



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Draft Budget scrutiny 2026-27

24 November 2025

Evidence in respect of the budget allocations made through the Social Justice Main Expenditure Group (MEG); including evidence of how the consideration of equality and social justice is driving priority-setting and budget allocations across Welsh Government.

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1. Budget Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the 2026-27 Draft Budget allocations applied to the Social Justice MEG

- The table below provides an overview of the Social Justice MEG plans as published in Draft Budget 2026-27 on 14 October and 3 November. Overall, this confirms an increase in **fiscal resource (revenue) of £8.2m** and an increase of **£0.4m on General Capital**. For **Financial Transaction Capital (FTC)** the MEG has received an additional allocation of **£1.5m**, although this is netted off against planned FTC repayments leaving a budget of **£0.5m** on the face of Draft Budget 2026-27. **Non-Fiscal Resource budgets (non-cash)** have **decreased by £0.05m** as a result of changing requirements in year.

| | 2025-26 Final Budget | 2025-26 Baseline Adjustments | 2025-26 Revised Baseline | Changes Draft Budget 2026-27 | 2026-27 Draft Budget | Changes 1st Supplementary Budget 2025-26 | 2025-26 1st Supplementary Budget |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|--|
| | (A) | (B) | (C = A + B) | (D) | (E = C + D) | (F) | (G = A + F) |
| | £000s | £000s | £000s | £000s | £000s | £000s | £000s |
| Fiscal Resource | 139,296 | -3,977 | 135,319 | 8,235 | 143,554 | 2,909 | 142,205 |
| Non-Fiscal Resource | 507 | 0 | 507 | -46 | 461 | -20 | 487 |
| Resource Total | 139,803 | -3,977 | 135,826 | 8,189 | 144,015 | 2,889 | 142,692 |
| General Capital | 17,890 | 0 | 17,890 | 358 | 18,248 | 0 | 17,890 |
| Financial | 1,461 | -1,461 | 0 | 457 | 457 | -10 | 1,451 |
| Capital Total | 19,351 | -1,461 | 17,890 | 815 | 18,705 | -10 | 19,341 |
| Total | 159,154 | -5,438 | 153,716 | 9,004 | 162,720 | 2,879 | 162,033 |
| Total AME | 226 | 0 | 226 | 0 | 226 | 0 | 226 |

- As with all other MEGs an inflationary uplift of 2% has been applied to the Social Justice MEG, and a 2.2% uplift for public sector pay elements of the budget. This proves an additional **£2.735m of revenue (fiscal resource)** and **£0.4m general capital** through the 26-27 Draft Budget. The revenue uplift has been applied equally across all BELs recognising that a whole systems approach that addresses multiple areas of disadvantage across different policy areas is critical to ensure opportunities for every child, family and household to improve outcomes for people over the longer term.
- In addition to the broad-brush inflationary increase, I have also looked for opportunities to allocate my budgets towards areas of greatest impact and need. This sees a further **£2.4m revenue** repurposed within the Social Justice MEG within the Draft Budget 2026-27 proposals.
- A total of **£5.2m** revenue from the estimated Welsh Government share of the Debt Advice Levy has also been allocated to the Social Justice MEG on a non-recurrent basis which will be ring-fenced for **debt advice** services through the Advice Services budget.
- Finally, an additional **£0.3m** has been specifically allocated from reserves, with an allocation of **£0.1m** to the **Criminal Delivery Justice** budget to fund a pilot scheme in collaboration with **Greater Change** to explore a different approach to supporting

those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and an allocation to the **Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights** budget of **£0.2m** to fund the first year costs of implementation of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill.

6. For General Capital, the **£0.4m** inflationary increase has been wholly allocated to the **Financial Inclusion** budget to create a capital funding programme for Credit Unions. Likewise, the uplift in Financial Transaction Capital of **£1.5m** will be used in full to provide additional support to the Wales Council for Voluntary Action's Community Asset Loan Fund.
7. All allocations have been made in line with our many Programme for Government commitments which aim to address and reduce inequalities and support human rights and children's rights. Comparatively, these are small investments, but their impact will be far reaching and significant on the individuals who require support most.
8. A more detailed breakdown of Draft Budget 2026-27 allocations at BEL level is provided at **Annex A**.
9. The above table also summaries the adjustments made to the 2025-26 Final Budget baselines. For Fiscal Resource (revenue) the adjustments relate to recurrent allocations made during 2025-26 in respect of the public sector pay award and national insurance changes. There is also the reversal of the 2025-26 one-off, ring fenced debt levy of £4.32m returned to reserves. For Financial Transaction Capital the adjustments represent the reversing out of non-recurrent allocations made in 2025-26 and planned repayments.
10. A more detailed breakdown at BEL level of changes made between the 2025-26 Final Budget and the 2026-27 Draft Budget and the changes that were made between the 2025-26 Final Budget and the First Supplementary Budget of 2025-26 published in June 2025 can be found at **Annex B**.

How equality and social justice is driving priority setting

11. Equality and Social Justice continue to underpin the priorities of this government. Funding through the Social Justice MEG, alongside other budgets across the Welsh Government, contributes to tackling poverty, tackling inequality, promoting human rights and improving wellbeing of everyone in Wales.
12. 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 in the summer of 2024 and announced by the First Minister in September 2024. The four key priority areas are:
 - **lechyd da** – cutting NHS waiting times, including for mental health; improving access to social care and services for women's health.
 - **Green jobs and growth** – creating green jobs that tackle the climate crisis and restore nature, while making families better off; accelerating planning decisions to grow the Welsh economy.

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- **Opportunity for every family** – boosting standards in schools and colleges and providing more homes for social rent, ensuring every family has the chance to succeed.
 - **Connecting communities** – transforming our railways and delivering a better bus network; fixing our roads and empowering local communities to make choices on 20mph.
13. These are existing policy areas. Delivery is ongoing and is being undertaken in accordance with the relevant statutory and impact assessment requirements.
 14. An outline Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA), to support the plans set out in the 2026-27 Draft Budget was published on 3 November. A full SIIA will be concluded in January and published alongside the Final Budget.
 15. A review of the Welsh Government's SIIA process was recently undertaken, which concluded in summer 2025 with the review highlighting several positive aspects of the current approach. The SIIA is widely recognised as a valuable tool that brings together multiple statutory and strategic considerations into a single process, supporting better-informed and more balanced spending decisions.
 16. The SIIA has helped raise awareness of key duties and priorities – including equality, Welsh language, children's rights and the Wellbeing of Future Generations – and encouraged a more integrated and holistic way of considering impact in cross government spending decisions. This helps 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.
 17. To build on these strengths, a new approach has been taken to developing the SIIA for the 2026-27 Budget. Importantly the SIIA will take place over the full budget cycle and will include a series of interactive workshops featuring contributions from our evidence and analytical units, key stakeholders as well as policy and finance colleagues to gain a truly integrated perspective. The sessions are designed to be collaborative, creating a space where a wide range of experiences can feed into the SIIA.
 18. Within the Social Justice MEG itself, our continued support of the third sector in Wales, a sector as diverse as the communities it serves, is a prime example of how we are prioritising equality and social justice considerations. The support the third sector provides to people and communities helps tackle inequality and poverty and improve wellbeing. The third sector organisations we support run community facilities and provide services, including domestic abuse specialist support, advice services and sanctuary support which foster community cohesion, offer opportunities for volunteering and provide a range of activities to support wellbeing. The services provided by the third sector include access to food, clothes and fuel vouchers which also help lower income people and households.
 19. The MEG also continues to support the office of the Children's Commissioner as an independent voice in speaking up for children and upholding their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), informing our decision-making as a government and holding public bodies to account.
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How we have consulted with key organisations and citizen involvement in shaping its budget priorities

20. I engage with stakeholders, as do my officials, for example through the Third Sector Partnership Council, Child Poverty External Reference Group, Disability Equality Forum, Wales Race Forum, Faith Communities Forum and Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel to inform the development and delivery of the range of programmes and initiatives that the Social Justice MEG funds.
21. For example, I have protected funding for the Discretionary Assistance Fund. Key organisations like Bevan Foundation, Citizen's Advice, Trussell Trust, Age Cymru and The Red Cross are regularly involved in considering how the Discretionary Assistance Fund can be targeted to ensure it is providing the right crisis support to those who need it.
22. Engagement with disability organisations and disabled people – through the Disability Rights Task Force and the Disability Equality Forum – has been integral to the development of the Disabled People's Rights Plan, published later this year. I have also launched a new Equality and Inclusion grants programme to support delivery of the Welsh Government's National Equality Objectives 2024-28, and I have allocated £800k of funding to the new programme for 2025-26. The schemes will better align funding with Welsh Government policy priorities, improve accessibility to and transparency of funding, and ensure a wider range of organisations can use their experience and creativity to support delivery of Welsh Government objectives. The grants are divided into two streams: the first focuses on encouraging collaborative and innovative arrangements to enable third sector organisations to foster inclusivity and to support people with protected characteristics; whilst the second is intended to raise awareness and improve engagement with minority groups and people with protected characteristics.
23. We are also actively engaging with British Sign Language (BSL) Stakeholders including through the BSL stakeholder group which has developed a set of short-term priorities for BSL support pending progress of the BSL Bill through the Senedd. These recommendations have been published on the Welsh Government website and will inform the development of our BSL Route Map.
24. Through our relationship with the VAWDASV regions and the specialist sector, insight from the VAWDASV Blueprint partners and my meetings with the VAWDASV National Advisers, the importance of both our revenue and capital funding has been highlighted, including opportunities for regional VAWDASV advisers to work collaboratively and innovatively. In this budget I have consolidated a 30% increase in our Capital funding, and increased funding to the regions to support implementation of their VAWDSV objectives in alignment with our national strategy.

How the gender budgeting pilots have informed budget allocations

25. The gender budgeting pilots have shaped the approach to the 2026–27 budget, by helping to further embed equality, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making into the budget process. The pilots reinforced the importance of treating the budget as a tool for advancing equality, not just funding services. This means actively considering how spending decisions impact different groups — particularly women —and using budget levers to address structural inequalities.
26. The pilots demonstrated the value of using disaggregated data and lived experience to inform budget choices. This has led to improved collaboration through workshops between analysts, policy teams, and external stakeholders to ensure budget decisions are grounded in robust evidence. The macro analysis provided by our Equality Evidence units considers how gender intersects with other factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, and geography. This has helped identify where inequalities are most acute and where targeted investment can have the greatest impact.
27. In regard to allocations while the overall budget remains constrained, targeted funding in women’s health, VAWDASV and skills and employment programmes reflect the learning from the pilots. While the scale of change in allocations is currently modest, the pilots have laid critical groundwork for a more gender-responsive budgeting framework.

How the budget has been shaped by the Well-being of Future Generations Act

28. All Cabinet Secretaries are committed to using the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFG 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.
29. The Welsh Government has an established principle of promoting sustainable development through the WFG Act, which has committed us to making sustainable development the central organising principle of government and across all Cabinet portfolios. This means that sustainable development changes what we do and how we work so that we meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
30. The Welsh Government continues to use the WFG Act, and the five ways of working, to drive continuous improvement to the budget process. This Draft Budget demonstrates a clear commitment to the five ways of working outlined in the Act—particularly through sustained engagement with stakeholders, including the Welsh Commissioners, the Social Partnership Council the Budget Improvement and Impact Advisory Group, Local Government and the voluntary sector.
31. The MEG allocations have been shaped to maintain stability in public services, with inflationary uplifts applied across departments. This approach supports continuity while aligning with the Act’s goals of promoting prosperity, equality, and resilience for future generations. The 2026–27 Draft Budget also reflects a responsible and

strategic approach, prioritising the passage of a stable budget over introducing new commitments. This ensures public services are protected and avoids the risks associated with budget deadlock, which could disrupt essential services.

32. The Welsh Government's early publication of the Draft Budget and its structured engagement process reflect a proactive stance on scrutiny and transparency, enabling better alignment with the Act's principles and fostering trust in public finance.
33. While we published a one-year budget on 14 October, that does not constrain our ability to plan for the longer term and our commitment to three year (multi-annual) funding in the third sector as a result of the revised Funding Code of Practice, has been welcomed safeguarding the voluntary sector infrastructure. The work of the Welsh Spending Review (WSR) will become a key part of our budgetary process, and it is the place where we consider how we approach future years. The WSR is a significant and strategic approach to medium to longer-term fiscal planning for Wales, addressing future challenges and opportunities from a cross-government perspective and through a more preventive lens.
34. The five ways of working are being actively embedded throughout this approach, reinforcing the long-term ambitions of both current and future Welsh Governments. This commitment promotes sustainability, equity, and resilience at its core. The approach is already fostering meaningful cross-government and cross-sector collaboration, with a clear emphasis on tackling root causes over the long term, rather than responding solely to short-term pressures.
35. We continue to develop the suite of documents we publish alongside the draft Budget. This includes the Wales Economic and Fiscal Report which provides a fuller account of Welsh economic developments and fiscal prospects. This work complements the Well-being of Wales Report. We also continue to advise on the application of Green Book principles in the context of the WFG Act.
36. To support us in this we continue to work in partnership with the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG) 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. I have taken the range of evidence provided in the Well-being of Wales report 2025 into consideration in developing this draft Budget.
37. In April 2025, the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Auditor General for Wales published their statutory reports on the Well-being of Future Generations Act – the Future Generations Report 2025 (FG Report) and the Auditor General's "No time to lose: Lessons from our work under the Well-being of Future Generations Act". Both these reports focussed on embedding the WFG Act into budgetary processes.
38. The FG Report has a dedicated section on Budget Setting for Future Generations including 4 recommendations for Welsh Government. These recommendations were in relation to preventative spending and multi-annual budget setting

processes. The Welsh Government has responded to the recommendations and will be implementing those which have been accepted.

Examples of Good Practice in Policy Budgets

39. The seven well-being goals and the sustainable development principle set out in the WFG Act underpin all delivery in Welsh Government. As a case study, the Welsh Governments equality and tackling poverty work embeds the five ways of working and takes a long-term and preventative approach to what is often intergenerational inequity.
40. For example, the Anti-racist Action Plan (ArWAP) has the long-term goal of an anti-racist Wales by 2030. The ArWAP is aligned with the Wellbeing Goals, and particularly the goals of A More Equal Wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities, and A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language, strengthening our combined efforts through shared indicators and milestones. In working toward eliminating pay gaps for gender, disability, and ethnicity by 2050, we have already engaged with the UK Government on their planned Equality (Race and Disability) Bill. This Bill will extend pay gap reporting for ethnicity and disability to employers with over 250 staff, helping protect workers from race and disability discrimination.
41. The WFG Act has been instrumental in shaping the ArWAP, embedding long-term, preventative, and collaborative ways of working at its core. Prevention is reflected in intersectionality and positive action as cross-cutting themes running across the Plan. Prevention is also reflected in actions within the Plan including the Diversity and Anti-Racism Professional Learning (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 also taken in the Disability Rights Taskforce and development of the forthcoming Disabled People's Rights Plan. A cross-government and integrated approach underpins the ArWAP, as it does the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, with collaboration across the public and third sectors integral to their delivery.
42. Our work on Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is a clear example of how a WFG Act approach supports and enables a more sustainable approach to tackling generational challenges. The UN Sustainable Development Goals to which Wales' Well-being Goals contribute 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.
43. Welsh Government's is committed to supporting communities and future generations by continuing to strengthen our partnership with voluntary

organisations. Our work in developing the revised Funding Code of Practice for the Third Sector, the New Approach to Volunteering and Framework for Engagement is rooted in the Well-being of Future Generation. Using the five ways of working we have been able to understand the underlying drivers and change required to move to preventative practices.

2. Equality, Race and Disability Data Units

Additional £0.1m revenue has been allocated to the Data Units as part of the 2026-27 Draft Budget to meet emerging evidence needs within the areas of race, disability, gender or LGBTQ+.

Informing budget decisions

44. The Welsh Government Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units have produced several key pieces of evidence since their inception that have been used to support policy decisions and inform the budget allocation process. The Evidence Units provided a macro-level summary of the evidence on all the protected characteristics and intersectional information to highlight who would be the most impacted by spend to inform Cabinet decisions. This involved synthesising a range of available evidence in relation to the First Minister's key priorities. This evidence was taken into account by Cabinet when making decisions on the main budget strategy and approach. 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 will be shown in the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment of the 2026-27 Budget.

Delivery of units

45. The allocation of funding for the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units will support their delivery through a programme of work to improve the availability, quality, granularity and accessibility of equalities evidence so we fully understand the level and types of inequalities across Wales. This was a requirement under the Programme for Government commitment to "Create a Race Disparity Unit alongside an Equality Data Unit to ensure an inclusive evidence base to inform decision making in government".
46. A priority for the staff within the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units is to develop the approach and evidence to measure the impact of key equality action plans: the Anti-racist Wales action Plan; LGBTQ+ Action Plan; Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan; and the forthcoming Disabled People's Rights Plan. The Evidence Units have produced several key pieces of evidence that are used to deliver their mission. For example: the Review of Welsh Government equality data sources and outputs; Well-Being of Wales 2025: More Equal Wales chapter; and exploring how coproduction can be used to enhance evidence.
47. The Evidence Units regularly publish their outputs and progress on their webpage. Much of the work delivered is largely cross-cutting evidence projects, that would improve the equalities evidence base across portfolio areas supporting Welsh Government requirements under the Equality Act, Public Sector Equality Duty, Socio- Economic Duty, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Human Rights Act.

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 to ensure opportunities for every family and to improve outcomes for people over the longer term.

Tackling poverty

48. The allocations of funding in the draft budget will tackle poverty by supporting the co-ordination of cross-government activity and enabling strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the root causes of poverty. We will continue to support initiatives that reduce costs, maximize incomes, and create pathways for children and families to escape poverty.
49. As I have already stated, the inflationary revenue uplift has been applied equally across all BELs within the Social Justice MEG recognising that a whole system's approach is essential. I have also carefully reviewed all my budget lines specifically looking for opportunities to repurpose funding, using all levers available to me to ensure maximum impact for all most in need. This has enabled increases to BELs over and above the flatline 2% inflationary increase across a number of key areas of highest need and demand. A detailed breakdown of all these specific allocations can be found at **Annex B** but for tackling poverty specifically, I have:
- Through this Draft Budget I am allocating an additional **£0.7m** above standard inflationary increases for the Supporting Communities BEL for the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy - **£0.45m** to increase funding for the Child Poverty grant to facilitate the development of more innovative provision of much needed services in this area and **£0.25m** to continue to support the National Child Poverty Strategy Community of Practice (COP) . Children are the population group most likely to be in relative income poverty, and rates continue to remain high. Those from poorer households are at the greatest risk of being looked after and developing mental health conditions, increasing their chances of facing hardship during adulthood. Protecting services that prevent or address poverty, especially child poverty, is pivotal – cuts to such services have implications not only for current children and young people but public health implications for future generations.
 - I have allocated an additional **£0.5m** revenue to the **Advice Services** budget to continue to support the work on **Streamlining Welsh benefits** which will make it easier for people to access the benefits they are entitled to.
50. We continue to make a significant investment in Advice Services of **£16m**, supporting work on income maximisation and access to advice services, including: funding for social welfare information and advice services delivered through the Single Advice Fund (£12m a year for 3 years); provision of training to frontline workers; and work to raise awareness of the benefits people are entitled to. Social welfare problems are more prevalent amongst the more disadvantaged and marginalised population groups in Wales. In the last financial year 83% 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.

51. Funding channelled through my **Supporting Communities** budget (£7.6m for **2026-27**) also plays a key role in my portfolio's aim of tackling poverty and through these budget plans I will be maintaining funding in real terms for emergency food aid, support for those in fuel poverty and provision of safe and warm spaces.
52. I have also opted to allocate the full Social Justice MEG capital inflationary uplift of **£0.4m** to the **Financial Inclusion** budget which will create a capital funding programme for credit unions. Having dedicated capital funding will enable a more strategic and fairer approach to funding the sector - rather than a reactive approach to ad hoc bids which rely on in-year underspends elsewhere in the MEG.

Supporting communities

53. The funding in my own **Supporting Communities** budget is targeted predominantly at supporting those who are poorest in our communities and those who are struggling the most with poverty and the cost of living. A significant element is targeted directly at those in crisis including through the Discretionary Assistance Fund, our Emergency Food Aid and our emergency fuel support. I am also supporting initiatives and organisations who work directly with the poorest in their communities, including through the Child Poverty Grant, Credit Unions and Local Food Partnerships. More generally, our published distributional analysis has shown a significant proportion of our budget is supporting those on the lowest income. We will be publishing similar distributional analysis alongside the second stage of the draft budget.

Child Poverty Strategy

54. The Child Poverty Strategy for Wales progress report, to be published later this year, will provide an update on how we are progressing in tackling child poverty in Wales and in mitigating the worst impacts of living in child poverty. Along with the progress report, I will also publish data against the Monitoring Framework detailing progress against wellbeing measures, and I will also publish evidence from children, young people and families with lived experience of poverty across Wales.
55. There is substantial investment across government supporting the delivery of the Child Poverty Strategy. Through the support I provide in my own MEG we are investing in interventions which alleviate financial pressures, reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families and keep money in the pockets of Welsh Citizens, in line with Objective 1 of our Strategy. This includes providing support for schemes that help tackle food and fuel poverty through emergency food aid, Local Food Partnerships and funding for the Fuel Bank Foundation as well as significant funding for the Single Advice Fund and Discretionary Assistance Fund. A key focus is also support for the work to streamline Welsh Benefits.

56. Complementing the Welsh Benefits action is the continued delivery of the flagship **Claim What's Yours** campaign. From the first awareness campaign in 2021 to March 2025, this national benefits take-up initiative has already helped over 96,000 people access more than **£32.7m** in additional income.
57. The **Single Advice Fund** was introduced in January 2020, and by March 2025 it had helped more than 388,000 people from the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities to access additional income of over **£208.9m**, and to have debts totalling **£66.3m** written off. It reaches those people who are most in need by working with access and referral partners across the regions. It adopts a person-centred delivery model, ensuring the advice services are accessible through a range of channels to suit their needs, i.e. face-to-face, telephone, email, and webchat. These actions support Commitment 2 of the Child Poverty Strategy.
58. In the plans published for Draft Budget 2026-27 I have been able to prioritise additional revenue funding for the implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy including **£0.45m** to increase funding for the Child Poverty Grant and an additional **£0.25m** to continue to support the National Child Poverty Strategy Community of Practice (COP) equating to a **targeted uplift of £0.7m** for the Supporting Communities BEL. This will ensure we continue to deliver against Objective 5 of our Strategy – to enable strong collaboration at the regional and local level to address the root causes of poverty and facilitate more innovative provision of services.

Supporting households with cost-of-living pressures

59. The **£7 billion** that has supported households across Wales to alleviate financial pressures, help maximise income and to help keep more money in their pockets includes programmes such as our flagship Single Advice Fund and Discretionary Assistance Fund programmes, the roll out of Free School Meals, the School Essentials Grant and our Council Tax Reduction Scheme. As tackling poverty is a cross-government priority, activities included within the £7 billion also include programmes such as free prescriptions, free dental and eye checks, support for students, the Education Maintenance Allowance, a real living wage for social care workers and Flying Start.

Crisis support

60. We provide support for low-income households differently in Wales and do not have a single fund in the way that there has been in England and that is proposed under the Crisis and Resilience Fund. In Wales targeted support for those who need it most is delivered through programmes such as our **Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)**, support for the cost of the school day, housing / homelessness support and funding for fuel vouchers and emergency food aid.
61. My **Financial Inclusion** budget offers direct support to individuals experiencing financial hardship and will see an uplift of **£0.7m** in the 2026-27 Draft Budget bringing the total overall budget to **£40.8m**. This includes funding of circa **£39m** for the Discretionary Assistance Fund.

62. The DAF, delivered consistently across Wales, continues to provide vital emergency support for those in crisis with no other means of support and to assist people in moving to a more settled way of life following a crisis.
63. Likewise, through the **Supporting Communities** budget (**£7.6m for 2026-27**), I will continue to invest in emergency fuel and food support as well as more collaborative actions through the Local Food Partnerships, Food Sense Wales and our communities of practice to explore ways of reducing reliance on emergency food aid and develop more community focused food solutions.
64. Outside of my portfolio, the School's Essentials Grant has helped to reduce the costs of purchasing school uniform and equipment for many families, and through the Warm Homes Nest Scheme, we are tackling fuel poverty for homeowners and households renting from private landlords.

Welsh Benefits Charter

65. The work on streamlining the administration of Welsh benefits with all 22 local authorities will make it easier for people to access the financial support to which they are entitled and put the aspirations in the Welsh Benefits Charter into practice. A Streamlining Welsh Benefits Phase One route map outlining the high-level priorities and outputs that are expected to be achieved by April 2026 was published in January 2025. In the draft budget I have **allocated an additional £0.5m** to the Advice Services BEL to continue to support the work on streamlining Welsh Benefits and to support the capacity of key delivery partners to take forward any work in this area.

4. Equality, human rights and Community Cohesion

The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget has been increased by £0.8m through the 2026-27 Draft Budget; the Community Cohesion budget has also been increased by £0.2m.

66. The Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget directly supports the groups who face the greatest disadvantage and are often those most impacted by the current financial context. Specifically, within the proposals outlined within Draft Budget 2026-27, the additional allocations detailed below, equating to an overall uplift of **£0.8m**, have been applied to the Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights budget. This includes a 2% inflationary uplift (**£0.2m**) as well as two targeted allocations: an allocation of **£0.4m** to support delivery of the Programme for Government commitment to create an Equalities Legal Service; and **£0.2m** to fund the first-year costs of implementation of the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill.
67. A new Equality and Inclusion Grants scheme has now been launched to fund activities supporting delivery of the National Equality Objectives; the overall budget for the grant is £0.8m which will be awarded for awareness and engagement activities, and for innovation to tackle inequality and support people. The new scheme is intended to improve coherence, accessibility and transparency, and to enable a wider range of organisations to use their experience and creativity to support delivery of the National Equality Objectives and Strategic Equality and Human Rights Plan.
68. This competitive grant will enable a broader range of third sector organisations to access Welsh Government Equality and Inclusion funding than was previously possible. The provision for smaller grants under the Awareness and Engagement strand creates funding opportunities for smaller organisations that would not previously have had access to Welsh Government Equality and Inclusion funding.
69. The strengthening of the budget process to reflect consideration of equality and human rights is outlined above in paragraphs 14-17. In relation to grants, the Communities and Social Justice directorate is piloting an approach to grant conditions to strengthen consideration of equality and human rights. We have included clauses in the grant letters to ensure the needs of different equality groups are considered, in order to reduce inequalities and support the Welsh Government's National Equality Objectives and underlying equality action plans. This is being considered as part of the monitoring of these grants. Learning from this will be shared across Welsh Government to inform grants from 2026-27 onwards.

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ+ Action Plan and Gender Equality Action Plan

70. Welsh Government continues to prioritise delivery of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, with allocations focused on embedding anti-racism across government portfolios, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and supporting community engagement through our ArWAP convenors and programmes such as the Equality and Inclusion grant. Impact is evaluated through the EAG sub-group progress reports and independent External Accountability Group oversight.
71. In delivering on the LGBTQ+ action plan, we continue to report on progress through the LGBTQ+ Tracker. Funding in the Draft Budget will support partner organisations in the delivery of the plan and the 'Hate Hurt Wales' campaign continues to support those who have experienced hate crimes in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.
72. The Advancing Gender Equality Plan sets out cross-Government vision and actions to achieve gender equality in Wales. The Gender Equality Forum supports delivery of the Plan's aims and objectives. Funding in the Draft Budget will continue a focus on advancing gender equality and ensuring that lived experience is integrated into the delivery of the Plan, building in an intersectional approach.
73. Our Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units monitor and evaluate the impact of our equality plans. A comprehensive evaluation is necessary for both accountability (making sure the plans are delivering what they set out to achieve) and learning (understanding what may need to change to ensure the plans can effectively deliver on their commitments and improve outcomes).
74. The Evidence Units consist of Government Social Researchers, who will evaluate the plans in line with the principles for monitoring and evaluation set out in the Magenta Book and Green Book. The Government Social Research (GSR) profession in the Welsh Government operates independently of policy teams. It is guided by the GSR Code, which is designed to ensure analytical integrity and ensure that all research is impartial, methodologically robust, and free from undue influence.
75. This comprehensive and mixed-method evaluation approach is being applied consistently across the plans, while also accounting for the individual plans' nuances and timing of when they were each established. The key components of our approach include:
 - Theories of change (to systematically map out how we expect actions to lead to desired outcomes and the overarching impact – including the National Equality Objectives);
 - Measurement frameworks (to identify indicators and measures that will be used to inform comparisons over time);
 - Process evaluations (to understand how interventions are being implemented, and identify barriers and enablers to delivery); and

- Impact evaluations (to assess what changes have occurred as a result of the interventions).

76. The approach also emphasises the importance of incorporating lived experience throughout the evaluation stages, particularly drawing on qualitative data and input from the external advisory groups. Overall, this approach is intended to provide a comprehensive, robust and accessible assessment of the plans.

UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women

77. Welsh Government has provided a total of £143,515 in funding to support the Legislative Options Working Group's (LOWG) analysis of options on incorporation covering work from January 2024 until March 2026. These figures do not include the internal Welsh Government staff time also allocated.

78. No specific allocation has yet been set for any further LOWG-related expenditure in the forthcoming Draft Budget; decisions will be subject to Ministerial consideration of the LOWG's report when published in 2026.

Disabled People's Equality

79. I am wholly committed to the delivery of the cross government Disabled People's Rights Plan. The allocations I have made in the draft budget will continue to support the work initiated by the **Disability Rights Taskforce** which was set up in direct response to the **Locked-out-liberating-disabled-peoples-lives-and-rights-wales-beyond-covid-19**.

80. The Taskforce's 10 thematic working groups brought together over 350 external stakeholders and over 200 policy leads from across government to produce high quality recommendations.

81. These recommendations have been published on the Welsh Government website. They informed the draft **Disabled People's Rights Plan 2025-2035** which is shaped by the Social Model of Disability and rooted in the principles and obligations of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People**.

82. The draft Disabled People's Rights Plan was published for consultation on 15 May 2025 as a 10-year cross-government strategy. It outlines both short-term cross-Government **actions** and long-term cross-Government outcomes to ensure disabled people can thrive as equal members of Welsh society.

83. The Disability Rights Taskforce convened its final meeting in January 2025 to review the framework for the draft Plan, and an External Advisory Board is being established to support the Plan's implementation, delivery, and impact.

Community Cohesion

84. The **Cohesive Communities** budget of **£10m** (uplifted by £0.2m in 2026-27) demonstrates my ongoing commitment to supporting communities and fostering good relations, advancing equality of opportunity and challenging hate crime and community tensions. The budget also supports migrant integration, including support for refugees and asylum seekers, who will often have one or more minority protected characteristics and are therefore more likely to benefit from our work to eliminate inequalities.
85. The allocations I have made in this Draft Budget will support us to foster community cohesion, including through implementation of the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee recommendations from the 'Cooperation over Conflict' Inquiry, as well as implementing actions in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, the Disabled People's Rights Action Plan and the LGBTQ+ Action Plan.
86. I have maintained our **£1.6m** funding of the **Community Cohesion Programme** in 2026-27 and have agreed a multi-year funding for the programme until March 2029. This provides funding to the eight cohesion regions to support cohesion coordinators and officers in each region and includes a small grants fund. This will ensure our regional teams embedded within local authorities can continue to build on their work fostering good relations between groups, advancing equality of opportunity, and tackling community tensions and victimisation.
87. I am maintaining our funding for hate-related activities. This includes continuation of the **Wales Hate Support Service** run on our behalf by Victim Support Cymru, and continuation of the **Hate Hurts Wales** campaign, which seeks to encourage reporting of incidents, active bystander behaviour and discourage perpetrators. This funding will enable us to undertake various hate prevention initiatives, including online hate and false narratives monitoring and response coordination, a hate and misinformation media literacy intervention, training on freedom restricting harassment protection, hate crime perpetrator pilots and a dedicated hate awareness raising initiative for disabled people.
88. I have also allocated funding to support local de-polarisation projects, genocide commemorations and community 'get togethers' across Wales, to build social connections and shared identity.
89. We are working towards improved measures of cohesion which will help us demonstrate the impact of our extensive delivery. Our **Hate Support Centre** will continue to monitor the number of victims support and satisfaction rates. We will continue to embed evaluation metrics within each of our funded initiatives. This will be taken forward as we deliver on Recommendation 1 of the ESJ Committee report into Social Cohesion. As part of our arrangements for multi-year funding we will be benchmarking the delivery of the Community Cohesion Programme.
90. Additionally, as part of our response to Recommendation 1, we are in the process of establishing an Expert Group on Cohesion to address the suggestions made in the report.

5. Nation of Sanctuary

£7m revenue has been allocated to enable the continued implementation of the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary approach.

91. The **allocation of £7m** within the **Cohesive Communities** budget will enable the continued implementation of the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary approach and actions, as set out in the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2024). Wales being a Nation of Sanctuary means supporting those who, fleeing persecution and war, arrive here to rebuild their lives. I will continue to provide funding for a range of dedicated interventions as well as investment through mainstream wider interventions to support the integration of sanctuary seekers, including Ukrainians, into Welsh life and contribute positively to our nation.
92. I am maintaining the funding for the **Wales Sanctuary Service** until 31 March 2027. The service provides practical help and emotional support for navigating the asylum process, securing housing, accessing education and English classes, and finding employment on a pan-Wales basis.
93. We will continue to work closely with partners to improve support for individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). We intend to adopt consistent guidance across local authorities to ensure clarity and fairness in the way support is provided including access to free school meals. This will be underpinned by updated and comprehensive practice guidance for local authorities, third sector organisations and other partners, supported by a programme of training to promote consistent and effective implementation across Wales. We will also maintain funding to enable access to shelter and legal advice for those left without immigration status but a realistic prospect of obtaining it.
94. 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 also enable increased capacity of immigration legal advice services for those most in need; support for the employability of refugees; and placing those with lived experience at the heart of our policymaking and decision-making.
95. I remain committed to addressing the transport and digital barriers sanctuary seekers face when accessing services and community activities. We are currently reviewing options to address these barriers and will continue to work with partners on the best approach.

6. Gypsy and Traveller sites

I am pleased with the progress being made during the 2025-26 financial year; we now have a strong pipeline of approved projects to deliver outcomes over the next few financial years.

96. I have welcomed the increase in applications to the Sites Capital grant funding in this financial year. To date, 14 applications have been approved totalling £2.4m. We anticipate further applications in this financial year.
97. Two of the applications are for new pitches totalling five new pitches across two local authority sites. The remaining 12 applications include funding for resurfacing a pitch, a new play area, new fire-resistant gates, traffic calming measures and the refurbishing of community buildings.
98. We continue to do everything we can to encourage bids that directly address the need for new pitches, and we review and update the grant guidance annually to ensure this funding is as accessible as possible to local authorities.
99. 15 local authorities have informed us they plan to submit applications to develop a total of 236 new pitches in 2026-27 and into future years. One of these proposals includes a bid to develop a transit site for six new pitches. I have maintained the General Capital budget for Gypsy Traveller Sites at **£3.4m** to support these plans.
100. We are making steady progress on the actions in relation to tackling the inequality and discrimination faced by Gypsy, Traveller and Roma people set out in the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, as outlined below.

| Action | Progress |
|---|---|
| Work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members, local authorities and others to better enable appropriate transit provision. Decisions will be taken based on evidence of where transit is needed. | <p>We have contracted a third sector organisation to undertake national research to identify demand and location for transit sites across Wales. This is looking at where across Wales families ought to have safe, legal places to stay while travelling through.</p> <p>The research report is expected to make evidence-based recommendations of where transit provision would be most suitable for people travelling in and through Wales. It will involve and draw on the lived experience of community members to help final recommendations.</p> <p>Recommendations are due to Welsh Government by the end of the year and will be shared with local authorities following this.</p> |

Welsh Government evidence paper on the 2026-27 Draft Budget for the Social Justice
MEG for the Equality and Social Justice Committee

| | |
|--|--|
| Pilot additional or new ways of funding permanent provision. | <p>As part of the Gypsy and Traveller capital sites grant scheme¹, in 2024 we added the option to use the capital grant funding for local authorities to buy land to turn into a local authority gypsy and traveller site.</p> <p>We know there is a need for accommodation, and we will continue to consider options of how we can fund permanent homes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.</p> |
| Fund a study to look at options for a mobile home rental scheme through social housing. | Officials have carried out initial scoping work to inform the requirements of a study on options for a mobile home rental scheme. |
| Depending on outcome of the mobile home rental scheme study, set up pilot scheme. | Awaiting outcome of the above action. |
| We will procure a framework for an external training company to develop and deliver a training course to upskill all 22 Local Authorities on Gypsy, Roma and Travellers nomadic ways of living. This will be developed with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members. | <p>Welsh Government has procured training services to be provided by an external training company via a competitive procurement competition completed in June 2025.</p> <p>Currently, a new training programme is under development that will improve understanding of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural lifestyles and identities. It will be delivered to all 22 local authorities in Wales and will run over a three-year period starting in April 2026.</p> <p>The programme is currently being co-designed with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.</p> |
| Commission a three-year pilot programme to provide advice to those seeking to develop private sites. | <p>Running from September 2025 to March 2027, a private planning pilot is being delivered to provide planning advice for families seeking to develop their own sites.</p> <p>This pilot forms a key part of delivering the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families in accessing safe and culturally appropriate accommodation.</p> |
| Review the Gypsy and Traveller capital sites guidance. This will include reviewing the piloting of funding for buying land, feedback from the communities and a decision on funding for private sites. | <p>Site Capital Funding guidance has been reviewed for 2025-26 to support local authorities to create new sites/pitches and refurbishments to existing sites.</p> <p>Land acquisition by local authorities was added to the Capital Sites Guidance in 2024.</p> |

¹ [Gypsy and Traveller capital sites grant scheme \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>We are working on different options for funding in relation to private sites, and this work is ongoing.</p> |
| <p>Re-draft and simplify the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Guidance, involving community members to reflect their needs.</p> | <p>Welsh Government has reviewed and re-drafted all four Gypsy and Traveller Guidance documents and undertaken a public consultation of the proposed changes over the Summer 2025.</p> <p>The guidance documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Gypsy and Traveller sites in Wales • Designing Gypsy and Traveller sites in Wales • Undertaking Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments • Managing unauthorised encampment guidance <p>In addition to the public consultation, direct engagement of over 200 community members on the changes have been carried out to seek their views on the proposed changes.</p> |
| <p>Welsh Government will actively consider using its powers to ensure local authorities comply with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.</p> | <p>Progress against how local authorities are meeting the accommodation needs set out in the Gypsy, Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's) is being monitored. Capital grant applications which address the need for additional pitches will be prioritised.</p> |
| <p>Have regular meetings with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and stakeholders to inform Welsh Government policy. Ensure people feel included in the meetings.</p> | <p>The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller stakeholder meeting has been reinstated. Three meetings have taken place in Mid Wales, West Wales and South East Wales.</p> <p>This group includes members of the community. 'There and Back Again' was awarded the contract to coordinate invitations and reimburse community members for their time and contributions. Invitations are extended to local authorities and third sector stakeholders.</p> |
| <p>Provide advice and advocacy services to Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities.</p> | <p>In September 2024, Travelling Ahead at TGP Cymru were awarded a new contract to deliver advocacy and advice services to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.</p> <p>This service supports individual community members to understand their rights with respect to their housing needs and will run to August 2027.</p> |

7. Criminal Justice

101. I do not accept the characterisation of Lord Timpson's evidence. Discussions around devolution of youth justice and probation to Wales are progressing at pace. As set out in the written statement published by the Deputy First Minister on 7 August, Welsh Government officials and officials in MoJ and HMPPS are working together to develop options for youth justice devolution and explore approaches to co-commissioning probation services.
102. Officials in both governments are exploring options where responsibilities in the youth justice system could be realigned. This includes strategic oversight, partnership and governance arrangements and funding of youth justice services as starting points. We are exploring formalising the governance through which UK and Welsh Governments engage.
103. On the devolution of probation services, we are discussing the potential for the Welsh Government to work with HM Prison and Probation Service to adopt a Memorandum of Understanding on probation, similar to the model in place in Greater Manchester. An additional allocation of **£0.1m** will build on investment in 2025-26 to pilot an approach in Wales which utilises philanthropic match funding to test whether a condition free, third sector delivered, flexible and responsive intervention has a positive impact in terms of reducing homelessness.
104. These areas of discussion do not reflect the limits of our ambitions; they reflect starting points and we expect further discussions to follow. It remains the Welsh Government's policy to seek the full devolution of the justice system, and the steps we are taking are to be the first of many.
105. Budget assumptions are based on both activities to devolve justice services, and the delivery of current justice functions. The Justice Transformation BEL within the Climate Change and Rural Affairs MEG funds not only work on the devolution of justice, but also planned tribunals reform, activity to manage the interface between devolved and non-devolved services related to justice, and supporting the Welsh Government and wider devolved public sector on justice matters.
106. Additional funding was awarded to the Justice Transformation BEL in 2025-26 in order to (amongst other things):
- Recruit additional staff with specialist knowledge in justice services, devolution and/or activity related to tribunal reform
 - Develop a robust evidence base for youth justice services, probation services, and tribunal reform
 - Prepare for the adoption of new functions by the Welsh Government
 - Engage with practitioners working in youth justice, probation services, and tribunals to implement change
107. The resource allocations are kept under review as devolution options and tribunal reform policy develops. The level of resource required to deliver a quality service,

both in staffing and delivery costs, will form part of our policy analysis and negotiations on any future UK Government budget transfers.

108. The table below sets out the funding budgeted and spent on justice related activities and devolution, as part of a broader spending programme on constitutional reform. While this funding has contributed to activities, it cannot be fully attributed to work on devolution.

| | | 2021/22 | | 2022/23 | | 2023/24 | | 2024/25 | |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| | | Cumulative spend | Annual budget | Cumulative spend | Annual budget | Cumulative spend | Annual budget | Cumulative spend | Annual budget |
| | | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ | £ |
| Funded programme | | | | | | | | | |
| BEL 6663 | Constitutional Reform | 260,124 | 400,000 | 923,939 | 1,100,000 | 1,037,214 | 1,048,000 | 813,334 | 2,014,000 |
| BEL 6669 | Justice Transformation | 330,377 | 490,000 | 357,672 | 490,000 | 512,936 | 480,000 | 388,323 | 488,000 |
| Overall Result | | 590,501 | 890,000 | 1,281,611 | 1,590,000 | 1,550,150 | 1,528,000 | 1,201,658 | 2,502,000 |

Speech and Language Therapy

109. In January, as part of a wider Debate on Speech and Language Therapists in the Senedd I spoke about Speech Language and Communication needs in the criminal justice system. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care confirmed that Local Health Boards are responsible for determining population health needs and for determining the best way to meet their population's needs.
110. All Local Health Boards in Wales provide speech and language therapy as a health treatment where it is clinically required. This service is available to all children who are assessed as requiring speech and language therapy in Wales, including children in contact with the justice system, subject to a referral process. Not every child with a speech, language and communication need may require or benefit from specialist therapy. There are a number of other interventions that can support the resolution of SLCN without needing a specialist therapist.
111. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care also set out that it would be for youth justice service teams to provide any further services relating to speech language and communication needs, beyond that delivered by their Local Health Board, in order to deliver on their reserved statutory role.
112. Local authorities who consider there to be a need for additional provision can employ their own speech and language therapists directly or commission and fund provision via another employer, such as the NHS or private sector. They have access to a number of funding streams which could be used to support this, and our work with local authorities ahead of last year's summit highlighted several examples of where this is already working well. This includes local authorities using the UK

Government's Turnaround funding scheme, which has been renewed into 2025-26, to fund provision.

Women's Justice

113. The Welsh Government vision for criminal justice is for a trauma-informed, evidence-based approach which addresses the underlying causes of offending and supports people at risk of offending towards fulfilling, crime-free lives. This approach can prevent crime happening in the first place.
114. Our considered approach recognises the needs and vulnerabilities women in the justice system face, in part because many women in the justice system are victims themselves and should be considered as such. By focusing on early intervention, we can support women who are in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system, by taking a system-wide partnership approach to develop services that better meet the complex needs and experiences of vulnerable women from all backgrounds.
115. In particular, it is our view that non-custodial sentences must be available to Welsh women, to maintain family ties. The UK Government has established a National Women in Justice Board, with the aim of delivering fewer women in prison and more women supported in the community – providing an opportunity to interface and work collaboratively to share learnings and experiences. Wales is represented on the Board which is developing a national Women in Justice Strategy, including an approach to Residential Women's Centres in England and Wales.
116. We work closely with the UK government on women's justice issues, including the Women's Justice Blueprint and remain closely engaged on the opening of the Women's Residential Centre in Swansea.
117. However, as the UK government is responsible for the Centre, including timelines, funding commitments and commissioning arrangements, the Centre is not yet open.
118. I have raised this regularly with UK government counterparts and have received assurances that the UK government is committed to offering meaningful alternatives to custody for women, including through residential centres. This is being taken forward through the Women's Justice Board.
119. The recently laid Sentencing Bill also sets out ambitions to divert more adults from short immediate custodial sentences to community-based orders, to allow individuals to have their needs addressed in the community, with less disruption to their lives. This is expected to particularly benefit women for whom a larger proportion of sentences given each year are short disposals.
120. I will continue to regularly engage with UK government Justice Ministers and key partners who are leading on this important programme of work.

8. Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy

I am pleased to allocate an additional £0.7m revenue to the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence budget in 2026-27 taking the budget up to £10m. 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.

121. Each year, I offer significant funding to all 6 regions in Wales via the Core Grant offer. Each region allocates this money based upon their regional needs and objectives in their local strategy (as required by the VAWDASV Act 2015) and the Welsh Governments VAWDASV National Strategy (2022-2026) objectives. In 2026-27 it is proposed that this funding is used by regions to fund a range of activities including victim services, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor provision, perpetrator interventions, support workers, training and communication campaigns. I am also supporting innovation projects by the regions through additional funding, which will give regions opportunities to be creative and innovative and use funding to adopt a preventative approach to violence against women and girls. The priorities for the innovation funding for 2026-27 are still being developed.
122. I will continue to invest in communications campaigns. The Live Fear Free Helpline, which supports victims of sexual or domestic violence across Wales. We will continue to roll out of the award-winning 'SOUND' communication campaigns that encourage men and boys across Wales to reflect on their own behaviours and continue to develop our early intervention and prevention as a key priority. This further encourages men and boys across Wales to learn about gender-based violence, positive and healthy relationships and Sound out the conversation around notions of masculinity, its ideals and where it could lead to gender stereotypes and become harmful for not only the women and girls in their lives, but how it can impact themselves and their own wellbeing. The Sound campaign will build on the previous phases; with phase 4 delving into the world of online and technology facilitated abuse, for example - Online Stalking & Harassment, Intimate Image Sharing and digital tracking.
123. My officials work closely with all of our third sector funded organisations to review annual spend to ensure that services are not lost and also work closely with regions to ensure that funding is addressing local need. Our 2026-27 budget will directly support the delivery of the six objectives set out in our National VAWDASV Strategy (2022-2026).
124. The VAWDASV capital budget of **£3.1m** which provides small grants up to £50k, and larger grants up to £350k will continue to enable third sector organisations, local authorities, health boards and other public bodies to access funding to support VAWDASV services across Wales. This scheme funds property purchases, upgrades to refuge spaces, victim safety initiatives and improving accessibility. Last year it funded over 20 projects across Wales. We are currently in the process of the

live bidding event for next year's budget and are anticipating in excess of 20 applications for 2026-2027.

Social Justice Committee's Recommendations

125. In January 2025 I provided an update to the committee on progress the Welsh Government had made on each of the recommendations in the Committee's report on a public health approach to preventing gender-based violence. Further updates will be consolidated into the statutory annual VAWDASV report which is due for publication in November 2025.
126. In addressing the challenges faced by migrant women, for the past two years the Welsh Government has added to the existing Home Office Support for Migrant Victim (SMV) Scheme. Recognising this scheme has now received a significant uplift itself, my officials have focused our budget on exploring improved ways to support individuals of abuse with no recourse to public funding and the professionals that help them. As a result, during 2024-25, I provided additional funding to BAWSO, Wales' main provider of specialist VAWDASV support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women, including migrant women, to recruit 2 new support workers, specifically to work with women in Wales who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) who have experienced domestic abuse.
127. I have allocated funding across the whole of Wales to upskill housing officers, social workers and regional advisors to ensure they are appropriately trained to understand migrant women's rights, providing better access to information and signposting, as efficiently and effectively as possible. This will ensure those women and families do not stay in refuge any longer than necessary and appropriate support at their most vulnerable times. Additional funding has been allocated for the third sector to support those women who have no recourse to public funds in accessing emergency equipment for example, cots, baby equipment and so on to ensure they have their basic needs met.
128. Our National Strategy 2022-2026 and our current, collaborative Blueprint approach, both outline our approach to tackling VAWDASV through a public health approach and in delivering Objective 4 of the strategy which focuses on making early intervention and prevention a priority. Whilst support for survivors and system change to improve outcomes for survivors remain part of the toolbox, we wish to shift focus from symptom to cause through a public health approach. This does not mean that survivors should expect any less from our approach. This is about expanding the impact of what we do to ensure that survivors as individuals are supported holistically and that there is a wider societal effect which reduces the chances that they experience VAWDASV in the first place.
129. Our public health approaches will expose a broad segment of the population to prevention measures and reduce and prevent violence at a population-level. In this context prevention is an umbrella term meaning that VAWDASV and the harm it causes is prevented across the spectrum.

130. Examples of where our funding has been targeted include:

- Primary Prevention is targeted at reducing the number of new instances of violence by intervening before violence takes place. This involves challenging attitudes, behaviours, and practices which justify, excuse, or condone violence. Our successful Sound campaign has worked closely with men and boys across Wales to focus on how they can play an important part in reducing violence against women and girls, how they can challenge harmful attitudes amongst their peers and how they can seek advice if they are concerned about their own behaviours.
- Secondary Prevention is considered an early intervention for groups who may already be exhibiting signs of perpetrating VAWDASV. I have funded New Pathways to deliver an intervention to young people who have been referred into their services as victims but have demonstrated some problematic or harmful sexual behaviour. I have also supported Safer Wales to deliver an intervention to young people who are at risk of exploitation, and other vulnerabilities who can access support and advice to prevent them entering the Criminal Justice System. Within the health sector, my officials work closely across the health sector for example in relation to the IRISi social enterprise dedicated to improving the healthcare response to VAWDASV. The IRIS programme for example, is a specialist domestic violence and abuse training, support and referral programme for GPs, it operates in GP practices in some, but not all parts of Wales. Support to survivors of sexual assault is also available through Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs). SARCs offer confidential medical and practical support to people who have recently been raped or sexually assaulted through an acute provision including a range forensic aspects which are responsibility of the police (e.g. Forensic Medical Examinations and Independent Sexual Advisers) and provides wrap around support including and medical needs, sexual health screening and access to counselling via SARCs/mental health services.
- Tertiary Prevention is seeking to prevent those who have already committed harm from doing so again. Through our regional Core Grant funding, regions have been able to deliver perpetrator interventions directly to perpetrators of VAWDASV. I have also been able to provide funding to purchase the 'She is Not Your Rehab' books for each prisoner in one of the 4 main Welsh Prison estates to allow them to reflect on their behaviour that led to their incarceration and better prepare them for their release and returning to existing or new relationships.

9. Advice Services

As part of this Draft Budget, I am pleased to make additional revenue allocations of £5.9m to the Advice Services budget to continue to support the Single Advice Fund and to support work on streamlining Welsh benefits.

131. As part of Draft Budget 2026-27 plans I have been able to allocate the **Advice Services BEL** a total budget of **£16m**. This represents a £5.9m uplift year on year and is made up of the following allocations:

- A specific ring-fenced allocation of **£5.2m** from the UK Government from the Debt Levy (2025-26 allocation - £4.3m);
- An inflationary uplift of 2% equating to **£0.2m**; and
- An additional **£0.5m** of revenue to continue to support the work on streamlining Welsh benefits will also make it easier for people to access the benefits they are entitled to.

Single Advice Fund

132. 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 June 2024, the former Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice agreed to make **£12m** available for the provision of services delivered through the Single Advice Fund in each financial year from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028.

133. The funding for financial year 2026-27 will be allocated as follows:

- A pan-Wales (remote access) information and advice service – **£3m**
- Six regional information and advice services – **£8.4m**
- Six standalone services providing information and advice to underrepresented population groups - **£0.6m**

EU Settlement Scheme

134. When the United Kingdom (UK) made the decision to exit the European Union (EU) a formal agreement was established to protect citizens whom the exit would impact upon. As a result of the Withdrawal Act Agreement, UK public bodies have a statutory responsibility to protect the rights of EU and EEA EFTA citizens and their family members.

135. The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) enables EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens resident in the UK by the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, and

their family members, to obtain the status they require in order to live and work in the UK after 30 June 2021.

136. The scheme opened to the public on 30 March 2019. The deadline for most people to apply to the EUSS was 30 June 2021, but eligible applicants may still be able to apply if they have a later deadline to do so or they have 'reasonable grounds' for their delay in applying.
137. More than three years have passed since the 30 June 2021 deadline, and the UK Government continue to make changes to the scheme, meaning the need for support and advice services continues. There is also demand for continued support in making late applications, upgrading status where automation is not possible, supporting adjoining family members and accessing rights.
138. **Budget Allocation 2024-25:** £140,000 awarded to Settled to continue to deliver the EU Settlement Scheme Advice Services. Welsh Government's Grant Award supports Settled to provide information, advice and support to EU citizens regarding EU Settlement Scheme applications as well as access rights and services entitled to individuals with status under the Withdrawal Act Agreement.
139. **Budget Allocation 2025-26:** £140,000 continuation of Settled's services as outlined above. £22,500 has also been budgeted to fund TGP Cymru to deliver targeted EU Settlement Scheme outreach work with the Roma community as per ESJ Committee recommendations and requests by the EU Citizens Rights Forum. Planned Migration are currently looking at a completing a departure request to facilitate the virement of funding through an existing contract.

10. Third Sector

An additional £0.4m revenue and £1.5m Financial Transaction 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.

140. Through this budget I continue to support our strong partnership with voluntary organisations across the range of our responsibilities and maintain our investment in the infrastructure needed to support the sector. Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) – a partnership between the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the nineteen county voluntary councils across Wales – provides help and advice to the many thousands of third sector organisations in Wales. TSSW provides support under the four pillars of sustainable funding, volunteering, good governance and engagement and influencing. This includes support for organisations to put in place appropriate safeguarding measures to keep children and vulnerable adults safe; the Volunteering Wales grant programmes; Volunteering Wales, Funding Wales and Knowledge Hub digital platforms. This funding also supports the Newid programme to develop digital skills and capacity in the sector, and the national time-credits programme. The budget also makes a small contribution to the core costs of Community Foundation Wales.
141. Specifically, I have uplifted the Support for the Voluntary Sector budget by £0.4m revenue being a combination of a 2% inflationary uplift and additional revenue requirements of £0.2m associated with the additional Financial Transaction Capital of £1.5m on the Community Facilities Programme budget line which will be used to provide a further loan to WCVA for the Community Asset Loan Fund.
142. In fact, across the Social Justice portfolio, I have increased all budgets by an inflationary 2% to reflect the increasing costs experienced by the third sector. Third Sector officials continue to promote the Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector across Welsh Government.
143. Funding decisions within the Support for the Voluntary Sector budget expenditure line take into account the increased cost of National Insurance by passing on increases to the budget as advised under the Code of Practice.

Future financial sustainability

144. Although funding for longer periods has always been an option, these decisions have been on a case-by-case basis and at the discretion of individual policy areas.
145. Since 2022 we have had a longer duration of funding policy, which responds to these concerns, particularly from the third sector, that grants are often be based on a one-year basis. The Welsh Government Cabinet has recommitted to this policy in 2025.

146. All funding provided to the third sector from the support for the voluntary sector and volunteering budget has been made under three-year funding agreements. The revised Code of Practice for Funding the Third Sector was published in April 2025 and makes the case for an increased use of longer-term funding where this is appropriate.
147. We are clear that longer-term funding has significant benefits for all concerned. It provides financial and employment security, allows for better planning and cuts down on administrative burdens. It also improves service provision by helping with the recruitment and retention of experienced staff and volunteers.
148. To ensure we have as complete a picture of possible, working with WCVA and Nottingham Trent University we have developed and launched a third sector barometer. This will provide a series of data points which will provide an insight into the health and sustainability of the third sector in Wales. This will also, over time, allow us to track the impact of policy decisions on the sector's sustainability.

11. Fuel Poverty

An additional £0.75m investment in the Warm Homes Nest scheme, working alongside the Energy Company Obligation and Great British Insulation schemes, will support low-income families living in energy inefficient homes.

149. The Capital funding for the Warm Homes Nest scheme has been increased by **2% in 2026-27 from £37.5m to £38.25m**. This builds on the **7% uplift in budget in 2025-2026** which has increased the capacity of the scheme to support more households. In addition to budgetary constraints, there are other limitations to the number of homes Warm Homes Nest can help, including the number of applicants to the demand-led scheme and contractor capacity in Wales to deliver the programme to the PAS2035 industry standard. The Standard, alongside our funding of an independent quality assurance service, ensures we are not facing the same issues of poor workmanship that the UK Government has encountered in its ECO and GBIS schemes.
150. The Nest scheme also sits in a wider policy context, alongside other initiatives such as ECO4, which do not rely on government funding. Consequently, we have supported local authorities to upscale ECO4 activity through establishing ECO4 LA Flex schemes, thereby increasing access to energy company obligations funding.
151. Changes to funding in England on programmes which are devolved in Wales result in changes to our block grant via the Barnett formula. However, those changes do not determine what the block grant should be spent on. It is for Welsh Ministers, with the Senedd's approval, to decide how to allocate the Welsh Government's budget, which includes funding from the block grant, devolved taxes, and capital borrowing. Where there is a case for using the consequential funding for similar purposes, Welsh Ministers will deploy in line with its priorities as part of the appropriate budget process.