



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



# Welsh Benefits Charter

February 2024



# Introduction



**The commitments within the Welsh Benefits Charter are necessary for a coherent and compassionate Welsh Benefits System that is based upon respect for fundamental human rights and equality.**

The commitments will improve the accessibility of the system, enabling more people in Wales to take up their entitlement to financial support and ensure the efficient and consistent administration of Welsh benefits across Wales.

They have been developed in partnership with key stakeholders and re-designed based on feedback from individuals and organisations that support them.

# Foreword



**Jane Hutt MS**  
**Minister for Social Justice and**  
**Chief Whip**

The creation of a coherent Welsh Benefits System has been a long-term ambition for the Welsh Government and other key stakeholders to ensure that people in Wales are claiming all the financial support to which they are entitled.

To make a significant difference to the delivery of devolved benefits and payments will require joint effort from a range of partners, with Local Authorities taking a lead role.

There have been moves towards joining up the Welsh Benefits System in the past, however, these have tended to be fragmented and piecemeal with no strategic lead.

We know that our Welsh benefits, which include support like Free School Meals, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Schools Essentials Grant, Education Maintenance Allowance are a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of people in Wales.

To ensure that this support is easily accessible we will work at pace to develop and deliver a plan to streamline the Welsh Benefits System.

In the meantime, the Welsh Government is determined to ensure that the approach taken for administering Welsh benefits is a person-centred and compassionate one; based on rights and entitlements.

The development and implementation of the Welsh Benefits Charter is an important step in ensuring that this approach is embedded, and the adoption of the Charter by all 22 Local Authorities is a significant step in the right direction. It confirms the collective commitment to improving access to financial support for people across Wales.

The Charter has been developed in conjunction with a group of stakeholders with a shared focus on supporting the most disadvantaged people.

I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has been involved in this development work and in the work of our income maximisation stakeholder group, which was set up to drive change and improvements.

The Charter is an excellent example of what can be achieved when we work together towards a common goal.

Finally, this Charter is part of the journey and not the end point. To put the Charter's commitments into action, it is vital we work innovatively and collaboratively with stakeholders and Local Authorities to put them into practice.

# Welsh Benefits Charter Commitments

## Design of the Welsh Benefits System

**Welsh Government, local authorities and other delivery partners, key stakeholders, and people accessing benefits will work in partnership to design an inclusive system which:**

- demonstrates fairness and equality in the delivery of Welsh benefits and grants to ensure dignity and respect in the treatment of individuals without discrimination. This will be underpinned by policies that reflect the social model of disability adopted by the Welsh Government in 2002<sup>1</sup>.
- is flexible and not based upon a one size fits all methodology and can respond quickly to the changes and pressures in the lives of people in Wales.
- meets the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups who are particularly at risk of experiencing poverty, recognising the diversity of the people of Wales as encompassed by the Equality Act 2010.
- identifies and removes the barriers that prevent people from claiming their entitlements and proactively helps people to access the financial support they are entitled to.
- evaluates processes and systems with the people who will use them before finally putting them into operation.
- encourages, and responds to feedback to enable the delivery of the best service possible.
- makes a positive difference in Wales which is aligned with the Well-being of Future Generation Wales Act. 'Prosperity for All: the national strategy.'
- ensures that new Welsh benefits are designed to complement the existing devolved benefits system, identifying gaps in current provision.
- makes use of data sharing for the good of the public in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- operates in accordance with the Welsh Language Standards and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, promoting and facilitating the ability of citizens to access the system easily in clear, accessible Welsh.

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<sup>1</sup> The social model of disability makes an important distinction between disability and impairment and puts the onus back on society to remove barriers that cause disablement. For more information click here [Social Model – Disability Wales](http://www.disabilitywales.org/social-model)  
[www.disabilitywales.org/social-model](http://www.disabilitywales.org/social-model)



# Delivery of the Welsh Benefits System

**Welsh Government, local authorities and other delivery partners, key stakeholders, and people accessing benefits will work in partnership to design an inclusive system which:**

- allocates resources fairly and efficiently across Wales to deliver a service which puts people first.
- ensures everyone is treated equally, fairly and without discrimination and that the social model of disability is adopted by all delivery partners.
- adapts processes and systems to meet individual needs and preferences and explores methods which will ensure a single point of access for Welsh benefits to include multiple communication channels – digital, phone or postal methods.
- adheres to the Digital Service Standards for Wales<sup>2</sup>.
- facilitates identification of eligibility of other financial support.
- raises awareness and enables take-up of entitlements through:
  - i. the delivery of communications, using all media channels, that promote a positive view of entitlements and are in accessible formats including Easy Read, BSL and community and Welsh languages.
  - ii. ensuring staff delivering Welsh benefits are knowledgeable and experienced and receive ongoing training in the delivery of up-to-date advice and appropriate support.
  - iii. referring people to independent advice and support at an early stage to:
    - identify and address the causes of financial hardship, helping to break the cycle of poverty; and
    - for help to make their application for financial support and challenge decisions, etc.
  - iv. continuing to work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to raise awareness and promote the take-up of non-devolved benefits in Wales.

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<sup>2</sup> **[Digital Service Standards for Wales | Centre for Digital Public Services](https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/digital-service-standards-wales)**  
(<https://digitalpublicservices.gov.wales/guidance-and-standards/digital-service-standards-wales>)

# Charter Outcomes

- Increased take-up of Welsh benefits, helping to maximise household incomes and contribute to tackling poverty in Wales.
- Informed Welsh policy which has involved partners and individuals and other stakeholders in its development.
- Awareness of benefit entitlement and the support available is improved through clear messaging on Welsh and non-devolved benefits which also challenges myths and stereotypes.
- Commitments on income maximisation and welfare benefit take-up are delivered.
- Financially resilient communities are developed through our commitment to alleviate and prevent poverty.
- Outcomes are improved for children and young people from low-income households, supporting them to have a better future and reach their full potential.
- There is a reduction in the need for emergency aid such as food banks as households are supported to become financially resilient.
- Take-up measured by the number of people supported via Welsh Government benefit schemes.

## Putting the Charter into practice

By agreeing to the commitments contained within this Charter partners are agreeing to work with Welsh Government to take action towards developing a consistent Welsh Benefits System that works for the people of Wales.

This will include developing key actions that can be delivered to create change.

## How will we ensure that outcomes are being achieved?

An evaluation framework will be developed by Welsh Government in consultation with key stakeholders, delivery partners and individuals. This will be reported against and monitored regularly.

The Charter itself will also be reviewed from time to time to ensure commitments and outcomes are still fit for purpose.



We the undersigned agree to the principles within the Charter and to work with Welsh Government and others to realise the outcomes.



# Further Information

**All enquiries about this Charter should be sent to:**

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