

WGDB25-26(6)5 Whitehead-Ross Education,

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cyllid | Finance Committee

Cyllideb Ddrafft Llywodraeth Cymru 2025-26 | Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025-26

Ymateb gan Whitehead-Ross Education, | Evidence from Whitehead-Ross Education,

1. What, in your opinion, has been the impact of the Welsh Government's 2024-2025 Budget?

Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 1 (we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

2. How financially prepared is your organisation for the 2025-26 financial year, how will inflation impact on your ability to deliver planned objectives, and how robust is your ability to plan for future years?

Please outline your reasons for your answer to question 2 (we would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

3. What action should the Welsh Government take to:

- help households cope with inflation and cost of living issues;
- address the needs of people living in urban, post-industrial and rural communities, including building affordable housing and in supporting economies within those communities?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

4. Have Welsh Government business support policies been effective, given the economic outlook for 2025-26?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

5. Are Welsh Government plans to build a greener economy clear and sufficiently ambitious? Do you think there is enough investment being targeted at tackling the climate change and nature emergency? Are there any potential skill gaps that need to be addressed to achieve these plans?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

6. Is the Welsh Government using the financial mechanisms available to it around borrowing and taxation effectively?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

7. The Committee would like to focus on a number of other specific areas in the scrutiny of the Budget. Do you have any specific comments on any of the areas identified below?

Is enough being done to tackle the rising costs of living and support those people living in relative income poverty?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How could the budget further address gender inequality in areas such as healthcare, skills and employment?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Is the Welsh Government's approach to preventative spending represented in resource allocations (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early).

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How should the Welsh Government explain its funding decisions, including how its spending contributes to addressing policy issues?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How can the documentation provided by the Welsh Government alongside its Draft Budget be improved?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How should the Welsh Government prioritise its resources to tackle NHS waiting lists for planned and non-urgent NHS treatments. Do you think the Welsh Government has a robust plan to address this issue?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Is the Welsh Government providing adequate support to the public sector to enable it to be innovative and forward looking through things like workforce planning.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Has there been adequate investment from the Welsh Government in basic public sector infrastructure.

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How should the Budget support young people?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

How is evidence and data driving Welsh Government priority-setting and budget allocations, and is this approach clear?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

Is the support provided by the Welsh Government for third sector organisations, which face increased demand for services as a consequence of the cost of living crisis and the pandemic, sufficient?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

What are the key opportunities for the Welsh Government to invest in supporting an economy and public services that better deliver against the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?

(We would be grateful if you could keep your answer to around 500 words).

There are two actions Welsh Government should take to support and invest in Wales' economy and public services: 1) focussing investment on adult education provision delivered by Independent Training Providers; and 2) funding a new national employability programme to target the economically inactive.

Independent Training Providers:

Five of the seven wellbeing goals (A prosperous Wales, A resilient Wales, A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of more cohesive communities) can be directly supported through ensuring individuals have access to support in order to improve and develop their skills.

However, only basic learning is provided through Lifelong Learning Services (delivered by local authorities) and Adult Learning Wales.

For the majority of vocational learning and skills development, adult learners need to access training directly through Further Education Colleges. Whilst this experience is appropriate for some adult learners, many learners find the rigid structure of FE colleges (attending campuses with courses starting at set times of the academic year) inflexible and restrictive due to their work, caring, and access needs. They are effectively locked out from learning.

There is an opportunity for Welsh Government to achieve progress towards its aspirations of a better skilled population and of increased economic growth by focussing investment on adult education provision delivered by Independent Training Providers.

Independent Training Providers are able to be more responsive, can respond to local need and demand quickly, deliver courses starting every week throughout the year, utilise community venues with flexible course times, and offer a large variety of vocational qualifications geared at getting people into work or- for those already in work- progressing into other careers and better paid work, reducing household poverty.

Similar models have been effective in other parts of the UK.

There are 1,700 Independent Training Providers in England delivering 34% of overall adult education provision to complement courses offered by local authorities and FE Colleges.

National Employability Programme:

Welsh Government's Employability Skills Programme (ESP) came to an end in March 2023. Since this time there has been no replacement employability support provided. The only employability provision for communities remains from the UK Government's DWP Restart Scheme, which is targeted at job seekers who have been unemployed for nine months or more.

With the European Social Fund ending in December 2023 and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund due to come to an end in March 2025, there will shortly be no employability support provision to support the economically inactive in Wales.

Welsh Government should therefore consider funding a new national employability programme to target the economically inactive.

With Wales economic inactivity rate remaining the highest in the UK at 28.3% as of August 2024, action from Welsh Government is critical.
