



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

**Dydd Iau, 4 Hydref 2012
Thursday, 4 October 2012**

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Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Mae hon yn fersiwn ddrafft o'r cofnod. Cyhoeddir fersiwn derfynol ymhen pum diwrnod gwaith.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. This is a draft version of the record. The final version will be published within five working days.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Kenneth Skates	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Adele Baumgardt	Cydgadeirydd, Rhwydwaith Cydraddoldeb Menywod Cymru Co-chair, Women's Equality Network Wales
Kate Bennett	Cyfarwyddwr Cenedlaethol, Y Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol National Director, Equality and Human Right Commission
Sue Cohen	Prif Weithredwr Rhwydwaith Gweithredu Rhieni Sengl ac Aelod Rheoli o Bwyllgor Rheoli Grŵp Cyllideb Menywod Chief Executive of the Single Parent Action Network and Management Member of the Women's Budget Group Management Committee
Yr Athro/Professor Teresa Rees	Prifysgol Caerdydd Cardiff University
Jamie Westcombe	Cynghorydd Gwleidyddol, Y Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol Political Adviser, Equality and Human Right Commission

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
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Hanna Johnson Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil
Research Service
Marc Wyn Jones Clerc
Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.28 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.28 a.m.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. I remind Members that we are in a formal committee setting and that we, therefore, do not need to touch the microphones; they will be operated for us. We operate through the medium of English and Welsh; on the headphones, it is channel 1 for translation and channel 0 to amplify the language of the floor, should you need it. We do not expect a fire alarm today; if there is an alarm, we will take our instructions from the ushers, who will lead us out to the assembly point at the Pierhead building.

[2] We have apologies from Bethan Jenkins; there is no substitution, because we know that Rhodri is capable of representing the Plaid Cymru membership. Before we start, do Members wish to declare any interests that have not already been recorded?

[3] **Joyce Watson:** The only thing that I would say is that I am a founder member of the Wales gender budget group.

[4] **Ann Jones:** That is fine. Thanks for that, Joyce.

9.29 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i Ystyriaethau Cydraddoldeb Cyllideb Llywodraeth Cymru— Sesiwn Dystiolaeth Inquiry into the Equality Considerations in the Welsh Government's Budget— Evidence Session

[5] **Ann Jones:** Members will perhaps remember that we agreed to undertake a short inquiry into equality budgeting as a way to inform our committee's scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget from an equalities perspective. Those are the terms of reference and the background. I welcome Sue Cohen, who is the chief executive of the single parent action network and a management member of the women's budget group committee. Thank you for coming; I believe that we asked you to come at quite short notice. Do you have a few opening remarks with which you would like to set the scene, or are you happy to go into questions?

9.30 a.m.

[6] **Ms Cohen:** Shall I say a little about the background of both organisations? I am the chief executive of the single parent action network, which is a grass-roots network supporting the self-help and empowerment of single parents across the country. When I say the country, it was working in the four nations, but it is working more in England now and, to some extent, in Wales; for example, we had on our committee a representative from safer Wales. However, I am here today to represent the women's budget group, which is a national organisation that brings together grass-roots organisations, Trades Union Congress members and academics, and produces an analysis of the Treasury budgets on an annual basis, as well as the autumn spending review. It looks in particular at gender proofing, and I am here today to look at

gender-sensitive budgeting and how that is being progressed by the Welsh Government.

[7] **Ann Jones:** We have several questions, so I will start with the first. Can you tell us what you think the key elements of an equality-sensitive budget are?

[8] **Ms Cohen:** I have produced a few notes, so I hope that you do not mind my reading them.

[9] **Ann Jones:** No, carry on.

[10] **Ms Cohen:** We see an equality-sensitive budget as a tool for social change, in that it furthers the mainstreaming of gender equality in national and local government, particularly with regard to public finances. In particular, as far as where the work that I am involved in is coming from, it helps to reduce women and children's poverty and it also helps to address the intersection between class, ethnicity, gender, disability and age in how women-and-children's poverty is addressed by Government. As well as paid work, it addresses unpaid work, especially care work, which is usually disregarded in national accounting systems. For it to work well, a political and institutional commitment at all levels has to be embedded in the long term in a broad range of strategies, because the overall purpose would be to release finances in a broad range of arenas: education and training; families, children and young people; employment, welfare and benefits; health; housing; transport; and crime, and, especially in terms of violence against women. So, it has a broad reach if it is done well. Internationally, in developing countries, it is used as a tool in this way, and, in this country, we are learning from that development. It should be participatory, involving the grass roots, the voluntary sector, academics and unions. It needs to do a policy analysis that it is quantitative and qualitative, and it should inform the next stages—it needs to be a results-based programme.

[11] **Gwyn R. Price:** Good morning. During its scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget, what should this committee aim to find out from the Minister to determine whether appropriate consideration has been given to equality issues?

[12] **Ms Cohen:** First, look at what the expectation was previously, what the track record has been and what the outputs of what you have already asked of the Government are. There is a lot happening in Wales around that, so I suppose this committee will need to explore what is happening and pin the Government down on that. It is what is happening in different Government departments and committees. What are the women's groups, the voluntary organisations and the researchers saying, and how is that being acted upon? It is about getting information of that sort. It is also about asking what finance is available and how transparent all the data are. Are they producing baseline information and disaggregated statistics? Where are they addressing inequality? For example, there is a great burden on women with regard to care and childcare, so what movement has been made in that arena? What has been done on public transport? There has been a lot of consultation with women in Wales around transport. What, specifically, has been invested to make transport more accessible, including in rural areas?

[13] Looking at baseline information, just at the weekend, it was showing that women over 50 have seen a 31% increase in unemployment, compared with an increase of 4% in the nation. Yvette Cooper, shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, has said that women are facing a toxic combination of sexism and ageism because they are dealing with caring for elderly parents, they often have to look after their grandchildren and they are faced with sexism in the workplace. So, what can the Welsh Government do for that group? Has that been addressed? What about the impact on single parents who have lost a twelfth of their income under austerity cuts? What is the Welsh Government doing in that arena? There has been an increase in reporting on domestic violence, so what has been happening in that arena?

[14] **Peter Black:** Can you provide the committee with an example of good practice relating to the consideration of equality in budget allocation processes?

[15] **Ms Cohen:** The TUC has produced a toolkit—I do not know if you know this—on equality impact assessments on the cuts, which enables people at grass-roots level and in Government situations—civil servants—to look at how the cuts have affected employment, education and training, housing, welfare reform and transport et cetera.

[16] Thinking about the practice of the single parent action network, we have undertaken a research project over the last three years, following single parents who have been moved from income support to jobseeker's allowance. That research has been done by peer researchers: single parents interviewing other single parents. Doing an equality impact assessment of that would show that single parents are being pushed into work and, somehow, that is seen as addressing poverty. However, in reality, the impact on women—90% of single parents are women—is that they are being pushed into the worst sorts of jobs. They are being pushed into the five Cs; if I remember them, they are: clerical, childcare, catering, cleaning and the interface with—*[Interruption.]* Yes, customer service.

[17] So, in spite of their qualifications, we found that women with degrees in teaching and so on were working in supermarkets. Part of the reason for that was that Jobcentre Plus was not giving them the information they needed when they went into the job centre. It was instead pushing them out into any old job. So, as a result of that, we have been working with Jobcentre Plus to review its practices and the training of its staff, for example to encourage more self-employment initiatives, given that self-employment was considered by a number of the single parents as a good way of balancing their family and their work responsibilities.

[18] So, by applying a gender-sensitive analysis to that, we feel that we can have an impact. However, we want to go much further. It would be interesting for you to take a look at the Kirklees strategy, because Jobcentre Plus there is giving free childcare to all parents—for children up to the age of 14—and, as part of that process, the number of childcare workers in the workforce is being increased. So, that is an interesting way of moving women's equality in the workforce and childcare needs forward.

[19] **Mike Hedges:** I think that I agree with everything that you have said so far, but one of the things needed is the ability to gather good data. Are you happy with the availability of gender-specific data and gender-disaggregated data to help prove some of the things you have said?

[20] **Ms Cohen:** I do not have a sufficient answer to this question. I cannot give you a global response to that; all I know is that it is getting much more difficult to get those statistics, certainly at the Westminster level, because a lot of the institutions that would analyse those data have been disbanded or have had their workforce cut. So, for example, the Women's National Commission was decommissioned and the Equality and Human Rights Commission has lost half its workforce. So, generally, it is more difficult to get that information.

[21] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych chi wedi codi nifer o bwyntiau sy'n eithriadol o bwysig o ran cydraddoldeb. I ba raddau y credwch eich bod chi wedi cael y cyfle i fynegi'r materion hynny i Weinidogion yn ystod y broses gyllidebol, ac i ba raddau y credwch eich bod wedi gallu dylanwadu ar y gyllideb?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: You have raised a number of points that are extremely important in terms of equality. To what extent do you think you have had the opportunity to express those issues to Ministers during the budgeting process, and to what extent do you think you have been able to influence the budget?

[22] **Ms Cohen:** Certainly at a Westminster level, it is extremely difficult now. Under the previous Government, there was more of a listening ear. You had people like Yvette Cooper in particular who was proactive in looking at gender-sensitive budgeting, and the women's budget group and participatory groups at the grass-roots level, including groups from Wales, were able to visit the House of Lords and meet Members of Parliament and talk with civil servants under the previous Government. Those sorts of participatory processes at a national level are just not happening now in the same way.

9.45 a.m.

[23] In terms of Wales, I would not be able to say, because I am not based in Wales. However, in the lead up to the development of gender-sensitive budgeting and equality responsibilities, I have been impressed by the way you set up engagement events. I saw on the internet that you had really successful engagement meetings. I am going back to 2006 now, but this was the lead-up in preparation for taking on equality responsibilities. The level of response to those meetings was of a high quality. That is partly why I would suggest that you look back at that, if you have not done so already—I am sure that you have done or are doing that. For example, I noted that, at one of those meetings, it was said that transport planning needs to consider the needs of parents who work irregular hours, that buses and trains need to be accessible for pushchairs and wheelchairs, that public transport needs to be more flexible and that fares need to be more flexible to allow hop-on and hop-off facilities. That is one example. Has that been progressed? I do not know.

[24] It was said that the recommendations at those meetings were to go to you and would be acted on and that there would be more transparency, with equality impact assessments being put on local authority and the Welsh Government websites so that people could readily get hold of that information. I do not know whether that is the case. It is something to be explored.

[25] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae cyfeiriad wedi cael ei wneud yn y dystiolaeth rydym wedi ei derbyn at y lleisiau nas clywir yn aml, ac ei bod yn bwysig eu bod yn cael cyfle i ddweud beth yw eu hangenion. Rydych wedi cyfeirio at drafnidaeth. Ai dyna enghraifft o leisiau nas clywir yn aml yn y math hwn o broses?
Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Reference was made in the evidence we received to the voices of people who are not often heard and that it is important for them to have an opportunity to say what their needs are. You referred to transport. Is that an example of voices that are not often heard as part of this process?

[26] **Ms Cohen:** Yes. They talked about a whole range of things in those meetings. They talked more broadly about the fact that women were more likely to be in part-time work and that the quality of the jobs was poor compared to full-time work. As part of that, they talked about horizontal segregation, meaning that they were concentrated in the sectors I mentioned earlier. I have the five Cs now: they are clerical, catering, caring, cleaning and customer service. They talked about consultation being too limited a concept. It is often tokenism. They said that people should be fully involved from the point when the issue is first considered.

[27] I have done a great deal of participation work over many years, and what I think is really helpful is to bring the grass roots together with researchers and combine that knowledge. They each inform the other and you get some very good, grounded work in that respect.

[28] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr.
Rhodri Glyn Thomas: Thank you very much.

[29] **Ann Jones:** Janet is next.

[30] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** You spoke about stakeholder engagement. We had a very successful event here last week. The whole purpose of gathering evidence today is that, as we go into the budget process, we want to ensure as a committee that equality is running through all the services we provide and that we are not just paying lip-service, but ensuring that the proposed outcomes match the reality. All of us around this table are very aware of various strategies. We are ‘strategied’ to death at times. It is about how we are delivering on our equality responsibilities. With that in mind, how well do you think Government departments, both here and in the UK Government, consider the equality impact of their budgets?

[31] **Ms Cohen:** As I have said, I think that, in Westminster, there have been huge failings.

[32] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Could you give me some evidence on that?

[33] **Ms Cohen:** Research from the House of Commons library shows that the changes to tax credits and the public sector have hit women more than twice as hard as men. Of the £2.37 billion raised from tax credits and the public sector pay changes in the autumn statement, some 73%, or £1.73 billion, will come from women and 27%, or £638 million, will come from men. This is because of the huge cuts to the public sector infrastructure. It goes on and on.

[34] The Government, nationally, is investing £5 billion of capital investment in national infrastructure—roads, rail, and digital services—but only 5.3% of women are employed in science, engineering and technology, the areas in which these new jobs will be created. They make up only 12.3% of that workforce, but 45% of the workforce overall. So, the global picture is quite depressing. At the moment, the Treasury has undertaken very inadequate equality assessments. Having said that, the Equality and Human Rights Commission is on the case and it will be tracking it over the next year and a half. I think that you will receive evidence from it in a bit, will you not?

[35] I would not have enough information to say how well the Welsh Government is doing in this arena. It would be very interesting, because—

[36] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** May I step in here? Do you not think that it is important, now that we have devolution and are talking about the Welsh Government’s budget, that we perhaps become more focused on what the Welsh Government is doing?

[37] **Ms Cohen:** I absolutely think that devolution was politically, financially and socially the way forward. At the same time, there could be a tendency—although not here—not to consider sufficiently what is happening nationally. I am saying this from a grass-roots level. Devolution has separated us more from our Welsh colleagues. It has also separated us in the sense that we used to go to Westminster together—

[38] **Ann Jones:** I think that we are straying off into discussion of the devolution settlement, which is not part of our terms of reference on equality budgeting. Joyce, you want to come in on something that has just been said.

[39] **Joyce Watson:** I think that it would be right to follow that up, since we have started to discuss the question that I was going to ask. It has been suggested to this committee that the Welsh Government’s equality impact assessment of the budget should take into account—and this is what you started to say—some of the non-devolved issues, some of which you have mentioned, such as welfare, tax and justice. That being the case, do you think it would be beneficial for the committee to look at and take account of some of those issues as well?

[40] **Ms Cohen:** It is possible, in light of what is happening nationally, to do some targeted work in Wales—pilot work, such as that being developed in Kirklees, for example, where you are aware of the fact that childcare is expensive, that women on benefits are not getting the training that they should be getting, and women with degrees are on benefits and not getting the jobs that they should be getting. I suggest doing some good, targeted pilot work. There will be really good grass-roots projects going on across Wales that could be given more funding to develop and that programme and perhaps roll it out more effectively.

[41] **Joyce Watson:** Can you send us a link to the Kirklees report?

[42] **Ms Cohen:** Yes.

[43] **Ann Jones:** That would be helpful. Mark is next.

[44] **Mark Isherwood:** Do you agree with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which told us that changes to specific budget lines are easier to equality-impact access than looking at entire departmental or top-level budgets?

[45] **Ms Cohen:** I am not sure I understood that question. Are you asking whether it would be better to look at high-level budgets or more targeted spending in departments?

[46] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes, the specific spending programmes more than the headline budget.

[47] **Ms Cohen:** I think that you have to do both. You have to look at the context in which you are working, what is happening and what the trends are, and then target right down. Sometimes, you just have to tweak something to make a big difference. I think that that is the case with Jobcentre Plus, for example: if it gave better information on childcare training, and if the staff were better trained and understood that people who come through the door are parents, as well as adult workers, you would see a big shift. When there were lone parent advisers, there was a much better service. I am talking about single parent issues because those are the issues that I know well, and they do affect women. You need to understand what is happening on the ground in the context of what is happening nationally, and in departments as well as in overall budgets.

[48] **Mark Isherwood:** I visited those that deliver the work programme in Jobcentre Plus in Wales during the summer, and in their discussions with me they all raised single parents, among other things. They are all going through a programme of rapid change, and I was interested in your comment that you are working with Jobcentre Plus. Can you tell us a little more about that?

[49] **Ms Cohen:** As I said, we tracked these single parents in Bristol to see what happened with them, and we found that they were not being given a good service. We had a meeting with the area manager of Jobcentre Plus, who said it was the best meeting that he had that week. For him, it opened up what was happening on the ground, in that parents were not being readily directed to self-employment and were not being told what childcare was available in the area. They were not looked at in terms of their career prospects; it was a case of telling them about any old job, so many of them were jumping ship. We can do more work with area managers in that way, and we are now working with civil servants responsible for Jobcentre Plus across England, Wales and Scotland to look at training generally and advice in that respect. Parents were not getting transparent information. We have now got them to put a leaflet on the Government website advising parents on what they are entitled to. We have developed a similar leaflet on our website, so it is that sort of work.

[50] **Kenneth Skates:** Thank you for your evidence so far; it has been compelling. Many stakeholders have suggested to us that we have a role as a committee to scrutinise the Government's equality impact assessment. Do you agree with this?

[51] **Ms Cohen:** Absolutely.

[52] **Kenneth Skates:** How do you suggest we go about doing this? What sort of areas should we look at?

[53] **Ms Cohen:** That is a big question.

[54] **Kenneth Skates:** For example, has it made changes as a result of the assessment?

10.00 a.m.

[55] **Ms Cohen:** Yes, absolutely. For us, it is a question of what they promised to do—well, not promised, but what their outputs were, what the outcomes were, and whether those have been evaluated. Really, it is a matter of who you have on board, technically, and also who is actually behind all the development of research and policy. You need really good, grounded people doing that work, and so are there resources assigned to that?

[56] On what has been raised today, it is a matter of tracking where people have had a voice and have made recommendations, to see whether that has been acted on or whether it was a token consultation. What are the real changes that have been made? What has been most successful? Why was that successful in changing things for women and children in poverty? If you change things for women in poverty, you change things for children in poverty, too.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** We have public sector equality duties, so do you have any evidence that those duties might have improved the way in which public authorities consider equality in their budgets—or is that not the question?

[58] **Ms Cohen:** I did note that there seemed to be some concern in Wales about the level of transparency surrounding the public sector equality duty, and that a women's body would be tracking authorities on this, but I do not know where it has got to on that. It was the Wales Assembly of Women, and it was going to monitor all local authorities in Wales for evidence of the consequences of the gender impact assessment. I do not know what it is like in Wales, but it is very patchy in England. Some authorities are very transparent about what they have done, but you just cannot get the evidence from others. When you do get the evidence, you find that the equality impact assessment might have been done up to a point, but the gender element has somehow slipped through the net. I do think that it is something around here, whatever the body. It is about tracking that evidence to make sure that it is happening on the ground.

[59] **Ann Jones:** We have now come to the end of the questions. Thank you, Sue, for coming to give us evidence today. I am sure that it will form part of our short inquiry to help us to scrutinise the Welsh Government's budget. We will send you a copy of the transcript of this session just for you to check for accuracy, in case we have put anything down that you did not say, so just to be safe. Thank you very much for coming along. We appreciate that.

10.04 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Ystyriaethau Cydraddoldeb Cyllideb Llywodraeth Cymru—
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into the Equality Considerations in the Welsh Government's Budget—
Evidence Session**

[60] **Ann Jones:** We now welcome to the table Adele Baumgardt, who is the co-chair of the women's equality network in Wales, and Professor Teresa Rees from Cardiff University. I think that you have both been here before. Adele certainly has, to the former Committee on Equality of Opportunity when we did some work on gender budgeting, if my memory serves me correctly. You are both welcome, and thank you for the papers. Do you have a couple of opening remarks that you would like to make to set the scene before we go on to questions?

[61] **Professor Rees:** I thank the committee very much for inviting me. I have to say that I am not a huge expert on equality budgeting, but I am a great supporter of the concept of it. It might be useful to say that what seems to me to be the critical issue is the questions that the committee can ask to really get an understanding of the implications of everything that is going on. Secondly, that is quite a technical issue, even if you get the data. It is like doing an equal pay audit, as I know in my own institution: you get all the data but then what does it all mean? Thirdly, I think that there is a lot to learn from other countries that are a bit further down the track on this. Mostly, that is on gender budgeting. I do not think that many countries have a lot of expertise in all the equality dimensions. I particularly think that Canada and the municipality of Reykjavik have a lot to teach us.

[62] I will say a word about Reykjavik, if I may. The administration there looked at what it spent all its budget on and found that it was things like dealing with homelessness, unemployment, poor health and so on, and it worked out that everything that it was dealing with was directly or indirectly the consequence of quite concerning inequality. So, it then decided that its one aim was to promote equality, and then a lot of these issues would, hopefully, disappear or be reduced. So, promoting equality is extremely important. The agenda that you are concerned with, of equality budgeting, is critical to that, but it is technical, difficult, and we all need help with it.

[63] **Ann Jones:** Thank you for that. Adele, can you give the committee a brief overview? I know that a 'brief' overview probably does not coincide with the concept of gender budgeting, but can you tell us how it works in practice? I know that we have touched on this subject before.

[64] **Ms Baumgardt:** We have, indeed. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to be here and to speak on one of my favourite subjects. It is a complex and technical subject, as Terry outlined. In a nutshell, gender budgeting is an analysis of a way of raising or spending public money from a gender perspective, and working out whether the way that you raise taxes or spend money is having the same effect on women as it is on men, or on girls as opposed to boys. So, it has nothing to do with having a specific budget for women and girls; it is about looking at what we do with money, the effect that that money has, and how we raise it.

[65] There are a number of reasons why you should be interested in this. They are all in the papers sent to you, and you will be well versed in many of these arguments. However, there is a big issue for Wales around GDP and making the most of our assets. We know that women and girls are outperforming boys at all stages of the education system, but there is something latent in our economy that means that we are not tapping into that and making the best use of it, as the gender pay gap evidences. So, it really matters that we get this right and that we ensure that we are using women and girls to their full potential in our economy. If we do not understand our economic strategies from a gender perspective, we are severely missing

out on that opportunity.

[66] Turning to how you do it, I tried to put some ideas very simply in the previous papers that I have submitted. Some of the approaches that have been taken are based on international experience. If we are matching this with the work that you are trying to do on equality impact assessments and the progress under the public sector equality duty, a good equality impact assessment should do a lot of the work of a gender budget analysis. In my experience, of working as a private consultant with a lot of organisations, helping them to comply with and make the best of the public sector equality duty, when they do equality impact assessments, gender is the thing that they stumble on most often. If it gets mentioned, it tends to get mentioned in a neutral way. There is an assumption that it is the same for men and women, but I think that the causes of gender inequality are much more difficult and complex than those for some of the other groups—although that is not to say that there is a hierarchy in the difficulties or barriers that different groups encounter.

[67] The case for gender budgeting is that gender is not a minority issue, but a majority issue. The nature of the disadvantage that women face is complex and societal, and I think that people are more easily able to get their heads around the other equality strands, and tap into expertise and specialist lobby groups for them. So, if you have to consider disability in your equality impact assessment, there will be disability groups that can help you and can give very specific actions that can be undertaken to overcome the disadvantage experienced by disabled groups. On gender equality, first, there are now very few people or networks around that specifically or explicitly deal with women's equality, so I think that the expertise has been watered down. Secondly, on the causes of gender equality, I have yet to meet a woman in the street who can articulate how she has been indirectly discriminated against on the grounds of her sex because of where her health services are delivered. People do not think about their life experience in that gendered way, but she may very well be experiencing indirect discrimination because of the way in which hospitals services are designed and delivered.

[68] So, there are a number of things that make gender more difficult and a number of things that make it more important, which is why you need expertise to help you to understand these things.

[69] **Gwyn R. Price:** Taking that into account, what is your assessment of the Welsh Government's approach to considering equality issues in the budget allocation process? Has that been improved over recent years by the Welsh Government?

[70] **Ms Baumgardt:** Yes, of course it has improved. This is a journey, a direction of travel, and the commitment is to be welcomed and recognised.

[71] I produced a paper on behalf of the women's equality network Wales in response to last year's budget, which we felt was inadequate in a number of ways. The budget was to be welcomed, as it was progress and it did recognise that considerably more detailed work could be done on equality on the previous budget, but there was, to my mind, very little or no gendered analysis or understanding of women and men's inequality. As a result of what the Welsh Government decided to do following that budget, there were some things that had a beneficial impact on women and were very much to be welcomed, but they were not done from a gender analysis point of view, but from the point of view of anti-poverty and wanting to protect the most vulnerable in society, of which women obviously make up a great proportion.

[72] **Peter Black:** In the Welsh Government's budget from last year, did you see evidence that gender and equality were adequately considered in the allocation of resources?

[73] **Ms Baumgardt:** No—but then I would say that, would I not? [*Laughter.*] As I said, there were some beneficial consequences for women, but the point about gender budgeting is that it looks at what appears to be a neutral budget and tries to identify and unpick why it is gender blind, in fact, and not gender neutral. So, if you just look at the allocation of extra resources for, say, police community support officers, which is quite a big commitment that is to be welcomed, you need to ascertain how that will affect men and women differently. Will those officers who are employed fully understand gender and equality, will they be trained in domestic violence issues, and will women and men have access to those posts? We need to track this from a gendered and an equality perspective.

[74] Similarly, in relation to the stuff around jobs for growth and the commitment to creating and encouraging jobs, it felt to me as though there was a latent belief that ‘jobs’ would be equally accessed by men and women. However, we know that men and women occupy the economy in different ways: they have different needs and there are different barriers to their ability to access jobs. With fundamental things like public transport and childcare, we know that women depend on them far more than men do, so if those things are not considered in how we roll out our support for getting people into work, then more men than women will end up taking advantage of those opportunities. I did not see any explicit articulation of that in the budget, and I think that that was a gap in the thinking and the budget would have benefited from that gendered analysis.

[75] **Professor Rees:** I absolutely support that. The issue is that all this work should be happening in the policy development and design, so that the budgeting at the end should almost be like an auditing process. That would be ideal. The difficulty is in trying to do the budgeting at the end of the actions. How do you do that? It means really getting the evidence and the data together to try to ascertain the gender implications of policy design and development.

[76] There is an interesting example from the city of Modena in Italy, where there were various assumptions about who was involved in the labour market and who provided childcare and all the rest of it. The whole city was designed in that way and many of the women in the city protested against the local authority, as it was in that case, saying that they increasingly wanted to return to work but could not because of the way in which public services were organised. It was to do with timings—when the transport ran, when the general practice surgeries were open—and all those kinds of things. What they said was that, when designing and funding these public services, they needed to take into account that women and men may be involved in the labour market and therefore a lot more flexibility was needed.

[77] So, it is about getting the evidence and the analysis, and that is where having investment in data sources on a detailed and on a geographical basis, particularly for Wales, is important in the policy development process. Monitoring needs to be built into the process as well, so that the budgeting at the end becomes part of that story.

10.15 a.m.

[78] **Peter Black:** My community’s PCSO is a woman, but the question that I want to ask is whether part of the problem is that the Welsh Government does not deliver the services directly, but funds others to do that. Is that an issue in terms of making sure that equality is built into how services are delivered?

[79] **Ms Baumgardt:** An additional challenge for the Welsh Government in deciding how it creates the best possible scrutiny through equality impact assessments is the arm’s-length relationship for many of the services that get delivered. However, what it needs to do better is to understand the levers and requirements that it can place on those that it passes the funding on to. They can gather the raw data to which the Welsh Government may not have direct

access. For example, it might not have the data on who uses what bus services in local communities, which might be owned by the transport consortium or by the local authority, but it could, in its grant-funding processes, require that the local authority passed that information on to it.

[80] **Professor Rees:** There are two points. First, we need a paradigm shift in expertise in this area, which would help the whole public sector in Wales. There is quite a lot that the Welsh Government can do to encourage, support and maybe even require that proper technical support is used by those who deliver public services. The other thing is the complexity of this. A shorthand way of looking at this says that you must attribute the same budget to men and women for everything. That is a great bear trap, because, often, to treat people equally, you have to treat them differently. Getting that understanding across is very significant.

[81] **Ann Jones:** Ken, you have a supplementary question.

[82] **Kenneth Skates:** It might help inform Members on equality issues if you could point us in the direction of specific papers regarding Reykjavik and Modena.

[83] **Ann Jones:** We do not have time to go to Reykjavik, although I am sure that Members would like to. [*Laughter.*]

[84] **Kenneth Skates:** However, if there is strong academic research, that would be really helpful. It would be very interesting.

[85] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** What are the key elements of an equality-sensitive budget, specifically in relation to gender, and how important do you believe that this kind of consultation and engagement is during the process?

[86] **Ms Baumgardt:** How long do you have? Data, data and data, and consultation and engagement. Consultation and engagement are difficult on gender, in some ways—more difficult than with other specific protected groups, which have support groups and some expertise. The third thing that I would say is that there is a level of expertise and understanding around gender inequality and what causes it that is needed to understand the data and what consultation is telling you; I think that you even need to interpret those data as well. So, those would be my three elements.

[87] **Professor Rees:** To add to that, it is interesting to see the Welsh Government's desire to promote jobs growth, particularly in the knowledge economy, but if you look at the specific ways in which knowledge industries have been defined, you will see that they more or less exclude women. So, in a sense, that contributes to the polarisation between men and women in terms of the kinds of jobs that they have, the opportunities for progression, training, income and all the rest of it. The defining of terms is, in itself, gendered. Again, there is research on this and there is a danger—the European Commission fell into this trap as well; the more that it invested in its particular youth training schemes, because it was young men who fell into the remit, the more it widened the skills gap between men and women. So, the defining of terms, even in things like what knowledge economy industries and jobs are, is crucial, and it is important to understand the way in which women engage in the labour market and all of that to ensure that policies can encourage and support, rather than exclude them.

[88] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rwyf wedi bod yn gwranddo ar yr hyn rydych wedi ei ddweud, ac mae'n ddiddorol, oherwydd rydych yn cydnabod bod y broses ymgynghori wedi gwella dros y blynyddoedd

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I have been listening to what you have said, and it is interesting, because you recognise that the consultation process has improved over the years in terms of the consideration that is given to these

o ran ystyried y materion hyn yng nghydestun y gyllideb, ond, os wyf yn deall yn iawn, rydych yn dweud bod tuedd i geisio dadansoddi'r gyllideb yn nhermau rhyw ar ôl ei llunio, yn hytrach na bod proses o baratoi cyllideb ar sail anghenion rhyw. Felly, er bod y broses ymgynghori wedi gwella, nid yw'r hyn a gyflwynir yn y pen draw wedi gwella gymaint â hynny, er bod y dadansoddi hwn yn digwydd ar ôl i'r gyllideb gael ei phennu. Rydych wedi sôn am ddata ac rydym wedi clywed am leisiau nad ydynt yn cael eu clywed yn aml iawn. Sut mae modd yn ymarferol sicrhau bod y dylanwadau hynny yn digwydd ar y gyllideb, fel ei bod yn cael ei ffurfio mewn ffordd sy'n mynd i'r afael â'r problemau hyn rydych wedi eu crybwyll y bore yma?

issues in the context of the budget, but if I understand it correctly, you are saying that there is a tendency to try to analyse the budget in gender terms after it has been set, rather than there being a process of preparing a budget on the basis of gender needs. So, although the consultation process has improved, what is ultimately brought forward has not improved that much, although this analysis happens after the budget is decided. You mentioned data and we have heard of voices that may not be heard that frequently. How is it possible on a practical level to ensure that those influences come to bear on the budget so that it is drawn up in a way that addresses the problems that you have mentioned this morning?

[89] **Professor Rees:** Thank you for that. It is a tricky business to do this, but it can be done by having the promotion of gender equality agenda right at the forefront of the mind, and to acknowledge the way in which the terms, policies and assumptions that we all work with have gender implications that we may not be able to understand. So, starting from the beginning, you have to think what would be the three best policies to introduce to promote gender equality, not in a sense to not discriminate, but to promote gender equality. Putting that concern right at the beginning of the process can help. However, it is complex, and although consultation processes are very desirable and very important in a participatory democracy, it is an inexact science; some voices are heard more loudly than others. There are lots of examples of that, particularly in health. If resources are available, people will want their share of them, without necessarily understanding how those resources are currently allocated, and the basis for that allocation. In an unintended way, it can benefit one group more than another. So, it is about that complex analysis and putting it right at the beginning.

[90] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** To put you on the spot, health accounts for a third of the Assembly's budget, so what would be the top three?

[91] **Professor Rees:** Health, for sure. This is a bit outside your area of responsibility, but if we look at medical research, for example, we all know that if you take an aspirin a day it is good for keeping common cold away. That is based on clinical trials of 27,000 people, therefore it is very robust and we can feel confident about it. None of those 27,000 people were women. Heart disease in women is different. This is repeated in lots of medical research; women are expected to accept medicine that has less of an evidence base than men. It even extends to the animals used in pre-clinical tests. There are lots of examples of this. This is of great concern to me, because this is a deeply unfair distribution of medical science research

[92] **Kenneth Skates:** Are you talking about international research?

[93] **Professor Rees:** It is UK and international research. Among others, I wrote to *The Lancet* to say that when scientists report on the clinical trials that they are doing, they must be required to report on who takes part in the clinical trials. It works equally the other way. Men who have breast cancer—they are very few in number—are prescribed tamoxifen, which has never been tested on men. This is because no-one is thinking in a gendered way about how we do these things.

[94] **Ms Baumgardt:** It is an excellent question, which gender budgeting has struggled

with over the years. The desire is to design a gender-sensitive budget as you deliver it. What has actually happened with gender budgeting is a retrospective analysis of money as it has been spent. My top advice would be to look at that retrospective analysis and apply its principles to a budget as you are building it. So, learn from the lessons of the past and apply them to the way that you are spending now.

[95] My other caveat is that we know—and we have known for as long as I have been working on it—what the big sticking points are for inequality for women. I come unashamedly from that perspective on this. It takes brave and innovative budget allocation that is tracked and monitored on a longitudinal basis for its impact on men and women. For example, if you look at the money that the construction board, God bless it, has spent for decades on trying to encourage women into the construction industry, it has not dented those figures at all. If you took that money, and got rid of Kevin Webster and put another positive role model on motor mechanics in *Coronation Street* or in whatever it is that young people are watching, and if you did a social media campaign on why it was really cool for girls to be train drivers, which is what Transport for London did, then you would make bigger dents in these things. However, it does take a brave and innovative approach to doing something different with your money to try to crack some of these old problems.

[96] **Joyce Watson:** We are talking about making the decisions at a policy level and then the budget is an outturn of that, because it has been done that way around. I know, Adele, that you will remember the report that was done on the Westminster Government when Labour was in power in the early days. I cannot remember the name of it, but I was involved. That report looked at the connectedness in thinking between Government departments, and what they thought they should be doing on behalf of gender issues. There were huge gaps, because some people thought they owned it, whereas others thought that it had nothing to do with them. Do you think that that is happening here? If there is that disconnectedness in thinking, how can we go about changing it?

[97] **Ms Baumgardt:** That is a good and challenging question. I think that there is disconnectedness, but I am not sure that I have seen any evidence of particular ownership of gender issues in one place or another. In fact, what I generally encounter is goodwill and good intent, but not very technical knowledge. That leads to short-term decision making based on a reactive cycle as opposed to a long-term planning cycle. Gender issues do tend to sit in silos, certainly as far as budgets are concerned. If you are going to tackle gender equality, you need to have it mainstreamed, because it matters to everybody in all of the business that we deliver in Wales. So, going back to the previous question, look at how provision of supported childcare could make a huge difference to gender inequality, even in, for example, the criminal justice system, although I know that that is not fully devolved. If you are in the criminal justice system as a woman, there is no access to childcare. You are less likely to turn up to any of your probation hearings or to any of your court appearances, so you are more likely to end up in custody. The simple provision of childcare and public transport access would alleviate a lot of those inequalities and unfairnesses.

[98] **Mark Isherwood:** What role can this committee play in scrutinising the Welsh Government's budget equality impact assessment, its conclusions, its evidence base and any changes that result?

[99] **Ms Baumgardt:** I am incredibly enthusiastic that you have asked the question, because the potential is huge. In my opinion, a lot of equality impact assessments are completed and never scrutinised; therein lies a huge weakness. My challenge would be, if you produce a toolkit and set of questions to scrutinise budgets from an equality perspective, what are you going to do with the answers that they give you? How much expertise do you have to challenge an assumption such as 'We know that that does not have any negative impact on women or men'? How would you challenge that, and how would you scrutinise any data that

support that equality impact assessment? A lot of this comes down to expertise and having the right tools to turn to. In the Scottish Government, the Scottish women's budget group provides scrutiny on all of the budget allocations in an expert manner, supported by the Scottish Government, so that it has that expertise on tap through all of its budget allocation processes. However, that takes resources, expertise and money.

[100] **Professor Rees:** If you get in there very early in the system, people know that there may be consequences for the allocation of the budget if they have not provided you with sufficient evidence that they are doing the technical work to ensure that they know what the likely consequences of the budget spend will be. So, I think that it is about getting in there early and ensuring that people are worried that they may not get the allocation if they are not doing it properly. As you say, it is quite difficult to do very much about it after the event.

10.30 a.m.

[101] **Ann Jones:** We did try to get the Scottish women's group in to give evidence, but the dates and other timings have unfortunately not coincided. However, if the group has not already provided it, we are chasing it up to take its evidence. That is something that we as a committee can perhaps have a look at. Sorry, Mark; I cut in on your question. Are you happy now? Have you finished?

[102] **Mark Isherwood:** I was just wondering about one small part of the Welsh budget—it is a big part, but by no means everything—which is the single status changes to the public sector and local authorities in Wales. One of the biggest problems has been when a council produces its proposals and the losers, obviously, express their concerns. This has led to a complete revisit and the writing of new plans. How do we promote complete honesty to ensure that people understand that the consequence of this means that, although there will be winners and that it will tackle barriers that are preventing people from maximising their own opportunities, there will also be a cost elsewhere to counterbalance that?

[103] **Ms Baumgardt:** If I had the answer to that I would probably not be sat here, would I? I would be a very rich woman. [*Laughter.*] It is tricky, is it not? You are absolutely right: there are always winners and losers. Gender budgeting is not about saying that whoever has a budget does not have the right to say, 'We have less money so we have to make cuts and, by virtue of that, there need to be winners and losers'.

[104] What the duty requires is for you to have due regard to the negative impact on one protected group or another, and so transparency is absolutely the key to everything. I think that an awful lot of people would be less dissatisfied with the consequences of budget cuts if they understood and could see the process and the decision making and that, actually, their needs were considered in the decision-making process, but it is not easy. If you have a reducing budget, you will always have complainants, will you not? That is the truth of it. That they should always hold up the process is, I think, unhelpful, and it is sometimes unhelpful in advancing equality, because it gives it a bad reputation.

[105] **Professor Rees:** I think that that is right. This whole exercise is about redistribution, but the allocation is not an informed one. In many senses, it is accidental that some groups get a lot more than others, although that is not the intention.

[106] There is another exercise to be done, really—a paradigm shift, again—in getting the people of Wales to know and understand their own country better. 'An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in Wales', I thought, had some fascinating, but also some deeply shocking, statistics. Now, we may know those statistics, but what Adele says about transparency is quite right. I am very struck by the fact that, in Sweden, if you get a taxi, the taxi driver will pull out of their back pocket the latest Statistics Sweden report and say, 'Did you know, this year

there has been an increase in this or a decrease in that?’ There is a citizen awareness of the allocation of resource and who gets what, and I think that that is very important. We need people who are educated about the distribution of resource at the moment.

[107] If we knew the income and wealth of the poorest people in Wales and we compared that with the richest, we would find it outrageous. It is absolutely appalling. If we knew about the hidden prompters of inequalities, which none of us really understands because it is all too complicated, we would want to do something about them. So, it is about getting those forms of information into the public domain so that we all understand. Then, if we are talking about policies that involve redistribution, I think that there would be more ownership and that people would understand it. People would be concerned about the impact of poverty and inequality, if not for them, for future generations.

[108] **Joyce Watson:** We have sort of strayed into it, do you not think? That is, that the new public sector equality duties might improve the way that public authorities consider equality in their budgets.

[109] **Ms Baumgardt:** Undoubtedly. It does put a requirement on authorities to consider equality. That does not mean that practice and implementation are not patchy and at different levels in different places. However, I have seen some really good and well-thought-through budget allocation and even other resource allocation and the way that services are delivered being considered from an equality perspective, which would not have happened before the public sector equality duty.

[110] **Professor Rees:** In a sense, because we are one of the countries with the oldest welfare state, health authority and free education systems, what we have tried to do after that initial setting up is to adjust and adapt. We have then identified groups that have been ignored and have tried to add on a bit. We have ended up, as I discovered with the higher education fees system in particular, with a hugely complex range. You have to be really clever to be able make the accommodation allowance or maintenance work. I admire what they did in Australia, which had newer systems, which was to say, ‘This is getting a bit messy and untidy and difficult for anybody to understand, access or administer—throw it out of the window and let us start again. What is it that we are trying to do? Ah, yes; we are trying to deliver these services to those people who need them’. I think that it is difficult from the Welsh Government’s perspective to throw out the NHS, the free education system and the welfare state and start again. However, it may be that, in refreshing the perspective on some elements of governance and economic development, for example, we have the perfect opportunity to say, ‘Let us not just adapt and adjust; let us throw everything out and start again’.

[111] **Ann Jones:** That is an interesting thought.

[112] **Mike Hedges:** Adele, in your paper, you talk a lot about different budgeting techniques that revolve around disaggregating data. How good is the ability to disaggregate data? You talked about the difficulties in doing so. How accurate is it, and how difficult is it to ensure that what you are getting is correct? If it is correct, may I ask you for some of the data that you have produced?

[113] **Ms Baumgardt:** It has been interesting to go from working for a statutory commission on sex equality to being a consultant working with organisations to try to make this a reality. My experience is that the data on sex equality are there. The stock answer of, ‘Well, we do not have the disaggregated data’ is just not true. It is there—it is in a dusty corner somewhere, or somebody has not interrogated the data. If you are talking about data on transgender, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs, those are a long way behind. However, with regard to sex equality, there is a huge amount of data. My experience is that there is little expertise in analysing or looking at those data with regard to what the data can tell you. I

think that there is a huge amount of sex equality data.

[114] **Professor Rees:** It is incredibly important to provide all of the support that you think appropriate for the census in 2021. It is particularly important for areas like Wales, with small-area statistics; you cannot get those data from anywhere else. It is really helpful, particularly for economic development, but also for the allocation of public resources. The census data are critical.

[115] **Ann Jones:** Some of us have supermarket loyalty cards—in one supermarket, you do not even have to put in your order as it will base it on what you ordered in the last six weeks. The data are available, or there is a programme somewhere that is available to say that, ‘Ann Jones is’—I am not going to say how old I am—‘and she eats this, she likes that and she reads this’. Everybody always asks you what papers you read, and apparently that is supposed to demonstrate where you are in society. I dread to think where they would put me if they asked what papers I read. Programmes and that information are there—you said that the information is there. Why is it that public authorities struggle to deliver budgets or services for the people they represent? If supermarkets can do my shopping for me without my telling them what I want, based on the historic data available, surely local authorities should be able, at budget time, to put those data into a formula or system somewhere.

[116] **Professor Rees:** I am sure that you are right. I think that the danger for public services is that we are all rushing around trying to deliver on a day-to-day basis, and it is difficult to lift one’s head and be strategic. It is difficult to make what would be quite a significant investment in new ways of working in order to better understand the clients that one is dealing with. As you say, if it works for the private sector in order to enable it to provide a more targeted service, then it is avoiding quite a lot of waste in their advertising and communication. It is about investing to save.

[117] **Ms Baumgardt:** I think that there are number of reasons. As a society, we tend to do what we have always done—a little bit of refinement around the edges to make it a little bit better, as opposed to doing that big and challenging rethinking thing. It also depends on what you are trying to do. Most organisations that use that kind of market segmentation data are trying to sell something or raise revenue in some way, whereas public money operates differently to that, quite rightly. What we tend to do with public services is design systems and services that deliver the best to the most. Of course, what we are trying to do here is capture those who are always the most vulnerable and who fall through that net. They will be the people who will be excluded from a generic way of delivering things.

[118] I go back to this point of expertise. In most instances, where there is a big pile of data sitting in a dusty corner somewhere, they say, ‘Oh yes, we’ve got all that, we just didn’t know what do with it’. It is more a case of a lack of expertise on what is the data are telling you, and that expertise would, in fact, drive service delivery and make it much better. Actually, is the data are not being used currently. There are historical reasons and there are budget reasons, so you have to spend your money differently. I have worked with local authorities that, for example, will spend £11,000 a year on supporting their crown green bowling green in the local park. I tell them to take that money away and spend it on girls’ dodgeball in Lidl’s car park by putting some floodlights in, because girls need to play dodgeball. They will say, ‘Who do you think votes for me, Adele?’. So, there is always something about money and politics that will clash.

[119] **Ann Jones:** Absolutely. That is a classic example, which I think we all see in our casework. You look at developing policies, but it is about survival, really, is it not? However, sometimes that is wrong and sometimes you have to be brave and accept change. I will declare an interest as my husband is a crown green bowler.

[120] **Ms Baumgardt:** Sorry. [*Laughter.*]

[121] **Ann Jones:** No, it is fine.

[122] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** During scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget next week, what should this committee aim to find out from Ministers to determine whether appropriate consideration has been given to equality issues? I ask that because we had a debate on the programme for government last week. I asked about equality impact assessments and how they had fed into the programme for government, and I think that it is fair to say that I did not receive an answer.

[123] **Professor Rees:** It would be very interesting to ask what data sources they used to inform their processes and their decisions, whether they found that there were any data missing that they could have used and how they analysed them. These sorts of questions are about understanding a little bit better what data are being used and how they are analysed and getting a check across the Welsh Government about what levels of complexity are being dealt with. It seems to me that one of the strengths of social science in Wales is around quantitative methods. We have the Office for National Statistics down the road; we are in a very strong position to up the standard of using and analysing statistics for these processes. So, getting some feedback on what currently happens would be helpful.

[124] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I have a supplementary question on that. I find it quite difficult when it comes to settlement for local authorities. It is so historical; I think that it was 2001 when it was originally brought into being. In my constituency of Aberconwy, it is based on school numbers and the younger element, and yet we have the largest proportion of over-65s. It is about trying to get the settlement formula to reflect what our needs are in Aberconwy and trying to get that message across. I think that, from what Peter has told me previously, it has been adjusted and tweaked along the way, but it takes a brave move, as is the case with what is happening with welfare reform. With the numerous benefits and the complex system that is in operation at the moment, someone has bravely taken the initiative and said, 'Right, this is not working, and we need to be targeting those people who need the help'. You do not turn a ship around overnight, but it is a very brave move.

[125] **Ms Baumgardt:** You also need to understand the impacts on different groups.

[126] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** It will be measured and assessed before, during and after.

10.45 a.m.

[127] **Professor Rees:** I have had some concerns about identifying the people most in need and the relevant geographical areas. I know that this is a terrible thing to say, with Communities First and so on, but, in a sense, that is fire-fighting. It is about understanding the structural causes of why these communities or groups of people end up with that situation. It may be that childcare in a court would make all the difference to person X, Y or Z. It is that level of understanding that is really going to be helpful.

[128] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** If I may come in there, the sheer frustration that I have is that a lot of money has been put into areas of Wales where there has been deprivation, but the deprivation still exists. This is not just about money. It is about far more strategic thinking than that.

[129] **Ms Baumgardt:** I go back unashamedly to gender and women's issues. If I were asking the question, I would go back to the basic principles of the public sector equality duty, which requires authorities to advance equality of opportunity. That means advancing equality of opportunity for men and women. The Act itself now talks about what we mean by 'due

regard’, and what we mean is identifying barriers to equality and removing them. It also means increasing representation in decisionmaking—so, fostering good relations and looking at who makes the decisions. It is about asking where women and women’s voices are, and about positive action. The middle part of the Act talks about doing things to meet a particular need and being confident about positive action. Therefore, in looking at budgets, you need to ask what positive action is there—for whatever group, although I would say for women, would I not? What positive action is demonstrated in that money and where are the assumptions of gender neutrality?

[130] I would also ask who made the decisions in the decision-making bodies. As I get older, I see more and more decisions made by people with one particular life experience. They tend to be white men over the age of 55, who have had wives at home looking after the children and doing things. That is not to say that those people do not make good decisions or that they are not excellent at what they are doing, but they have one life experience. So, this is about widening the pool of decision makers, so that difference is reflected in how we make our decisions and allocate our resources.

[131] Thirdly, I would look at the power of the specific gender pay duty in Wales and at how the committee might collect evidence and data around that, because it requires looking at the causes of the gender pay gap. When I work with public authorities around Wales, I find that most of them think that doing a pay audit ticks that box. Actually, it is about understanding occupational segregation, vertical and horizontal segregation, childcare, the mummy gap and part-time discrimination, for which there is no protection but which clearly disadvantages more women than men. All of those things are complicated. We have an opportunity, through these duties, to collect some evidence and to do something innovative about the causes of gender inequality.

[132] **Ann Jones:** Peter has a supplementary question.

[133] **Peter Black:** Following on from Janet’s question and harking back to my last question, do we need to equality-impact test the funding formulas? Should we ask the question: ‘You have given so much to health boards and so much to local government, but have you done the equality impact test?’ Most of these formulas were set about 10 years ago.

[134] **Ms Baumgardt:** Absolutely. The further back you can go strategically in the decision-making process, the better the consequences and outcomes and the earlier you will be building in ways of addressing inequality. When I go back to my clients, they will often have a specific programme and will say, ‘Come and do an EIA on that’ when, actually, what you need to do is equality-impact test the children and young people plan. You need to do it at the most strategic level. There are examples in Australia where this has been done on a national budget; they have asked the question, ‘What does this money, the nation’s money, look like from men’s and women’s perspectives?’ Those are really helpful starting points.

[135] **Ann Jones:** Ken has the final question.

[136] **Kenneth Skates:** I am pretty satisfied that we have been given plenty of information today to be able to put together our own toolkit, which is something that you mentioned in your paper. Could you give us any specific recommendations about what we should be asking and what should be in that toolkit?

[137] **Ms Baumgardt:** It should be around evidence. You should be asking, ‘What evidence have you based this on, and how detailed are the disaggregated data?’ I would come at this from the gender disaggregate data perspective, because that means the least grounds for it to come back and say, ‘We do not have any data on that yet, but we will have them in the future’, which is what it says about many of the other protected characteristics. However, on

sex equality, it has data. Do not let it bamboozle you by saying that it does not. You should also ask what it has done with the data that it has. If no positive action is identified as a result of its equality impact assessment, I would ask, ‘Why not?’ There may be very valid reasons why that is the case, but you should ask those sorts of questions, challenging the data. You should also ask whether it has thought about the opportunities in its resources to close the causes of the gender pay gap. So, on things such as occupation segregation, people often miss opportunities to do things to attract women into non-traditional occupations—you know, the stuff around higher education. So, there are those kinds of things. It is almost about the supplementary questions, because, for the opening questions, you can go to the EHRC’s guidance on how to do a good equality impact assessment and it will be there for you. It is about knowing what to do with the answers when they come back; that is the trick to a good toolkit.

[138] **Kenneth Skates:** That is wonderful. Thank you.

[139] **Ann Jones:** We have run out of time, which is always a good sign, I think. As ever, you have given us evidence that will formulate our scrutiny of Ministers. I do not know whether the Ministers or officials are sitting in their offices watching, thinking, ‘Oh, crikey’, but thank you very much. I am sure that you can watch that scrutiny with interest. I hope that we do it justice, because it is important that we do so. Thank you both for coming. We will send you a copy of the transcript for you to check for accuracy. Thank you ever so much.

[140] **Ms Baumgardt:** Thank you for the opportunity.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.51 a.m. a 10.59 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.51 a.m. and 10.59 a.m.*

**Ymchwiliad i Ystyriaethau Cydraddoldeb Cyllideb Llywodraeth Cymru—
Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Inquiry into the Equality Considerations in the Welsh Government’s Budget—
Evidence Session**

[141] **Ann Jones:** I remind Members, if you have switched your mobile phones on during that short break, to make sure that they are now off as they affect the translation feed. I remind you that you do not have to touch the microphones; we are in public session, so that is done by the fantastic team behind us, who switch the microphones on and off for us.

[142] **Peter Black:** The unheralded.

[143] **Ann Jones:** Yes, the unheralded team. We now carry on with our inquiry into the equality considerations in the Welsh Government’s budget. I am delighted to welcome Kate Bennett, who is the national director of the Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales, and Jamie Westcombe, who is the political adviser to the Equality and Human Rights Commission. That is right, is it not?

[144] **Ms Bennett:** That is right, yes.

[145] **Ann Jones:** It is probably your first time here, Jamie, but Kate is well versed. Is it your first time, Jamie?

[146] **Mr Westcome:** It is my first time in this committee. I have attended a legislation committee previously, so I know the drill.

[147] **Ann Jones:** Kate is well versed in how we go about things. You are both very

welcome. I know that you have listened to the previous sessions, so that is good. Kate, do you have any brief opening remarks, or shall we go straight to questions?

[148] **Ms Bennett:** I have a couple of sentences, if that is okay. We place the highest importance on this process of equality impact assessment, particularly the equality impact assessment of the budget, because the budget and resources determine so much. It is important to do that assessment when a budget is increasing and there will be more and better services, because you will find out who will benefit. When a budget is decreasing, it is important to do it to find out who is affected by that. When a budget is staying the same, as was said previously, everything was not necessarily perfect before, so it is also worth looking at that.

[149] Sometimes, the jargon—I suspect that we will slip into equality impact assessment phraseology this morning—can be confusing, and the process can seem heavy. It is worth remembering that this concept has been around for quite a long time. I always think back to the late 1970s and early 1980s when there were a lot of job losses. When people were selected for redundancy, the first people who were selected were the part-timers. We know that that would have had a disproportionate negative impact on women. The others were those with short-service contracts, which was particularly the case in transport, for buses, trains and so on, and those people, at that time, were overwhelmingly ethnic minority people. So, it is not a new concept. The same rules, as Teresa Rees was saying earlier, can have different impacts on people. So, that is the concept that we are looking at.

[150] **Ann Jones:** Could you give us your assessment of the Welsh Government's approach to considering equality issues within its budget allocation process?

[151] **Ms Bennett:** We are very pleased that this is the third time that the Welsh Government has carried out an equality impact assessment of the budget. It was quite unusual for it to be done, and certainly for it to be done voluntarily, when it was done the first time around. We very strongly welcome that commitment. We are in no doubt that the Welsh Government and other Assembly Members are keen to see that budgets and finances are shared fairly.

[152] We have done some work, as you know, in collaboration with the Welsh Government to attempt to improve the process. This can be a very complicated process, but, as I said, the principles are clear. When the budget was equality-impact assessed for the 2011-12 budget, there was an attempt to look at the impact in relation to all the equality grounds and socioeconomic issues. It was quite a difficult and complicated thing to do. It was the first time that it had been done. We feel confident that, each time this task has been done, the process has improved. We think that there is probably still some way to go, and we have not yet seen the detail of how the equality impact assessment has been carried out this time.

[153] We are very keen that the equality aspects—gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion, belief and so on—are looked at clearly. There is a legal obligation to look at those areas. It is also important to look at the budget on grounds of poverty. Is it having a disproportionate impact on poor people? Are there some issues where people are entrenched in poverty? Are there positive moves to address that? There may be an overlap between poverty and socioeconomic issues and equality issues, but they are not the same thing. It is quite important. There has been a bit of blurring in previous budgets, and so we are keen that this is understood.

[154] There is an obligation to look at all aspects of the budget to equality-impact assess it. That can be a very difficult thing, looking at a very complex budget. The advice that I would give to you in scrutinising the budget is to look at the most important things. You would have a clue as to what the most important things in the budget were by looking at what the Minister

has mentioned in her statement. Those would be among the areas that were most important. If there were significant changes from the previous budget, which is what this will be about, that would be important. You may have received a lot of lobbying from different quarters, as may the Government, on what they would like to see in the budget. Those are the areas that would be well worth looking at. The fourth area that would be important to look at is the Welsh Government's strategic equality plan, which sets out its equality objectives; it would be valuable to know whether those are being seriously taken into account in setting the budget, or whether there is any actual prospect of delivering effectively on them, because the budget does not match up there.

[155] **Joyce Watson:** You have told us what to do, so what role do you think this committee has in scrutinising the Welsh Government's budget equality impact assessment, or EIA? I suppose that that is it, really. What do you think our role is?

[156] **Mr Westcombe:** Well, you will be pleased to hear, to begin with, that I think you have a crucial, valuable role to play, and I think it will be crucial to look at some of the key areas that Kate has just mentioned. One of the key things is the equality impact assessment, which will be published next week. There is a lot of information in there and, we hope, for the committee, it will not just be a case of ensuring that that information is there and has been published but actually analysing and interpreting those data and asking certain questions. What has changed because of what the Welsh Government has found in its equality impact assessment? Have allocations altered? That would be one key thing to look at. What was the evidence base that was used? As Kate mentioned, the equality objectives that the Welsh Government itself has set would perhaps be a good starting point for that. Also, what consultation is taking place with stakeholders? That would be another crucial thing that you could look at. How will this process continue, and how will the Welsh Government monitor its budget as it is taken forward and what impact does it have on the protected groups?

[157] **Joyce Watson:** Allowing for the fact that we probably do not have time to do all that you just told us we ought to, what do you think is the key thing that we could do within all of that?

[158] **Mr Westcombe:** Kate has already mentioned the key, strategic decisions—the highlights reports—that have been mentioned in the budget. We have seen it reported as a budget for jobs and growth, and a number of key allocations have been made. The ones highlighted in the press release and in the statements by Jane Hutt would be a good place to start.

[159] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** As Joyce has just said, it is rather a lot to get in before this budget. Is it not something that we should be working on now in order that we can really feed in to the budget process next time, so that we can be confident that we have done all this analysis and actually challenged and scrutinised to that sort of depth? This budget is literally minutes away from being sorted out and completed, and we are left with very little time to feed all this in—on the EIA alone—for this year. Is it not something that we should be working on as a committee more thoroughly for next year's budget?

[160] **Ms Bennett:** In a way, the way in which you scrutinise this year's budget, and the answers that you get, and your ability to understand what the process has been, will be very important in determining how you can feed in to the budget for next time.

[161] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** It is about being able to influence as well.

[162] **Ms Bennett:** Yes. There are a number of things that the Minister has highlighted in her statement here. She has talked about an additional £175 million for capital investment. It is impossible to say whether £100 million or £200 million would be more or less valuable;

that is not the issue. The issue is: how is that £175 million spent? There are a number of other points in here and these would be a good place to start. If the Minister has identified these changes in the budget, why have those been picked to be changed and what is the equality impact assessment?

[163] The final point that is mentioned is the maintenance of universal benefits. These are quite an iconic item in Wales, but that does not necessarily mean that they should be exempt from scrutiny. Not scrutinising them and not understanding why they are being protected and who they are benefiting makes them vulnerable to criticism. We have been hearing at a UK level that we should do away with this and that, and subjecting something to scrutiny does not necessarily mean that you think it is a bad thing; it may give you good reasons for keeping it. However, if something is so sacrosanct that it is not scrutinised, that does not help.

[164] **Peter Black:** You have largely answered my question, but on how we get under the skin of this budget, what should we be looking for specifically in terms of the large allocations such as health and local government in terms of trying to ensure that those are being properly equality tested?

[165] **Ms Bennett:** It is impossible to say that giving more money to local government is better than giving more money to health because you have to go below those levels and that is the challenge with this. Over the last year, I have met more than half of local authority chief executives to ask them about the process that they have undertaken in equality-impact assessing their own budgets. I have been surprised by the extent to which there has been a positive engagement with that process. I have been told by local authority chief executives that they feel that carrying out that equality impact assessment on the elements of their budget has improved their decision making and they have felt that the evidence and the consultation have given them justification for what can often be difficult decisions, whether those are to put expenditure lines up or down; that process also increases transparency. It is important to know how the Minister thinks that the money allocated and the changes to those budgets will promote equality or reduce inequality.

[166] **Kenneth Skates:** How important is engagement and consultation when considering the impact of a budget on equality?

[167] **Mr Westcombe:** It is essential, as you could have probably guessed. The committee probably found last week that hearing the views of stakeholders is a valuable way of understanding priorities and of hearing voices that may not always be heard—those who shout the loudest do not always hold the most important views. It is important to get the engagement with different organisations and individuals and to hear their priorities and to get their buy-in and support to ensure that it is a transparent process and that people are comfortable with what is being done. Without doubt, you would hope that that would have a knock-on effect; it is not just a case of listening to people, but of hearing them have some say on how allocations and policies are set. The Welsh Government talks a lot about its engagement and the fact that it listens to organisations, which is important. It is not a case of, ‘That has to be done before or after the setting of budgets and policies’—it has to be an ongoing process.

[168] **Ms Bennett:** The only point that I would add to that is that you sometimes listen to the loudest voices—

[169] **Kenneth Skates:** And the same voices.

[170] **Ms Bennett:** So, it is important to ensure that the consultation reaches beyond the usual suspects. Our colleagues in Scotland have recently published a report, which was on those who are hard to reach, after which they put in brackets, ‘or easy to ignore’. So, often

you hear the same well organised campaign groups.

[171] **Kenneth Skates:** Could you give us an example of how we ensure that we hear or listen to the voices of the least empowered or most disadvantaged?

11.15 a.m.

[172] **Ms Bennett:** On the equality impact assessment, it is the Government's obligation to have carried out the equality impact assessment. So, your task is to identify the groups. Some of the groups that we have identified as the least empowered are: asylum seekers and refugees, Gypsies and Travellers, people with mental health conditions and transgender people. Some of these are quite small groups, but people with mental health conditions or learning difficulties are actually very large groups. Some older people are exceptionally vocal while other older people are quite difficult to hear from. So, it might be worth asking what level of engagement has taken place with some of those groups on areas that may be particularly important.

[173] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Un peth sydd wedi dod i'r amlwg, ac rydych yn cyfeirio at hyn yn eich tystiolaeth, yw ei bod yn anodd iawn dadansoddi pa effaith uniongyrchol ar gyllidebau y mae'r cwestiynau hyn ynghylch cydraddoldeb sy'n codi yn ei chael. Sut mae modd i ni, wrth graffu ar y gyllideb, ddarganfod i ba raddau y mae'r math o bynciau rydych wedi'u codi wedi cael dylanwad uniongyrchol ar ddyrannu arian o fewn y gyllideb?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: One thing that has become evident, and you refer to it in your evidence, is that it is very difficult to analyse the direct impact that these questions that arise in relation to equality have on budgets. How can we, as we scrutinise the budget, discover the extent to which the kind of subjects that you have raised have a direct influence on funding allocations within the budget?

[174] **Ms Bennett:** We have covered this, in a way. The Minister and the civil servants have carried out the equality impact assessment. They should be able to inform you of their initial thoughts, which presumably were to allow last year's budget to carry through unchanged. So, you could identify, where there have been changes to what was anticipated on a steady-state budget, why those changes have been made and whether there is a guarantee or any evidence or feedback from consultations that those changes will not increase inequality, or whether they will address problems that have been identified already. Many of the problems that have already been identified are those contained within the Government's strategic equality plan—addressing the harassment of people on grounds of protected characteristics, who is going to benefit from jobs and so on. The goals are there, but is the money going to follow?

[175] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rwy'n siŵr bod yr asesiad hwnnw wedi'i wneud, ond fy nghwestiwn oedd: i ba raddau mae'r fath ystyriaethau yn cael effaith uniongyrchol ar y ffordd y mae'r arian yn cael ei ddyrannu o fewn cyllideb? Ai'r cyfan sy'n digwydd yw bod yr asesiad yn cael ei wneud o'r goblygiadau o ran cydraddoldeb rhyw ar ôl pendefynu ar y gyllideb?

Rhodri Glyn Thomas: I am sure that assessment has been made, but my question was: to what extent have such considerations had a direct impact on the way in which the money is allocated within the budget? Is it the case that the assessment of the implications in terms of gender equality is done after the budget is determined?

[176] **Ms Bennett:** If the equality impact assessment process has been done robustly, that work will have taken place first. Evidence will have been gathered as to which members of the population are encountering a particular problem. There might be pointers to gathering that evidence from consultations with the different groups, and so one would hope that

particular problems had been identified and that the budget had been moved in that direction, rather than moving the budget and then checking to see whether it had a negative impact. I do not know the answer to that; that is a good question to ask the Minister.

[177] It is also fair to say that, although the concept is not new, as I indicated earlier, the process of doing it is quite new and complicated. As you may know, we have carried out joint work with the Welsh Government to assist and improve the process, and it may be helpful to highlight some of what we believe will be the recommendations emerging from that. The work is not fully completed yet, but some of the recommendations include the separating of poverty considerations and equality considerations, so that they do not blur at the edges, because they may be different and there may be overlaps. For example, children living in disabled families may be living in poverty and there may also be a disability angle, and there may be people who are not poor but who have protected characteristics.

[178] There are issues of transparency. Is the decision-making process clear? To pick up Janet's earlier point, I do not suppose that this is going to be perfection. I do not know whether a budget will ever be perfection, but if there is transparency in the decision-making process and budget allocations this time, over the course of the next year, that will help to identify that something should be different next time. I think that the report will recommend better data sharing between departments in the Welsh Government. One of the most difficult but important aspects here is the cumulative impact. So, if some of the changes in the education budget have a negative impact on disabled children, if changes in the housing budget have a negative impact on disabled people, and if the economic development budget is not going to do anything to help disabled people, you begin to see that one particular group is not benefiting from any of the budget improvements. Conversely, there may be other groups—they may have been particularly good at lobbying—that will be benefiting consistently all the way through.

[179] The other thing to ask is what evidence has been used. We all talk these days about evidence-based policy making, but there is an absolutely phenomenal amount of evidence out there. It is impossible to use every bit of evidence. So, what we would regard as important is that, when the Welsh Government is telling you how it has equality-impact assessed the budget, you know what evidence it has used and why it has chosen to use those data and not other information.

[180] **Mr Westcombe:** The key part of your question is the key to what we hope to see when we see the equality impact assessment next week. We want to ensure that it is not just a commentary on how the budget is going to affect different groups. It should show what assessment has been made and whether things have changed because of that and how the impact on different groups has affected the way the budget has been set.

[181] **Mark Isherwood:** In your previous answer you detailed the key conclusions of your inquiry. To what extent, if at all, have those been fed into the equality impact assessment process for this year's budget?

[182] **Ms Bennett:** The report, which, as I said, has not yet been finalised, was conducted in the form of an appreciative inquiry. So, the people writing the report worked closely with civil servants within the Welsh Government on how the process worked last time. They looked at some of the defects that had been identified in previous equality impact assessments, such as the blurring of the poverty, socioeconomic and equality issues, the lack of data sharing and so on. Recommendations have gradually emerged over the last few months. That has been done in parallel with the equality impact assessment work that has been done this time. So, we are optimistic that that collaborative work will have affected the thinking and actions of the people carrying out the equality impact assessments. We are optimistic that there will have been some ability to take into account the recommendations in

the report. However, going back to Janet's earlier comment—or perhaps it was someone else's comment—this is a process, not an event. We hope that this process will get better every year. The bigger budgets, the three-year budgets, are the most important for you to scrutinise effectively to ensure that, whatever the recommendations are when we see them in the final form, they are built in in future.

[183] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** To what extent have the new public sector equality duties improved the methods through which public authorities consider equality in their budgets?

[184] **Mr Westcombe:** Perhaps the first thing to say about the new public sector duties that were passed in the Chamber is that they have been crucial in placing an emphasis on equality. It has given equality a higher place on the agenda and brought it into the minds of cabinet members and chief executives. The work that has gone on around the promotion of the new duties has been important in raising the profile of equality. The way in which some of the duties work and where they are helpful relate to the fact that there are duties to collect information and to engage with local stakeholders. Of course, these are things that local authorities should be doing anyway, but the duty on them to do this has been helpful, and it has improved the evidence that they receive and the views that they hear. The duties are proving to be a real lever and are providing a real opportunity to improve things.

[185] **Mr Bennett:** To add to that, in our conversations with local authorities they have talked about, for example, examining turning off street lights at night, because there has been a knee-jerk reaction that it will affect particular members of the community. When they looked at the evidence and consulted on it, they were quite surprised to find that it was not the people that they expected who were most affected by that. So, looking at the evidence and consulting is important. Local authorities have told us that they have looked at changing budgets for leisure facilities. Some have contracted out some services, as you may know. As a result of the equality impact assessment, they have written different things into the specifications for the contracting out of services, which is very important.

[186] We talked to a local authority—we are talking about last year's budgets—that needed to make reductions and was making an across-the-board reduction to many of its budget lines. As a result of the equality impact assessment—this is quite topical—it did not reduce the budget for aids for disabled people. So, there are some positive signs that this is beginning to take hold.

[187] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** As a supplementary question to that, I am aware that local authorities are producing those strategies now. In fact, in a previous life, I was responsible for some of this implementation and delivery, and the concern that I had was trying to get full co-operation from the departments to thread it through on a departmental basis. I am also aware that there is a move to regionalise equality plans, certainly in north Wales. With regard to the collaboration agenda, and the drivers to deliver services in a more collaborative way, does the equality impact assessment fall by the wayside, or is it carried right through? Have you had any experience of where it is being looked at more regionally?

[188] **Ms Bennett:** We are aware—we think that it is a positive development—that in north Wales, the six local authorities, the health authorities, the universities up there and the fire service, I think, have worked together. The new specific duties are very powerful and have the opportunity to drive change. There is quite a lot of work to be done in that regard, particularly on consulting. The authorities have worked together and held an equality conference, so instead of drawing in different groups many times, they brought them in together. In a way, that is very helpful, because it allows bigger actions to be taken that have a more strategic impact.

[189] Having said that, it is the responsibility of each authority to comply with specific

duties. I do not see a conflict between sharing evidence, consultation and having shared objectives, but each public authority must be responsible for its own. Do you want to add anything to that?

[190] **Mr Westcombe:** No.

[191] **Mike Hedges:** In your answer to question 3, you mentioned the movement between local government and health and that you could not look at them in an isolated way. Is there sufficient detail in the Welsh Government's budget document to adequately assess the equality impacts? You cannot do it at the top level, so is there enough detail lower down to be able to do it?

[192] **Mr Westcombe:** To a degree, we will see what is published next week in the equality impact assessment and the level of detail in there. That is the key document to assess. Two years ago, there was quite a substantial equality impact assessment, with lots of information. Last year, it just gave details of changes to allocations, because it was a smaller budget, so it was a less substantial equality impact assessment for that reason.

11.30 a.m.

[193] There is a lot of information in there; it is getting to the bottom of it that is the key, rather than just gleaning the information that is perhaps on the page. The committee will have a key role, along with us, in getting to the bottom of that information and assessing whether it shows how they have consulted with organisations, whether and how allocations have changed and how things will be monitored in future. That is what we would hope to see.

[194] **Ms Bennett:** This is not an exact recipe—you cannot measure out 2g of salt and add it to the rest. It relies on your judgment, as people carrying out the scrutiny and the judgment of the people who have put the budget together. In rather a trite way, the devil is in the detail, but if you cannot see the wood for the trees—you know. You have to get your position on that spectrum.

[195] What I note from the commentary issued by the Minister is that she talks about the £288 million for the NHS that was announced in last year's budget, with continued protection there. She talks about the extra £35 million that is going into social services. Those seem to me to be starting points. What is that extra £35 million being spent on? I have not been able to explore it in sufficient detail to know that myself, but has it been allocated to something that previous evidence and consultation have identified as a particular problem for a client group? I am sure that older people would benefit from £35 million. Children would benefit from £35 million. People with learning difficulties would benefit from £35 million. How has the decision of where to put that £35 million been achieved? Similarly on the health service, we heard powerful examples earlier in terms of the gender aspects, but there are lots of other aspects in there. How has that decision been reached? However it was reached, it will have been a very hard decision and it will have been dependent upon a judgment. The issue is whether there is sufficient evidence for you to say that this is a really bad judgment and that allocating that money in this way or that is quite bad and anti-equality, or are you able to say, 'You have paid due regard to the evidence and due regard to the consultation, and this seems like a reasonable decision to us'?

[196] **Gwyn R. Price:** You touched on local government and judgments. Is there a significant level of expertise in local authorities in Wales to carry out efficiency equality impact assessments?

[197] **Ms Bennett:** I think that the expertise has increased exponentially over the past couple of years. When this first came up, people would write, 'Not applicable; this doesn't

make any difference; this is money for play centres, so everybody's going to benefit', and that has progressed significantly. The stage after that was that the poor old equality officers hurtled around everybody, trying to give them advice and point out that, actually, if you could not access the play centre because there was not an accessible entrance, it was not any good. If it did not address the needs of children with learning difficulties, it was not adequate.

[198] One thing that we have noticed in the last few months is that there is a much greater input, from the department within local government, be it housing or social services, from the equality people, and also—this is the new development—from the people in corporate finance or the corporate centre. Before, it was not much of an issue, and then it was only the issue of the equality officer. It seems to me that we have made progress. We are not all the way there in every authority, but there is this partnership between the people with the equality expertise, the people with expertise in housing or education, and the people in the corporate centre who are much more experienced at the number crunching and at understanding the impact. You heard about comparisons with the private sector earlier. The private sector is very good at seeing how money drives change; accountants are good at that as well, and it is good to see them involved.

[199] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Given that we have just had elections, how engaged with all the equality duties and processes are elected members across local authorities generally?

[200] **Ms Bennett:** I think that they have probably been better engaged in some more than in others. Some authorities have taken very seriously the need to talk to elected members about the population within the county council area—where the ethnic minority people are, the disabled people, and so on, and the significance of those people's needs for allocation of budget. Again, things have improved, but there are still significant improvements that could be made.

[201] **Joyce Watson:** May I ask a question here?

[202] **Ann Jones:** Very quickly, and then perhaps Jamie can wrap the two up.

[203] **Joyce Watson:** You quite rightly identified a group of people that might be affected or otherwise by the budget, and that is okay, but you did say earlier that you should not mix up—I cannot remember the exact words—

[204] **Ms Bennett:** Equality and poverty.

[205] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. I just wonder how you marry that with your previous statement, because it seems to me that you are looking at equality, but not necessarily both.

[206] **Mr Westcombe:** We say, 'Don't mix up equality and the protected characteristics with poverty' because they are different things due to the protected characteristics. It is the intersection between them that is the key. There is a lot of overlap between the two, and that is perhaps where the deepest inequalities are. That is one of the key challenges. What we are conscious of is that, if a local authority is saying that it is tackling inequality, it cannot just look at poverty in isolation or the protected characteristics in isolation.

[207] **Ms Bennett:** Let me give you an example. The pupil deprivation grant, I presume, is mainly aimed at poorer children, who will be concentrated more strongly in some schools than others. Just because it is a pupil deprivation grant aimed at helping poorer children does not necessarily mean that that has addressed the requirements of the equality impact assessment, because you might want to know how that money is benefitting girls, boys, ethnic minority pupils, pupils who might not speak English, disabled pupils, and so on. We think that it is important to look at both, but you must not look at one and assume that you have

addressed the other issue.

[208] **Joyce Watson:** I think that that is going to be the challenge.

[209] **Ann Jones:** That brings me on nicely to the last question. We have had evidence from Save the Children, which tells us that children's budgeting is important for a raft of reasons. Do you see a role for children's budgeting as a method of assessing equality impacts?

[210] **Ms Bennett:** The equality impact assessment would require the Government to look at age factors, so obviously children would be a factor in there. It is also the case, when you are looking at children's budgets, that there are disabled children, ethnic minority children, and so on and so forth. I think that it is also the case, and this is reflected in the bigger strategic areas, that the Government is less likely now to talk about the child poverty action plan as opposed to the poverty action plan, and the major impact on children's wellbeing and welfare and ability to access everything else is their family. You may not have children who are prospering well if they are in a family living in poverty, or a family that is workless because there is no ability for a disabled parent to work, or an ethnic minority parent is facing discrimination—most particularly a child of a lone-parent family. So, I think there are many options. That would be something that the Welsh Government could consider. We would not say that it was absolutely essential.

[211] **Ann Jones:** We need to wait until the Government publishes its equality impact assessment to know whether children's rights have been appropriately addressed, so that is something that we can return to.

[212] We have run out of time, Kate, as ever—we always do. Thanks ever so much to you and to Jamie for coming and giving us this evidence session today. As usual, you will get a copy of the transcript to check for accuracy. It has been nice to have you here with us. Thank you very much for your evidence.

[213] **Ms Bennett:** Thank you. Good luck with the scrutiny.

11.40 a.m.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog Rhif 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order No. 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[214] **Ann Jones:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 17.42(vi).

[215] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11.40 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.*