

Jane Hutt MS

Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip

5 July 2023

Dear Jane

In-year financial scrutiny: 2023-24

Thank you for accommodating our request to use our scheduled scrutiny session in September for your contribution to our inquiry into the public health approach to preventing gender-based violence. However that means that our planned general scrutiny session will no longer go ahead. We would therefore welcome a written response to the following, including updates to recommendations made in our report on the [Draft Budget 2023-24](#), and other reports:

Cost of Living

- Welsh Government preparedness for the cost of living challenges that will arise this winter and any additional action you may be able to take to support the most vulnerable households?
- Has the Expert Group on the Cost of Living made its recommendations to the Welsh Government yet? If so, when can we expect these to be shared with the Committee (see also the [response](#) to the Draft Budget 2023-24 report).
- Please provide details of the budget monitoring of Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) demand. Has there been any revision of the allocations made in the draft budget for 2023-24 in response to the outcome of that monitoring?
- Has the evaluation of the Single Advice Fund been concluded and if so, can it be shared with the Committee?
- In line with recommendation 10 in our report [Unsustainable: debt fuelled by the rising cost of living](#), and recommendation 6 in our Draft Budget 2023-24 report, when do you expect to publish final figures regarding uptake for the Fuel Voucher Scheme against the targets set when the scheme was launched, both in relation to prepayment meters and off-grid households?



Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) and migrant women

- The Welsh Government accepted recommendation 3 of our report [Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence: migrant women](#) to support migrant women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), and we welcome your statement on 4 July 2023 which confirms a pilot of the Migrant Victim of Abuse Support Fund. The Welsh Government also accepted the Committee's recommendation in its Draft Budget report 2023-24 that it should clarify how the crisis fund will be funded. We understand that resources will be diverted from the existing VAWDASV budget. Please confirm how much has been allocated to the fund and the evidence base for arriving at that figure. What assessment, if relevant, has the Welsh Government undertaken to assess the impact of diverting resources from existing VAWDASV services and activity. Alternatively, please can you provide details of where the cuts have been made.

Equality and human rights

- Please set out the impact of the reduction in EU funding on Wales-based organisations, specifically Chwarae Teg and Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). What assessment has been made of the impact on delivery of Welsh Government equality plans. What consideration has been given to developing new funding streams to fill the gap in EU funding?

Experiences in the criminal justice system

- As referenced in our report [Women's experiences in the criminal justice system](#), can you confirm whether any costings have been developed of the proposed Residential Women's Centre pilot, including the financial impact on local public services.
- Can you confirm whether a sustainable funding stream for women's centres is now in place.
- Has the tender for the new Women's Pathfinder Whole System Approach Specification, mentioned in response to recommendation 5, now been published?

Budget improvement

- Please provide an update on recommendation 10 in the Draft Budget report 2023-24. Can you set out what action has been taken to develop your work on prevention.
- We ask that you reconsider your position on recommendations 11 and 12 in the Draft Budget 2023-24 report, which were rejected at the time. We are concerned that publishing a summary of all Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees on allocations within each MEG is not an adequate response to our recommendation. We would like to see how you intend to provide greater clarity and transparency in the



way next year's budget is presented. How do you intend to address criticism of the current approach to Strategic Impact Assessments? Will you commit to publishing a distributional analysis with the Draft Budget 2024-25?

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'R'.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee

