclusion budget in 2025-26 to just over £40m. Around 50% of the DAF applicants are now families with children and therefore the DAF is a key mechanism to help the most disadvantaged children in Wales alongside wider support through this portfolio and across Welsh Government. I have also allocated a further £120k revenue to the Financial Inclusion budget in 2025-26 to support research into financial exclusion in Wales. Access to this new evidence on the most disadvantaged, and therefore potentially vulnerable in society will enable design of better targeted interventions.
24. Through my **Supporting Communities** budget, I support the co-ordination of cross-government activity and enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the **root causes of poverty**. This funding is used to provide direct emergency support to the poorest in our communities and to help to tackle the drivers of poverty in the long term. This has included emergency food aid, funding to support individuals with the cost of energy, and funding to support the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy.
25. In this Draft Budget I have allocated a **further £2.5m** revenue from the wider £5m allocation to the Supporting Communities budget to fund Local Food Partnerships and to provide further support around **tackling food poverty**, enabling local projects to help tackle the root causes of food poverty. This will take the overall allocation delivering support for those experiencing food poverty across Wales for 2025-26 to nearly £4.5m (revenue and capital). This vital support facilitates community food organisations to purchase additional supplies of good quality food and essential goods, boosting their capacity to meet the needs of their customers. Funding also supports Local Food Partnerships and community organisations to deliver food related projects linked to the work of the local food partnerships, including those which help tackle the root causes of food poverty.
26. I have also allocated **£0.5m** revenue from the Supporting Communities budget to provide emergency fuel support through the Fuel Bank Foundation for those in **fuel poverty** and at risk of disconnection who have a prepayment meter or require off-grid support through our Heat Fund. Off- gas-grid households may receive help with bulk fuel purchase and heated throws can be distributed to disadvantaged people who need a safe and warm environment to get through the winter.

27. **£1.5m** of the additional revenue will be used to continue to support and expand the provisions of **Warm Hubs** in 2025-26, providing safe and warm places within local communities.
28. The **period dignity** budget also specifically targets the impacts of the costs of period products on those with low incomes and, again, this budget has been protected in full in 25-26 providing support to every school and college in Wales as well as being widely available across a range of community venues, including food banks and pantries, libraries, youth centres and community hubs.
29. Poverty is also associated with an increased risk of **domestic violence** and increases have also been made to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget which are described in chapter 7.
30. I have also allocated an **additional £1.4m** revenue to the **Digital Inclusion** budget in 2025-26 to restore the budget to support digital inclusion activity across Wales and fund the next phase of digital inclusion support, post the Digital Communities Wales (DCW) programme coming to an end next year. Support for digital inclusion will benefit the most disadvantaged in society and key sections of the population with additional challenges. Research by the Older Peoples Commissioner and the National Survey for Wales indicate that digital exclusion is higher within particular groups that already experience additional barriers in everyday life.

Child Poverty Strategy

31. In addition to the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment and the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group activity, scrutiny at Cabinet level has provided assurance that Child Poverty remains a key cross cutting theme throughout budget considerations and decision making. For example, in the Social Justice MEG through this Draft Budget I have allocated a further £1m revenue from the wider additional £5m allocation to the Supporting Communities budget to support the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy and to increase the funding available through the future Child Poverty Grant funding to facilitate more innovative provision of services.

Supporting households with cost of living pressures

32. The **Discretionary Assistance Fund** has been allocated an **additional £1m**, increasing the financial inclusion budget in 2025-26 to just over £40m. This crisis fund is a vital support mechanism for those with no other means of support. The DAF provides emergency cash payments and access to essential household goods to assist both in an immediate crisis and to assist in moving to a more settled way of life following a crisis. The DAF also includes access to help with off grid fuel payments – gas and oil – available throughout the year. Financial support for credit unions is included in the overall financial inclusion budget allocation and will be used to increase resilience of the sector and increase the range of services offered
33. Through the **Single Advice Fund**, I have put in place across Wales a framework of social welfare information and advice services that are accessible to people from our most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. In the last financial year 77% of people accessing a Single Advice Fund service came from a Welsh Government priority group including: people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, older people, carers of older people and low-income families with children.

34. As set out above, through the **Supporting Communities** budget, I support the co-ordination of cross-government activity and enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the root causes of poverty. This funding is used to provide direct emergency support to those who are poorest in our communities and to help to tackle the drivers of poverty in the long term. This has included emergency food aid, and funding to support individuals with the cost of energy.

Welsh Benefits Charter

35. The work on streamlining the administration of Welsh benefits will make it easier for people to access the financial support to which they are entitled.
36. A Streamlining Welsh Benefits Phase One route map outlining the high-level priorities and outputs that are expected to be achieved by April 2026 will be published in January 2025. This includes activities such as discovering and disseminating best practice, research, and communication, and I have allocated an additional £0.5m revenue in 2025-26 to support this work - ensuring these outputs can be met in a timely manner.

4. Equality and Community Cohesion

The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget has been increased by £0.7m through the 2025-26 Draft Budget; the Community Cohesion budget has also been increased by £0.9m¹.

37. The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget directly support the groups who face the greatest disadvantage and are often those most impacted by the current financial context. In 2025-26 these budgets have been protected in full, with key areas provided uplifts to recognise current inflationary pressures as far as possible. We know that people that are disabled, LGBTQ+ and/or from ethnic minority communities are more likely to experience hate crime, and along with people from lower income households are at greater risk of poor mental health and loneliness. The LGBTQ+ budgets directly support these communities and our Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) budgets also directly support work to tackle hate crime.
38. I have allocated an additional **£450k** to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget to support efforts to address and reduce inequalities and advance human rights. This funding will be used to target action aimed at tackling inequality and advancing human rights, reflecting the challenging context still felt by those with protected characteristics facing inequality and discrimination, and the third sector organisations that support them. This will help organisations to support delivery of our cross-government plans including the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and forthcoming disability rights plan. This is in addition to support for our partners working on Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights in the third sector with a budget uplift of 3%, alongside providing an additional £0.2m revenue to support work to break down barriers and improve access to service for those in the Deaf community.
39. **Migrants and sanctuary seekers, including Refugees and Asylum Seekers**, will often fall under one or more of these protected characteristics and are therefore more likely to benefit from our work to eliminate inequalities. The Cohesive Communities budget helps to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to equality and the Public Sector Equality Duty by providing support to migrants including people from Ukraine. In 2025-26, an additional £0.9m revenue will be allocated to support our Wales Sanctuary Service and the Cohesion Programme.
40. The **race and Gypsy Roma Traveller** revenue budget focusses on the protected characteristic of race, including Gypsy Roma Traveller communities. This budget will allow for delivery of the outstanding ArWAP actions. This will contribute positively to the Public Sector Equality Duties, positively impact communities who are economically disadvantaged and improve access to UNCRC rights for children, particularly of the Gypsy Roma and Traveller community. This will support work to address housing inequalities for this group, one of the most disadvantaged in Wales. We have also maintained support for the capital sites budget at 2024-25 levels.

¹ Allocation of £0.9m has been made, however a transfer of £0.7m has also been made out of the BEL therefore the uplift will show as £0.2m in the BEL tables

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan

- The draft budget supports the continued delivery of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) by prioritising resources to tackle systemic racism through a cross-government approach. This complements funding in other portfolios for the delivery of the cross-government actions contained in the refreshed ArWAP published in November 2024. Funding within the MEG includes initiatives such as support for community leadership development and increasing representation of ethnic minority people, particularly women, in public appointments and entry to the public service workforce.
- The External Accountability Group (EAG) continues to support the implementation of the plan, providing support and challenge, drawing on the EAG's expertise and lived experience.

Nation of Sanctuary

41. Allocations enable the continued pursuit of the Nation of Sanctuary vision. Commitments are contained within the Nation of Sanctuary chapter of the updated Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. £2.12m will be provided for a range of dedicated interventions, as outlined below, as well as investment through mainstream wider interventions to support the integration of sanctuary seekers.
42. The **Wales Sanctuary Service is increased to £0.9m** to ensure sanctuary seekers can provide advice and advocacy support on a pan-Wales basis. This support changes to the UK Government's asylum dispersal process and the need to ensure an equitable service across Wales.
43. I will also continue to allocate £0.7m funding for implementation of the Welcome Ticket and to facilitate internet access for asylum seekers living in Wales. Access to language tuition will continue to be facilitated through £0.4m for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Hubs.
44. We will continue to provide training for local authorities regarding those with No Recourse to Public Funds, as well as providing access to shelter and legal advice for those left without immigration status but a realistic prospect of obtaining it.
45. I will continue to allocate funding to support newly granted refugees to find alternative accommodation and register for key services during the move on phase. Funding will enable: increased capacity of immigration legal advice services for those most in need; continued provision of and updates to the Sanctuary website; support for the employability of refugees; and placing those with lived experience at the heart of our policy-making and decision-making.
46. We continue to support Ukrainians who come to Wales, as well as Ukrainians already in Wales under the Welsh Government's Super Sponsor route. Whilst maintaining £3.8m to support those arriving from Ukraine and to provide support for any increase in arrivals, we are reprioritising £1.2m from the Ukraine programme due to the reduced number of new arrivals alongside the success of our programme to move people on from their initial accommodation. By taking this action we can still deliver some of the key elements of the programme and continue to support Ukrainian people to move to longer term accommodation and integrate into their local communities. We continue to monitor arrivals from Ukraine under the Super Sponsor route following recent changes to the immigration rules, announced by the UK Government.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women

47. My budgets remain focused on how we can ensure human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled so that everyone in Wales can live with dignity, freedom, security, and without discrimination. This includes the actions being taken forward to incorporate both the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) into Welsh law. As outlined in the letter to the committee on 8th November, this work is being taken forward by the independent Legislative Options Working Group (LOWG) which was established in September 2022 to advise the Welsh Government on next steps to progress recommendations 1 & 25 i.e. incorporation of international human rights treaties into Welsh law.
48. The LOWG has indicated the need to focus more broadly on viable recommendations to advance human rights in Wales. This is complex and detailed work, and I am actively considering the extent to which funding will be required in support of this work as this work evolves.

Disabled People's Equality

49. My budget will focus on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of our cross-Government forthcoming Disability Action Plan.
50. I will continue to fund Disability Wales to embed the Social Model of Disability within Welsh society, support disabled people in understanding and accessing their rights, and work with the Welsh Government to create more inclusive policies. This work supports the Government's commitment to a more equal Wales.
51. I will continue to ensure that all our stakeholder meetings and engagements are fully accessible by commissioning British Sign Language interpreters and captioners, among other measures to ensure full accessibility.

LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

52. This budget will focus on the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of our LGBTQ+ Action Plan. We are supporting research that will address the data gaps in relation to LGBTQ+ lives. Ensuring that our plan is robustly evaluated in relation to its aims and objectives will be key to measuring the impact of the plan on the quality of LGBTQ+ lives of all ages in Wales. It will take an intersectional approach to ensuring LGBTQ+ people thrive in all aspects of their lives, including education, sport, work and public life.
53. I will continue to fund Stonewall Cymru to advance the human rights of LGBTQ+ people in all areas of Welsh life. This work supports the Government's commitment to a more equal Wales.

Community Cohesion

54. The allocations I have made in this Draft Budget will enable the enhancement of our Community Cohesion Programme by retaining the grassroots small grants fund we initiated in 2024-25 and increasing funding. A total of £1.6m would be allocated to the Programme delivery across Wales via the eight regions.

55. I have also allocated **£0.3m** to continue and enhance the **Hate Hurts Wales** campaign to address hate and encourage victim reporting. The Wales Hate Support Centre will be allocated £0.47m extended for 2025-2027 with an increased budget to address inflationary pressures.
56. I have also allocated a further **£0.35m** to support us in commemorating key events which demonstrate common humanity (such as Holocaust Memorial Day, Holodomor and Refugee Week) to combat hate through innovative approaches, and to support community recovery which fosters good relations.
57. Wider allocations relating to those with protected characteristics, as reflected elsewhere in this briefing, also supports our community cohesion work. Other mainstreamed work funded by teams across Welsh Government also aims to build cohesive communities and a globally responsible Wales.

5. Gypsy and Traveller sites

I am pleased with the progress made during the 2024-25 financial year; we now have a strong pipeline of approved projects to deliver outcomes over the next few financial years.

58. To improve the quality of public Local Authority run sites for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, £3.44 million was made available for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Capital Grant in 2024-25. This funding allocated to these projects will support Local Authorities to meet the need identified in their GTAAs, providing sites and pitches within a safe and secure environment whilst improving accessibility, energy efficiency, digital inclusion and improving well-being in the community for residents. In total, we have made 19 awards totalling £4.62m, to 10 Local Authorities. Some bids are multi-years to enable Local Authorities meet their accommodation needs.
59. To complement this grant funding, my officials have invited local authorities with a local authority run site to submit applications for small capital bids. This scheme will be for small projects that can be delivered in this financial year, with a cap of up to £50,000.
60. Local authorities are expected to utilise the capital funding available for 2024-25 to address Gypsy, and Traveller needs as identified by local authority GTAAs. This year, officials have extended the criteria for bids to include land acquisition, which will help local authorities to develop new pitches. All applications are expected to explain how the development will align with the Welsh Government's 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites' guidance.
61. As of November 2024, we have made 19 awards totalling £1.50m, to 10 local authorities. To attempt to fully utilise the 2024-25 budget, officials are running small capital grants scheme aimed at local authority run Gypsy and Traveller sites inviting small project bids, with a cap of up to £50,000. Bids of £0.74m are currently being assessed.
62. The budget for 2025-26 will remain at the same level as 2024-25 (£3.44m). Some bids received in 2024-25 have been multi-year bids and to date we have committed £2.49m in 2025-26 and £623k in 2026-27. My officials will continue to work with local authorities to fully commit these budgets over the next few years.

6. Female and youth justice

I am pleased to allocate an additional £0.2 to the Female and Youth Justice Blueprints budget in 2025-26.

63. This additional funding will help to address some of the most intractable and complex issues with the youth justice system, building on the existing achievements of the Women's Justice and Youth Justice Blueprints. It will also support research activity to help us understand the impact of the Blueprints, building on the Evaluability Assessment published in October 2022.
64. The budget will also continue to support funding for:
- The One Wales scheme, providing trauma-informed support to women and young people in contact with the justice system across Wales to help them access help and transform their lives. This includes holistic, gender-informed one-on-one support for women.
 - The Visiting Mum service, which helps children in Wales visit their mothers in custody in prison and which is delivered through the One Wales scheme.
 - An Independent Domestic Violence Advisor role for Welsh women in custody, recognising the prevalence of women in prison who are victims and survivors of VAWDASV.
 - Our membership contribution to the Wales Safer Communities Network, the strategic voice that champions and connects everyone involved in community safety in Wales so they can create safer communities.
 - Resourcing to continue improvement activity for the women's justice and youth justice system, delivered through the Youth Justice Board, HM Prison and Probation Service in Wales and internally within Welsh Government.
 - Contributions to the work of Integrated Offender Management Cymru and the Criminal Justice Board for Wales.

Women's Centres

65. The One Wales scheme, which the Welsh Government jointly fund and commission with criminal justice partners, supports a network of non-residential women's centres across Wales. As well as direct provision of services for women throughout their justice journey, these centres provide support with clothing, food and toiletries to all who need them.
66. Additionally, and as set out above, the budget will continue to fund resource in the Youth Justice Board, HM Prison and Probation Service and Welsh Government to take forward improvement work on youth justice and women's justice in Wales. This work will focus on the areas where we can work together to make the greatest additional impact on the lives of children and women in Wales. We are developing plans with partners to set out the full detail of this improvement work, which will build on the existing work and achievements delivered under the Blueprints and include continuing to work with the UK Government on a pilot Residential Women's Centre.

7. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

I am pleased to allocate an additional £1.3m revenue and £0.9m capital to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget in 2025-26. This will help to improve the support to victims of serious sexual and domestic violence and to increase levels of funding available for early intervention and preventative activities.

67. Through this budget I have made an additional allocation of **£0.5m** to support the delivery of Objective 6 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26 to provide all victims with equal access to appropriate resources, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales. This funding will be allocated through the existing Regional Grant Funding process to support the delivery of victim and survivor support and address pressures faced in year. This additional allocation will allow greater flexibility for regions, which may include additional financial support for regions to maintain existing levels of provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs). This uplift will allow more flexibility to regions through our core grant funding arrangements to supplement the existing arrangements for IDVAs and ISVAs. It will also allow critical services who have extensive waiting lists of survivors waiting support to access that support much sooner and in a more individually tailored way that is currently available. It will also allow regions to be more innovative in their approach to tackling VAWDASV including commissioning new ways of working through pilot schemes and promoting new initiatives, for example, in their responses to stalking, or low risk of harm interventions.
68. I have also made an additional allocation of **£0.7m** for further support to deliver Objective 4 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 to make early intervention and prevention a priority. This funding will include piloting a helpline for engaging boys and men building on the learning and recommendations from the successful Sound campaign. The Sound campaign, which has worked with men and boys across Wales in the past 18 months has identified a gap in service provision for those men and boys who want to seek support in respect of their relationship difficulties. We have seen a huge response on social media to asking men to join in the solution to tackling violence against women, but this has some way to go. One recommendation from the evaluation conducted in September 2024, shows that there is a need across Wales for a support service, which could be either a telephone helpline, or an online 'chat-bot' support service which will allow 24-7 advice and support to be offered to those who most need it. This additional £0.7 million will enable the development of such a scheme to be piloted and evaluated.
69. This additional funding will also support work on stalking in response to the findings of the super complaint and continued work to address the data gaps that exists on VAWDASV across Wales. This will enable us to work in partnership with UK Government and Policing in Wales to develop better data and robust information in respect of VAWDASV across the whole sector, including specialist services, health, education policing and many more. It will help provide better evidence for regional needs assessments and strategies under the VAWDASV Act; it will enable Wales to effectively monitor and measure the extent of VAWDASV across Wales including national indicators and emerging trends and acute concerns that need a rapid response.

70. In addition to these revenue allocations, I have also uplifted the **VAWDASV Capital Grants** scheme by **£0.9m** in 2025-26. This grant scheme provides small and large grants to support the delivery of the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-26. This includes funding of properties, refurbishment, service improvement, victim safety projects and improving and upgrading service- user spaces and equipment. The additional allocation will provide additional headroom for projects where the cost of properties has increased, enabling VAWDASV services and organisations to develop and provide better facilities for survivors, and address the needs of disabled people and neurodivergent people.

8. Advice Services

As part of this Draft Budget I have been pleased to make additional revenue allocations of £2.7m to the Advice Services budget to increase funding available to the Single Advice Fund and to support work on streamlining Welsh benefits which are also described above.

Advice and support services budget

71. Through the Single Advice Fund, we have put in place across Wales a framework of social welfare information and advice services that are accessible to people from our most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. In the last financial year 77% of people accessing a Single Advice Fund service came from a Welsh Government priority group including: people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled people, people with long-term health conditions, older people, carers of older people and low-income families with children.
72. Income maximisation is a key activity delivered through the Single Advice Fund and we know the services are making a real difference. Between January 2020 and September 2024, services helped people to claim additional income of £160 million and have debts totalling £38.5million written off.
73. I have protected this £12m revenue budget in 2025-26 and alongside the additional £1.9m from the share of the Debt Levy this will enable us to continue to invest in information and advice services. Our offer of three-year grant funding awards for providers to deliver the Single Advice Fund services from April 2025 is a clear demonstration of our ongoing commitment to the provision of information and advice services.

EU Settlement Scheme

74. Since 2019 the Welsh Government has provided nearly £3 million worth of funding to support EU citizens, in Wales, with applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to ensure they maintain their legal right to remain in Wales post Brexit and continue to access the services and rights that that residency entitles them to. Since 2019, this funding has complemented the funding provided by the UK Government to support collective efforts in this area.
75. The Welsh Government recognises that necessary support services must remain in place for EU citizens applying to the EU Settlement Scheme and over coming weeks we will be working closely with partners, members of the EU Citizens Forum and the UK Government to consider what those services look like over the next financial year and subsequent years. We have budgeted £150k for 2025-26.

9. Third Sector

An additional £2m revenue and £2.9m capital will be provided to support Third Sector activity across Wales recognising and valuing the role the Third sector organisations and volunteers play in supporting our communities thrive and improve Wales' well-being.

76. To acknowledge the valued support of our partners in the third sector and recognising their role in tackling inequality and poverty, and supporting those with protected characteristics facing inequality and discrimination, I have provided a 3% uplift to all of our third sector grants in 2025-26 at a cost of **£1m** revenue across various budgets in the Social Justice MEG to attempt to alleviate their budget pressures.
77. In recognition of the important role both the third sector infrastructure and volunteering play in supporting communities in Wales and in delivering on government priorities I am also providing a **further £1m** revenue to the Volunteering Wales Grant to promote and improve volunteering in Wales and to provide an uplift to the funding to Third Sector Support Wales.
78. As part of this targeted provision of support for the Third Sector, I have also allocated an additional **£2.9m** capital to the **Community Facilities Programme**, increasing the baseline budget to £10m. This will allow more projects that support the purchase and improvement of essential community facilities across Wales. The focus of the programme is on increasing opportunity and developing resilient communities where people are engaged and empowered, and projects that can demonstrate community involvement and benefit, collaboration, tackling inequality and the climate and nature emergencies are supported. To build on the success of the **Community Asset Loan Fund**, I have also allocated an additional **£1.5m** in Financial Transaction Loan capital in 2025-26. This funding for some organisations can be used to complement our Community Facilities Programme which is seeing an increased demand.

10. Preventative spending

I am committed to supporting preventative measures as far as possible.

Preventative approach to spending

79. I recognise the on-going need to make hard choices. The continuing pressure on public finances and on the level of funding available to this MEG, more specifically, mean we are under no illusions on the challenges we face.
80. These budget proposals reflect my continuing commitment to protect and prioritise investment that supports preventative measures as far as possible. The spending decisions have not only considered how best to meet the current demand for services but have also focused on supporting interventions that are able to prevent problems arising in the future. This preventative approach is an important part of our planning for public services, both now and in the future.
81. From the outset of my Budget preparations, I have focused on how best to meet the growing needs of key service areas within the MEG in the face of another challenging budget. Over successive years, prioritising preventative spending has been a way of avoiding more costly interventions at a future point and improving the quality of people's lives over the long term.

Balancing preventative spending and spending to meet immediate needs

82. Support for those experiencing food poverty across Wales at almost £4.5m (revenue and capital) facilitates community food organisations to purchase additional supplies of good quality food and essential goods, boosting their capacity to meet the needs of their customers. However, the funding allocation also supports Local Food Partnerships and community organisations to deliver food related projects tackling the root causes of food poverty – balancing the need to provide immediate support with a focus on enabling longer term preventative action.
83. If left unresolved social welfare problems can push people into poverty, act as a barrier to employment, result in homelessness and negatively affect physical and mental health. It is important therefore that people get the social welfare advice they need as soon as possible. The Single Advice Fund has proven effective at reaching people earlier, with more than half of the people accessing services in the last financial year doing so before they are in a crisis situation.
84. Where someone finds themselves in crisis the **Discretionary Assistance Fund** continues to provide a vital support mechanism to those with no other means of support – and we have allocated an additional £1m which will enable us to continue to provide emergency support to those most in need.
85. The **One Wales Scheme** supported by the **Female and youth justice budget** is jointly funded and commissioned with criminal justice partners with the aim of preventing women and young adults coming into contact with the justice system, as well as providing support to women and young adults in contact with the criminal justice system to prevent reoffending. The scheme aims to address the underlying drivers of offending behaviour,

empowering people to live successful, crime-free lives and prevent the damage that arises to people and communities through criminal behaviour.

86. The prioritisation of early intervention and prevention is embedded across our **VAWDASV** National strategy and Blueprint workstreams. The strategy commits to maintaining a focus on survivor support and services, whilst at the same time shifting from symptom to cause through a public health approach. We supported the conclusions of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report published in January 2024 on **How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence** that a public health approach is needed to tackle the causes as well as the effects of gender-based violence. Specific preventative action across the workstreams includes our 'Sound' campaign. The campaign engaged with men and boys between the ages of 18 to 34 across Wales to play a part in supporting early intervention and prevention of violence amongst women and girls. As set out in section 4, I have also made an additional allocation of **£0.7m** for further support to deliver Objective 4 in the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022-2026 to make early intervention and prevention a priority which includes building on the successful Sound campaign.

11. Well-being of future generations

Next March will mark ten years since the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 was passed into law, and the anniversary will be marked throughout 2025-26. It provides an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved in the last ten years and to commit to the next phase of work to build on our progress.

Future Generations Commissioner

87. Prior to the publication of Welsh Government's budget, the Commissioner is required to submit a statutory estimate of their funding requirements for the next financial year. The Commissioner's request is based on the 2024-25 baseline budget, plus an additional £17,500 to recognise the impact of the better-than-expected pay award for 2024-25. This revised baseline will be increased by 3% to allow for inflation and pay awards in 2025-26 which results in a total of £1,676,325 for 2025-26. This budget fulfils this request, which will ensure that the Commissioner will be able to fulfil their planned activity for the year ahead.

How the Well-being of Future Generations Act has influenced budget allocations

88. The Welsh Government continues to seek improved ways of embedding the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the budget process. More information about these changes can be found in Action 2.10 in the [Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan Progress Update](#) published in May 2024 and the [Budget Improvement Plan 2024-2025](#).

89. The Budget Improvement Plan sets out short- and medium-term ambitions over the next five years, to improve the budget process using the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the five ways of working to drive continuous improvement. We have committed to publishing the Plan annually, to recognise the ongoing nature of driving and sustaining longer term change. Our overall aim is to demonstrate how the Act has influenced budget decisions.

90. We continue to develop the [Chief Economist's report](#) to provide a fuller account of Welsh economic developments and prospects and complement the [Well-being of Wales Report](#). We have expanded coverage of fiscal issues and prospects within the Chief Economist's report and continue to advise on the application of Green Book principles in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

91. To support us in this we continue to work in partnership with the [Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group \(BIAG\)](#) which advises Welsh Government from an equalities and inclusion perspective. The aim of this group is to engage and stimulate improvements to our budget and tax processes, in turn supporting the delivery of the Budget Improvement Plan. Welsh Treasury officials have worked with officials in the Future Generations Commissioner's office to consider how we can more clearly reflect how the five ways of working as a central part of our decision making in the future and will be taking the range of evidence provided in the Well-being of Wales report 2024 into consideration in developing this draft Budget.

92. All Cabinet Secretaries are committed to using the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act to improve how we make decisions about the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Our goal is to embed the sustainable development principle and our spending plans aim to achieve a balance between short- and long-term priorities.
93. We recognise the need to collaborate with our partners and to use our collective resources effectively to plan for the tough choices ahead.
94. Our work on **VAWDASV** is a clear example of how a WFG approach supports and enables a more sustainable approach to tackling generational challenges. The UN Sustainable Development Goals which Wales' Well-being Goals contribute to include a specific goal and target to eliminate violence against women and girls. Our work to tackle VAWDASV in Wales, underpinned by the VAWDASV Act continues to be a clear demonstration of the five ways of working in the sustainable development principle. In this budget we are increasing funding for early intervention and *prevention*,; continuing to support *collaboration* through the Blueprint which includes a survivor panel that *involves* survivors into decision making; *integrates* the work of Local Authorities and Local Health Boards through their respective duties in the VAWDASV Act; and increases funding to develop better data, including *future* trends to support better decision making to tackle VAWDASV across Wales.
95. More broadly, all of our **equality and tackling poverty** work embeds the five ways of working and take a long-term and preventative approach to what is often intergenerational inequity. For example, the Anti-racist Action Plan has the long-term goal of an anti-racist Wales by 2030, with prevention reflected in actions such as the DARPL approach in education and childcare. The plan was developed through involvement and co-production, with lived experience central to its development and delivery. This co-productive approach was taken in the Disability Rights Taskforce and development of the forthcoming disability action plan. A cross-government and integrated approach underpins the ArWAP, as the LBTQ+ Action Plan, with collaboration across the public sector integral to their delivery.
96. I recognise the importance and role **community assets** play in ensuring we have safe, connected and resilient communities. This is why working in partnership with the third sector we have developed the Community Asset Loan Fund, which offers loans over a maximum term of 25 years to third sector organisations seeking to take ownership of community assets such as land or buildings. In doing so we are helping to protect the community infrastructure which plays a critical role when responding to natural disasters, such as the recent floods, but also ensuring they are there for future generations.