

Welsh Government Final Budget 2026-27: A budget that doesn't acknowledge women

WWBG and WEN Wales respond to yesterday's Budget announcement by the Welsh Government.

Yesterday, the Welsh Government published its Final Budget 2026-27, the last Budget of the Sixth Senedd. Following the UK Autumn Budget and a budget agreement with Plaid Cymru, the Final Budget allocated £27.5 billion – £400million of new investment since the Draft Budget in November – to support '[public services, people, communities and businesses in Wales.](#)' Alarmingly, the Final Budget and its accompanying documentation made little to no mention of women in Wales. In a country where women make up [51.1% of the population](#), the failure to use a gender lens seriously compromises the Welsh Governments ability to budget responsibly for the people of Wales.

As discussed in our [Budget briefing](#), we were pleased to see additional investment in Wales' public services following the budget agreement between Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru on 9 December 2025. The £180m allocated to NHS can help support women as majority service users and employees. Furthermore, the additional £112.8million invested in Housing and Local Government will provide short-term protection for vital public services. However, as acknowledged in the [Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment \(SIIA\)](#) published alongside the Budget, this uplift is unlikely to meet the cost and demand pressures facing Welsh local authorities. This may result in reductions to social care or increased service costs, both of which impact women in Wales disproportionately. In this context, the lack of targeted funding to improve the poor pay, working terms and conditions in social care will continue to exacerbate the recruitment and retention crisis within the sector. This omission both undermines the announced support for the NHS and fails to support the women who represent [78% of social care employees](#) and majority service users in Wales.

Unfortunately, the failure to adequately support women is a key pattern within this year's Final Budget. Despite inflationary uplifts for each department, the allocations of yesterday's Budget provide little relief for women in Wales who continue to face an unequal economic position and disproportionate share of caring responsibilities. For example, even with inflationary uplifts, the restated funding for childcare is wholly insufficient to address the structural issues with Wales' childcare system which remains [unaffordable, inaccessible and disjointed](#). High costs and gaps in childcare provision continue to represent a key barrier to gender equality by [pushing parents, particularly mothers, out of work](#). The failure to address these issues in the Final Budget is highly regrettable, and will serve to further entrench gender inequality in Wales.

Similarly, while the restated funding for Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) in the Draft Budget was positive, the complete

lack of recognition and additional support for the Welsh third sector in this year's Final Budget is deeply concerning. When public services are under pressure, vulnerable individuals often turn to third sector organisations in Wales for vital support. However, the third sector – especially the Welsh women's sector – has faced successive financial crises alongside increased demand, leading to organisational closures and service cuts. In this context, it is disappointing that the Social Justice portfolio received the smallest uplift of all departments in the Welsh Government's Draft Budget and Final Budgets this year.

We welcome the new collaborative approach taken to the SIIA. As with the Interim Assessment published alongside the Draft Budget, the Final Assessment represented an improvement in budget transparency and clarification of the SIIA process. We were also pleased to see the inclusion of case studies, which provide deeper insight into how evidence has informed decision making, and how those decisions impact certain groups. The identification of negative impacts and efforts to mitigate such impacts were also welcome additions. However, we must express our dismay at the distinct lack of gendered impact assessment within the final SIIA, which failed to acknowledge the impact of any decisions on women, including in key gendered areas such as transport, health and social care and apprenticeships.

The lack of a gender lens in yesterday's Budget and accompanying documentation is highly concerning. Without meaningfully considering the needs and experiences of over half of the population, the claim that the Final Budget adequately delivers for the people of Wales is hard to justify. This failure further underscores the vital need to roll out gender budgeting across the Welsh Government. Only by doing so can we ensure that that decision-makers consider and respond to the needs of all groups of people in Wales and provide the support that women in Wales need and deserve.

Hannah Griffiths (she/her)

*Wales Women's Budget Group Coordinator and Policy Assistant/Cydlynnydd Grŵp
Cyllideb Menywod Cymru a Chynorthwyydd Polisi*