

Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) – Minutes of Meeting

Date 28 September 2022	Time 13:00 – 15:00	Location Microsoft Teams Meeting
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No.	Action	Who	When
1.	Provide clarification on what formats the animation will be available in, to aide accessibility and further information about the communications plan to support the animation.	Budget Improvement Team	Before next meeting
2.	FGO office to consider any learning or best practice that could be relevant to this process.	FGO Office	Over coming weeks
3.	CPAG to share report when available.	CPAG	When available
4	Task and finish group meet again in the coming weeks to break down the actions further into short and longer term.	Task and finish group	Next meeting 18/10/2022
5	Discuss Intersectionality at a future meeting	All members	Future Meeting

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1. Members were welcomed to the meeting of the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG). Members were thanked for attending previous sessions, both provided an excellent discussion and points raised have been captured accordingly within the minutes.
- 1.2. Members were advised that the minutes from the last meeting had been circulated and all actions had been completed. No amendments were noted.
- 1.3. An update was provided to the group on the work with Children and Young Peoples team to further explore how we can engage young people in the annual budget process. An animation that has been created for young people was shown to the group. The group were advised that this animation is also available in Welsh, we welcome any thoughts or questions.

AP: Provide clarification on what formats the animation will be available in, to aide accessibility and further information about the communications plan to support the animation.

- 1.4. The Group were advised that work is ongoing with the children and young people team to explore how we can make the Budget Improvement Plan more accessible to young people. If members would like to know more information about this, please email the budget improvement mailbox.
Budgetimprovementteam@gov.wales

2. Discussion on Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) improvements

- 2.1. A smaller task and finish Group was formed to start to formulate some recommendations and how we can work together to make improvements to the SIIA. A paper produced by the task and finish group was circulated to the group in advance of the meeting. The paper identified several problems with the SIIA and possible solutions.
- 2.2. This session provided an opportunity for those members who were not part of the task and finish group to understand the paper in more detail. It also provided an opportunity for members to explore whether they agreed with the identified issues and whether there were additional areas that needed to be included.
- 2.3. The discussion would allow an opportunity to consider what may and may not be possible in both the short and the longer term and to work together to develop a plan to ensure there's positive progress made to improve the SIIA.
- 2.4. A member of the task and finish group provided an overview of the discussion that led to the creation of the circulated paper.
- A need for clarity of the purpose of impact assessment, transparency and understanding of how impact assessment is happening at the different parts of the budget cycle. A Visual representation of the budget cycle would be useful to show how impact assessment is happening at all levels.
 - If no changes are made to the current document, there is a need to rebrand it and be clear that the document named the SIIA is a summary of evidence not an impact assessment itself.
 - The need for a stronger link between evidence and what budget decisions are being made.
 - The timescales of how the changes could be implemented recognising that some changes are not going to be possible in this budget cycle.
 - A clear plan for reform and changes to the SIIA set out in the budget improvement plan to show commitment.
 - The need to see that there is an intersectional approach to impact assessment
- 2.5. Some initial feedback was provided from officials to aid the wider discussion:

- 2.5.1. The journey the SIIA has been on has led to a hybrid document where a lot of the narrative linked to impact is contained in the main narrative of the budget as well as the annex document.
- 2.5.2. The issues that have been identified cover reforms to the actual process of how we do impact assessment as well as the presentation and communication of this process to an external audience
- 2.5.3. There is an important distinction to be made in relation to the impact considered at a MEG level and that considered at a strategic level. A two-stage budget process which we should be operating should clearly separate these two levels. Due to the exceptional circumstances over the last few years the process has not happened this way.
- 2.5.4. A compendium of all Ministers responses to scrutiny committees is published on our website just after the draft budget is published ([Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees on allocations within each MEG](#)). It is a very detailed document and provides the information at a Main Expenditure Group (MEG) level.
- 2.6. The following is a summary of the discussion on the 'Problems and Solutions' paper circulated:
 - 2.6.1. Given the current economic situation, there needs to be a clear explanation of the detrimental impacts linked to spending cuts, decisions to reduce budgets or terminate them.
 - 2.6.2. There is a need to be clear that not all groups are covered under the Equality Act by being a protected characteristic and considering socio- economic issues is not the same as considering poverty. Assessment of impact in relation to budget decisions must take these things into account.
- 2.7. The strategic impact assessment should assess the potential cumulative impact of the budget decisions. It may be that at project or MEG level an individual decision doesn't look that bad for a particular group on their own, but if you take them all together, they might well be catastrophic. If we looked at some of the areas of impact in isolation it risks us looking at things in a siloed way that misses cumulative impact.
- 2.8. Have we identified what the longer-term changes are and timescales for these changes? Is it worth starting to think about which parts we might want to prioritise first if that does have an impact on your capacity? We have recognised the imperfections of the SIIA and we're open to how we can work together to improve it.
- 2.9. Good intentions can often become bogged down by how they are administered. Making sure that the line of sight is always on what we were trying to achieve? So the outcome and then the how and the what and the

why then gets measured about? Does it take us nearer to the outcome that we were trying to achieve?

- 2.10. Lessons learnt – Is there any learning to be taken around the wellbeing goals, how that's being measured? To ensure that the commonality between where this is driving to, and the wellbeing goals is there. And using some of the measures that they're using? We work closely with the Future Generations Office (FGO) and have always continued that learning journey. We also recognise there's a lot members can teach us as well. We talk to Governments internationally, including New Zealand, Iceland and Canada.
- 2.11. The FGO does analyse the Welsh Government budget to see how it is helping to achieve the well being objectives. There may be learning around this process that could be useful to feedback to this group.

AP: FGO office to consider any learning or best practice that could be relevant to this process.

- 2.12. There is a need to ensure that internal process and procedures used within Welsh Government are used to further equality e.g., procurement and supply chains. This does fall out of the scope of this group as these processes fall outside the annual budget process (which is the plan) and happen within the budgeting process (where activity is delivered). It is important to understand what levers we have to drive change through the annual budget process.
- 2.13. The purpose of the SIIA should be to demonstrate and reflect what is happening in practise across government in relation to impact assessment. To demonstrate to stakeholders and the public the assessment of impact and that analysis of evidence has informed the decision making. It is important stakeholders understand how government reached that decision even if there is disagreement on the decision itself.
- 2.14. Benefit across wider public sector. There is a real opportunity for this to be of benefit across the wider public sector as well. NHS Equality Leadership Group has done a lot of thinking over the last two or three years about equality impact assessments and wanting to move towards one approach for the NHS. If there is Welsh government work going on to reform the SIIA of the budget process for Welsh Government departments, let's not limit that just to Welsh Government departments. Let's see what we can do to try and include wider public sector too.
- 2.15. Ongoing work highlighted with Public Health Wales that could provide learning of interest. It is linking equality and health impact assessment.

AP: CPAG to share report when available.

2.16. Some shorter-term possible actions highlighted were:

- having a separate SIIA document available the main budget document. This would not replace the annex but allow the document to be more easily revisited throughout the year.
- A visual representation of how impact assessment works throughout the entire budget cycle
- Clearer linkages between evidence and budget decisions

2.17. There is a need to take forward some short term and longer-term actions. It would be helpful to bring the task and finish group back together to start to consider this as a more formal plan. Members not previously involved are more than welcome to join the group.

AP – Task and finish group meet again in the coming weeks to break down the actions further into short and longer term.

2.18. Members were encouraged to provide any further feedback to the Budget Improvement Team. Please email us at budgetimprovementteam@gov.wales.

Intersectionality Discussion

2.19. The plan identified a need for further conversation on intersectionality. Whilst in the broadest terms this needs to be a discussion wider than this group it was felt it would be useful to consider this in relation to the way intersectionality is considered as part of the SIIA.

2.20. The global definition was acknowledged, and Welsh Government have themselves defined what intersectionality means to them. When it comes to the strategic budget process an intersectional approach is being used to view the human intersections alongside the post human intersections in line with the four domains of well-being social, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts. So, for example, using that approach to address some of the evidence that shows the risk of disproportionate impact of tackling climate change falling on protected groups. So how can this approach help to look across these different areas in an intersectional way?

2.21. It was felt that there was a need for this conversation to happen with the group to not only be clear of definitions but to unpick some of the intent of using this approach and understand and discuss differences.

2.22. The discussion is to focus on the groups views of intersectionality linked to the SIIA and how it can be best reflected in the budget documents as much as the process itself.

- 2.23. In its most basic form intersectionality should consider intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression. For example, Wales' employment rate is 75% for white men and approx. 74% for white women. If you look at Black Asian Ethnic Minority Women it is approx. 56%. Looking further than just women will show a different picture across a range of characteristics.
- 2.24. It can be hard to drill down to some levels when data sample sizes are data are relatively small. It is recognised that no data does not equal no impact. Information will be considered in its broadest sense to help identify those cumulative negative or unintended impacts as much as seeking the positive. The process of impact assessment should prompt conversations on data across Welsh Government which should have a knock on effect on improving what is available.
- 2.25. Concerns raised over the level of complexity. There is a need to be clear about what is achievable and manageable when it comes to such a density of information. There is a risk that with a huge, complicated agenda that it will never really be under control and therefore making a real difference will be hard to achieve.
- 2.26. Several areas were highlighted that fall outside the scope of this specific area of work including place based or spatial accounting, experience of children's budgeting, community-based asset approaches, changing public perception of positive spending and school funding.
- 2.27. There is a danger that in considering multiple protected characteristics it can lead to more generalisation and stereotyping. This does not always reflect the actual lived experience of the people we are talking about. Public policy has, for a long time, been driven by generalisations and averages, using these approaches will try to break that down to learn, to try, to adapt, to try to target policy and funding in better ways.
- 2.28. This conversation will continue throughout all of our discussions with this group to enable us to continue refining how we approach this through the budget process and ensure we all have a shared understanding of intention and ways of working.

AP – Continue discussion at a future meeting

3. General Budget update

- 3.1. Due to timing this item was not discussed in substantial detail.

4. AOB - Meeting Review and close

- 4.1. Next meeting was due to be on the 7th of December, this will now be re-arranged for the New Year due to budget preparations.
- 4.2. The Budget Improvement team will remain in contact over the coming quarter in relation to the ongoing work linked to the SIIA and how it is going to feed into the updated budget improvement plan that we will publish alongside the draft budget, currently scheduled for the 13th of December.
- 4.3. The Group were informed that a link to the BIIAG web page has been included within the minutes. The page contains an overview of the purpose of our group, the TOR and workplan and minutes will be uploaded once they have been approved by the group. This is to ensure we are being transparent in our approach and people can find out more about the group itself. You will find the webpage here: <https://gov.wales/budget-improvement-and-impact-advisory-group>
- 4.4. An electronic equality questionnaire will be sent to all members, it is completely anonymous. We would appreciate if everybody could complete it to help us with our own reporting and monitoring of the group's membership. We would appreciate it if everybody could complete the questionnaire to help us with our own reporting and monitoring of the group's membership.
- 4.5. A reminder that this is a conversation that does not have to stop when the meeting ends. These meetings are intended to bring us together to be able to debate things in greater detail. Please feel free to contact us at any time using the budgetimprovementteam@gov.wales mailbox.