

Finance Committee
The National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry: Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2016-17

Chwarae Teg works to build a Wales where women achieve and prosper. We do this by working with women to broaden horizons and build confidence and skills; working with employers to create modern workplaces that are successful by harnessing everyone's contribution; and working with influencers, educators and decision makers to build a society that values, supports and benefits women and men equally.

In response to the above inquiry we wanted to highlight a few key areas for consideration during the scrutiny of the draft budget and future budget development.

1. Impact assessment

- 1.1. The Welsh Government's continued commitment to equality impact assessments is to be commended. We were pleased to see that an impact assessment was still carried out despite the tight timescales for the budget process as a result of a delayed CSR.
- 1.2. However, we believe that the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIP) that accompanies the 2016-17 draft budget could be more comprehensive. The level of detail suggests that the timescales have had a negative impact on the assessment process and as a result there is less in-depth analysis of how the spending decisions in the draft budget will affect different groups, particularly decisions that may have a negative impact.
- 1.3. Impact assessments should be a crucial tool to help the scrutiny process. We have concerns that the SIIP in its current form is not comprehensive enough to effectively fulfil this role.

2. Local Government cuts

- 2.1. The budget sees further cuts to local government budgets. As we highlighted last year, this has the potential to impact on women more heavily than men if it translates into cuts in services and job losses from within local authorities

as women are more likely to use local services and make up a larger proportion of the local government workforce.

2.2. The impact of these cuts should be monitored, particularly as plans to reform local government move forward and potential council mergers are discussed. Mergers that will result in job losses will again affect more women and efforts should be made to ensure that women are not net losers from Welsh Government decisions.

3. Changes to third sector funding

3.1. The draft budget sets out changes to the way that the third sector will receive funding. A move away from grant funding to commissioning of specific pieces of work could see third sector organisations lose out on funds that have traditionally helped to cover core running costs.

3.2. If this change in funding arrangements results in third sector organisations either restructuring or ceasing to exist this will have a larger impact on women who again make up a larger proportion of the workforce in this sector.

4. Part-time study

4.1. We echo the concerns expressed by the Open University about the impact of cuts to the Higher Education budget on the provision of part-time study. Women make up the majority of part time students, often opting to study part time to accommodate other responsibilities in their lives such as child care or work.

4.2. There are concerns that the reduction proposed in the Draft Budget will lead to greater pressure on the institutional learning and teaching grant distributed by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). A reduction in this grant could lead to institutions reducing their part time offer or increasing their fees. This could have a disproportionate impact on women who are looking to up-skill or re-skill so that they can progress in the workplace.

4.3. The importance of part-time study to the economy and social mobility came through strongly in the responses to the Diamond Review of Higher Education Funding. It's therefore important that budget decisions do not result in a reduction in part-time study options.

We would be happy to discuss any of the above points in more detail if required as part of the ongoing scrutiny of the Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely

Christine O'Byrne
Policy and Research Lead

Christine.obyrne@chwaraeteg.com

07787 295658