

FEMINIST SCORECARD 2020

Tracking Welsh Government action to advance women's rights and gender equality



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FOREWORD

Our 2020 Feminist Scorecard shows the progress that has been made towards making gender equality a reality in Wales since 2019. Over the past 12 months, advances have been made, for example in ending violence against women, and in fair finance which have as a result moved from red to amber. All other areas remain graded the same as outcomes have not greatly improved. Our verdict on this, is that there are many positive words but little action, for example, on the Access to Elected Office Fund. WEN requested for this to be in place for the 2021 Welsh Parliament elections and for legislative quotas to be part of local government reform.

We are deeply worried about another threat to women's equality in the form of the impact of the Covid-19, which has become significantly worse as we go to press (Spring 2020). 80% of people employed in human health and social work activities in Wales are women. It is women who are at the forefront of responding to the virus as health workers, teachers and carers in the home. It is women who are at risk of being trapped at home with abusive partners. It will be women, particularly those who are disabled, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) or on low incomes who are likely to be hardest hit by the pandemic. Yet we risk falling into the same traps that the Gender Equality Review has highlighted for urgent review – Welsh Government budgets and contingency plans dealing with the virus are being allocated without any form of gender analysis and this must change. 'Gender budgeting' must become common practice if we are to see any fundamental change and shift in the inequalities we continue to face.

Oxfam Cymru and WEN Wales welcome Welsh Government's acceptance of the Gender Equality Review recommendations, and their commitment to a Wales free from gender discrimination, where diverse women achieve their full potential, but we must now redouble our efforts to ensure women are not further disadvantaged by the pandemic – we must now see timely, concerted action, with sufficient budget in place to make Wales the feminist nation we all want to see.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Fookes".

Catherine Fookes
Director of WEN Wales

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R Cable".

Rachel Cable
Head of Oxfam Cymru

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INTRODUCTION

Oxfam Cymru and the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales have worked together to publish Wales' second Feminist Scorecard. The Scorecard presents a snapshot of Welsh Government performance in several key areas of concern to women in Wales. It provides an update on progress made by Welsh Government in these policy areas over the last 12 months, and this year includes Health as a critical area for equality for women. It is a call to action for Welsh Government to examine where it has made progress and where more work is needed to achieve equality for women and girls in Wales.

WEN Wales and Oxfam Cymru are guided by the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and believe that Welsh Government should enshrine the principles of CEDAW into legislation regarding devolved matters. Welsh Government should also demonstrate how it will protect and enshrine women's rights and ensure their future enhancement during and after Brexit¹.

Comparison of 2019 vs 2020 results 2019²

FAIR FINANCE

2019: RATING RED

Jobs and pay equality: ambitious targets needed to achieve decent work for all women in Wales. Taxation and budgets: we argued gender budgeting needed to be introduced as a priority.

GLOBAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

2019: RATING - AMBER

Good leadership demonstrated in areas, but more focus required on global responsibility and climate change targets.

CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

2019: RATING - AMBER

Incremental progress made but more work was needed.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION & LEADERSHIP

2019: RATING - AMBER

Welsh Government and Welsh Parliament was rated strongly in this area but with an urgent need to address equal representation at local government level.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

2019: RATING - RED

Patchy service provision and slow implementation of key legislation was noted.

TACKLING GENDER HEALTH INEQUALITIES

No previous data to compare as this is new for this year.

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RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Enshrine the principles of CEDAW into legislation regarding devolved matters.

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RATING KEY: GREEN = SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS AMBER = SOME PROGRESS RED = LITTLE PROGRESS

FAIR FINANCE

2019: Rating - Red
2020: Rating - Amber

There is positive progress with Welsh Government piloting a gender budgeting approach. However, further work is needed to ensure that BAME and disabled women are not further disadvantaged in the workplace. The gender pay gap needs to be addressed as well as the unequal distribution of caring responsibilities.



CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

2019: Rating - Amber
2020: Rating - Amber

Limited but positive progress in some respects, such as increasing recognition of the value of both paid and unpaid care, but Welsh Government's Childcare Offer still does not serve all women in Wales equally.



GLOBAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

2019: Rating - Amber
2020: Rating - Amber

Some progress has been made in terms of commitments. However, these positive words now need to be followed up with strong action and progress on the ground, especially with regards to climate change.



EQUAL REPRESENTATION & LEADERSHIP

2019: Rating - Amber
2020: Rating - Amber

Little progress has been made on our 2019 recommendations. Job sharing in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill is a step forward as is the review on the public appointments process. However, the lack of an Access to Elected Office Fund for 2021 Welsh Parliament elections and no commitment to both gender and diversity quotas is extremely disappointing.



TACKLING GENDER HEALTH INEQUALITIES

2020: Rating - Red

Urgent action is required to ensure women have access to education and information on health issues throughout their lives and to tackle inconsistent access to healthcare services in Wales.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

2019: Rating - Red
2020: Rating - Amber

Some progress has been made therefore this has been rated Amber, up from Red in 2019. However, the system is currently too complex and inconsistently applied to be a gold-standard solution.



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CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

SCORE: AMBER

In 2020, as was reported in 2019, women continue to carry heavy and unequal responsibilities in caring for children and other family members.

“As second earners, or primary carers, many women have limited independent incomes, leaving them especially vulnerable to falling into poverty in the event of relationship breakdown.”

Chwarae Teg, 2020³

Welsh Government’s Childcare Offer

The Welsh Government has recognised the importance of childcare and has committed to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of three and four-year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. This has not changed since last year.

The Offer has benefited many parents in Wales, with 84% of users reporting that they now have more disposable income and 56% reporting more opportunities to increase their income⁴. 15% of women say they now work more hours because of the Offer, compared to seven per cent of men⁵.

Nevertheless, there remains confusion around how the scheme works, and some parents have faced unexpected bills for school holiday childcare⁶ as well as for wraparound childcare before and after school hours. The fragmented nature of the current Offer means that women could be forced into more part-time, low-paid

jobs to give them the flexibility to navigate between the Foundation Phase nursery to a childcare setting⁷. To be effective, it is imperative that childcare provision is available and affordable, as well as flexible⁸.

In our 2019 Scorecard we recommended that the Welsh Government take steps to ensure that the Offer is a gold star service by offering affordable and accessible childcare for all from six months, extending the eligibility criteria to include non-working parents and ensuring disabled, and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) families are supported to access the childcare. Limited progress has been made towards these recommendations in the last 12 months and the Offer still does not serve all women in Wales equally.

We continue to call for the Offer to be extended to all non-working parents. This echoes the thoughts of the Children’s Commissioner who has emphasised the long-term benefits of quality early years provision to children from the poorest backgrounds⁹.

There is still a continuing need to collect information on take up of the Offer disaggregated by protected characteristics to ensure it is delivered in a way that is equally accessible¹⁰.

Welsh Government has made available £670,000 to local authorities to remove barriers to accessing the Offer for parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and to make sure the Offer is inclusive. However, many local authorities have

“From a children’s rights perspective the Offer falls short as the children’s rights impact assessment undertaken only considered the benefits to the children that were to be included and didn’t analyse the impact on any potentially excluded groups, including protected characteristics.”

Children’s Commissioner for Wales

underspent their allocation due to confusion around how funding should be used and allocated, calling the guidance given “very vague.”¹¹

Unpaid care

Unpaid care is unevenly distributed by class, age and gender: women do 60% more unpaid work than men; 59% of those who provide family care are women; and one in four older women have caring responsibilities¹². Unpaid care work of family members is an essential role in benefiting the wellbeing and development of individuals, households and communities yet it is chronically undervalued.

Across Great Britain, those in Wales spend the most time providing social care. On average, 42 hours each year are spent providing unpaid adult care¹³. Based on current rates of pay in equivalent sectors the wage value of unpaid household and caring work in Wales is £21.6 billion¹⁴. Unpaid carers should be able to juggle work and care, if they wish to, with support to return to work alongside or after caring¹⁵.

We welcome the move that the Welsh Government will be developing the new national carers plan in 2020 with the commitment to taking an intersectional approach by including the views and experiences of a wide range of people providing unpaid care as well as sector experts.

The right to respite was identified in our 2019 Scorecard as a priority on which action falls seriously short – we recommended that by 2020 Welsh Government allocate funding to give carers a choice of quality respite services. Carers Wales calls for “funding and choice of quality services to enable carers to take the breaks they need”¹⁶. However, progress in the last 12 months has been slow. The inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers¹⁷ found that respite care can be difficult to access, there is a lack of suitable provision, and it also lacks flexibility.

Since 2017-18, Welsh Government has provided £3 million of recurring funding for respite to local government through the Revenue Support Grant, but this money is not ring-fenced and therefore monitoring and evaluation of local authority spending on respite is essential.

The paid care workforce

Social care is an enormously valuable sector to work in. It provides vital services for people, young and old, who need support, while also substantially contributing to the economy. Nevertheless, the care sector continues to be characterised by low wages and insecure hours. In Wales, 80% of the people employed in ‘human health and social work activities’ are women¹⁸. There is an urgent need to develop policy solutions for the social care workforce that recognise and reflect its true economic value.

Low wages and insecure contracts are an issue across the whole of the care sector. The recommendations of the Fair Work Commission¹⁹ highlighted these issues and called for a Fair Work Forum to be established with an initial focus on care. The setting up of a forum focussing on care is one of a range of recommendations being considered by Welsh Government and is currently at the feasibility scoping stage²⁰.

The childcare workforce, dominated by women and often low paid, requires significant investment. In 2019 we recommended that Welsh Government ensures childcare providers have good pay and conditions as well as access to training. The Welsh Government is working to implement its Childcare, Play and Early Years

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Workforce Plan, rolling out new qualifications and supporting childcare practitioners to upskill. There is also due to be a consultation in 2020 to register the childcare workforce supporting a move towards professionalism and valuing the important work that paid carers do²¹. This is positive progress towards our 2019 recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Offer affordable and accessible childcare for all from six months, including to non-working parents;
- Collect robust equality data as part of the evaluation and monitoring of the Childcare Offer to ensure equality of access and eligibility;
- Provide more clarity around the Special Educational Needs (SEN) budget attached to the Childcare Offer and encourage local authorities to spend their allocation;
- Progress existing plans to ensure all care workers in Wales are paid fairly and have access to training and clear routes for career progression if they want it;
- Provide childcare hubs for asylum seeker families;
- Ensure unpaid carers are involved in designing and delivering policies and services that affect their lives;
- Monitor local authority spending on respite care and evaluation of the effectiveness of the funding.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS SCORE: AMBER

Welsh Government has excellent foundations in the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 (VAWDASV) and its commitment to the Istanbul Convention²² to address VAWDASV. Overall, some progress has been made in the last 12 months and for this reason this section has an overall Amber rating, up from Red in 2019.

Nevertheless, despite hopeful promises, the system is currently too complex and inconsistently applied to be a gold-standard solution. To deliver on its pledge of a made-in-Wales model with world-leading standards of support, we still have a way to go to fully realise the potential and intent of the Act by Welsh Government and devolved public services in Wales. More action is needed by Welsh Government to ensure sustainable funding and to make sure the Act is applied consistently in all geographic locations.

In 2019 we noted how our optimism for the potentially ground-breaking VAWDASV Act was tempered by slow implementation of actions, and the late emergence of plans and strategies. We called for an improved response from Welsh Government to all forms of violence against women and set out how we thought this could be achieved.

“Victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence are often let down by an inconsistent, complex and fragmented system.”
Wales Audit Office²³

More specifically, we criticised the lack of a detailed action plan with responsibilities and timescales for delivery to go with the National Strategy on VAWDASV that was published in November 2016. Unfortunately, despite the publication of both Local Strategy Guidance (2018) and the Cross Government VAWDASV Framework 2018-2021, there is still a lack of clear milestones to monitor delivery, and a continued failure to encompass a fully cross-government approach. Without published timescales or milestones it has been difficult to hold Welsh Government and devolved services to account to deliver within a specified timeframe²⁴. Thus, we do not believe enough progress has yet been made towards this aim.

The sector has welcomed the publication of the Commissioning Guidance published in 2019²⁵ with its strong definition of specialist support services. It is now time to see the guidance effectively rolled out and adhered to across all areas funded by the Welsh Government and local government. Our 2019 Scorecard expressed disappointment that the decision to make the National Advisor post part-time exacerbated the delays in implementation. We are pleased to see the allocation of additional hours to make this position a full-time equivalent post. This role must engage frequently with front-line service providers and the specialist sector in Wales.

Sustainable funding

WELSH WOMEN'S AID DATA FOR 2018/19²⁷ SHOWS:

- 21,599 survivors were referred to VAWDASV specialist services during the year and this is a 61% increase from 2017/18;
- 20,405 survivors were supported by VAWDASV specialist services during the year, which is a 68% increase from 2017/18;
- 512 survivors were unable to be supported in refuges because of a lack of service space, capacity or resources at the time they needed help, up from 431 in the previous year;
- 16,591 survivors were supported by domestic abuse specialist services in the community but at the year-end, 239 survivors were on waiting lists for community support;
- 1,332 survivors received support from dedicated sexual violence services in Welsh Women's Aid's membership but at the year-end;
- 251 survivors were on waiting lists for rape crisis support at three Welsh Women's Aid member services.

"The majority of the VAWDASV sector continues to face uncertainty because of a lack of secure and sustainable funding. Many VAWDASV services in Wales have reported that they continue to find it challenging to adequately plan for the future due to their reliance on annual local authority funding and additional short-term grants."

Welsh Women's Aid, 2020²⁶

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In 2020 there is still a continuing urgent need to address sustainable funding to ensure that the increased demand on the sector can be met, and that survivors are not turned away from specialist violence against women services in Wales.

The National Advisors Annual Plan 2020-2021²⁸ noted that the Sustainable Funding Group has been re-established with new terms of reference to meet the key challenge of moving towards a sustainable funding model. Welsh Women's Aid²⁹ has mapped information on the funding and resources going into the VAWDASV specialist sector across Wales, and this was provided to Welsh Government Sustainable Funding Task and Finish Group in 2018. Yet there has not been similar mapping that has produced the equivalent information for the public sector or for Welsh Government departments. Welsh Women's Aid data sets out the current demand for specialist services and has documented the continued struggle of specialist services to find the funding they need to provide high-quality, needs-led services to all survivors of VAWDASV.

The first Scorecard recommended that by the end of 2019 Welsh Government should ensure adequate funding is available to support disabled women. Welsh Government announced an extra £1.2million capital funding, particularly focused on increasing support for survivors with multiple needs, which was welcomed. However, it is not clear if this will specifically benefit disabled women³⁰. There is an urgent need to improve responses for disabled women to ensure all survivors have equal access to prevention, protection and support. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) specifically refers to the multiple discrimination faced by disabled women and calls for appropriate governmental measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women (Article 6)³¹.

Istanbul Convention

The 2019 Scorecard recommended that by 2020 Welsh Government publish a report in accordance with Istanbul Convention procedures showing how it is meeting the Convention's obligations.

However, to date, there is no such report in the public domain that meaningfully demonstrates this. We agree with Welsh Women's Aid that although the Act has brought in many positive measures which help to meet the obligations, Welsh Government has provided only verbal assurances about meeting the articles within the Convention, and there are several examples where there is, at present, only partial compliance with the Convention articles.

Public health

Despite decades of international evidence and practice from the World Health Organisation, suggesting that VAWDASV must be a public health priority, there has been little engagement from Health – at Welsh Government, public health and at local health board levels³³.

Education

It is welcome that Welsh Government has committed to Relationship and Sexuality Education being a mandatory part of

“In some cases, we feel there is limited compliance with the Istanbul Convention. Covered within the scope of the Istanbul Convention is the adequate geographic distribution of short and long-term specialist services that are accessible to all women and their children as well as an adequate delivery of preventative approaches for all forms of violence against women and girls.”

Welsh Women's Aid, 2020³²

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the new curriculum from 2022. Lessons on consent, relationship abuse, sexual equality and respecting diversity and tolerance are vitally important to ensure all children can grow up in a safe and equal society. This must be delivered in line with Welsh Government Good Practice Guidance on Whole Education Approach to VAWDASV published in 2015³⁴.

RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Collaborate with sector experts, and people with lived experience in all forms of VAWDASV, to inform its refreshed cross government strategy and framework and ensure that there is high-level commitment to ensure the Act is embedded in portfolios;
- Prioritise meeting its commitment to deliver a secure and sustainable funding model for VAWDASV specialist services including making clear how additional funds will benefit women with complex needs;
- Incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCPRD) and ensure it is fully recognised and implemented through policies and services to tackle VAWDASV;
- Provide comprehensive and relevant information in a variety of formats on the full range of services available to help victims and survivors navigate the fragmented system of current services;
- Carry out monitoring of the full implementation of the Whole Education Approach;
- Ensure the Minister for Health and Social Services provides leadership to public health and health boards to prioritise the prevention of VAWDASV and improve responses to survivors and perpetrators;
- Within a year publish a report in accordance with Istanbul Convention procedures showing the Convention's obligations are being met.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

SCORE: AMBER

The 2019 Scorecard welcomed the First Minister's appointment of a gender balanced cabinet. Nevertheless, we stressed that more is needed to achieve the stated aim of a feminist Welsh Government and especially to address the stark gender gaps that persist at local government level. We were keen to see top-line Welsh Government commitments turn into meaningful action and progress since April 2019.

IN 2019 WE CALLED FOR WELSH GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE A 50:50 WELSH PARLIAMENT. IN 2020³⁵:

- 47% of AMs/MSs are women (no change from 2019)
- 35% of Welsh MPs are women (up from 28% in 2019)
- 57% of Welsh Government cabinet Ministers are women (no change from 2019)

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THE STORY OF LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN 2019 WAS PARTICULARLY BLEAK, BUT WE HAVE SEEN POSITIVE CHANGE ON SOME INDICATORS³⁶:

- 28% of local councillors are women (no change from 2019)
- 23% of council leaders are women (up from 18% in 2019)
- 36% of council chief executives are women (up from 18% in 2019)
- 32% of council cabinet members are women (up from 27% in 2019)

It is heartening to see the improvement in the proportion of women in leadership positions in local councils and an increase in the number of women MPs, however neither of these developments can be attributed to Welsh Government action and we remain extremely disappointed that there has never been a BAME woman elected to the Welsh Parliament.

Legally binding quotas

In 2017, just 28% of people elected as councillors were women, and alarmingly 33% of wards had no women candidates standing at all³⁷. The 2019 Scorecard recommended that Welsh Government integrate gender quotas into the electoral system so that all political parties put forward at least 50% women candidates by 2021. This has not happened to date.

The Local Government and Elections Bill (the Bill)³⁸ is one of Welsh Government's proposed steps to improve representation from under-represented groups, including women. Whilst we welcome elements proposed in the Bill (for example, job sharing), there are a few positive provisions regarding equality and diversity missing, including: legally binding gender quotas with sanctions; ruling out all male cabinets; and an Access to Elected Office Fund to enable disabled women, BAME women and those from different socio-economic backgrounds to stand.

"Job sharing will enable some women to participate in politics who couldn't otherwise, but the global evidence is absolutely clear that it is electoral quotas which are the most effective at increasing the participation of women in politics."

Professor Sarah Childs, 2020³⁹

The evidence supporting quotas is clear:

- Research shows that quotas are the "single most effective tool for 'fast tracking' women's representation in elected bodies for government."⁴⁰
- Among the twenty Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) countries registering the sharpest growth in the proportion of women in parliament during the last decade - half had introduced legal quotas. By contrast, among the twenty OSCE countries lagging in growth, none had implemented legal quotas⁴¹;
- There is international backing - various international institutions, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the EU and the Council of Europe support quotas;

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- Ireland has successfully used quotas requiring that at least 30% of the candidates each party stands nationally are female (rising to 40% after seven years). The percentage of women candidates increased 90% at the 2016 election compared to the 2011 election, with a corresponding 40% increase in the number of women elected – 35 in 2016 compared with 25 in 2011⁴²;
- The 2017 Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform, appointed by the Llywydd of the Welsh Parliament, recommended introducing prescriptive gender quotas for the 2021 elections. This presented an opportunity for Welsh Government to bring forward legislation to ensure diverse and equal representation.

WEN Wales and Oxfam Cymru believe that legally binding quotas, with sanctions or incentives, are essential to ensure we do not continue to see a reduction in the numbers of women MSs (formerly Assembly Members (AMs)) elected to the Welsh Parliament, and the continuation of low numbers of women elected in local councils. The Bill and forthcoming legislation on Reform of the Welsh Parliament should therefore include quotas.

Job sharing and flexibility

The Bill's proposals that would allow for job-sharing is a positive step, although this must be available across the council, from leaders and executive members and also include backbenchers. This year an extension of the existing job-sharing provisions in the Bill to other senior roles, such as Committee Chairs was announced⁴³, which we welcome. We note that in parallel with the development of the Bill, the independent Remuneration Board has published proposals for the Determination for the Sixth Assembly⁴⁴. These include Members of the Senedd (MSs), receiving extra funds for childcare with additional support offered for disabled MSs and those on parental leave which is a positive step.

Dame Dawn Primarolo, Chair of the Remuneration Board, said the proposals were aimed at contributing "towards achieving diversity within the Senedd's membership which in turn will deliver better representation for the people of Wales."

We support the Future Generations Commissioner's recent call for councillors on parental leave to have someone paid to support and complete their casework in their respective wards⁴⁵.

Promoting access to local government

In 2019 we called for the Welsh Government to commit to setting up an Access to Elected Office fund in time for the 2021 elections to ensure disabled women, BAME women and those from all protected characteristics can access political office. Access to funds to allow people to become elected representatives are critical – disabled women councillors are more likely to experience multiple discrimination as both women and due to their disability⁴⁶. There is an intention by Welsh Government to establish this fund ahead of the 2022 local government elections⁴⁷ which is positive. However, we are extremely disappointed that it is not available for the 2021 Welsh Parliament elections.

"More funding should be made available for underrepresented groups to stand and quotas should be introduced for all tiers of local government. Increasing diversity in local government will not happen by itself, you must force it."

WEN Wales member

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RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Ensure that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill and forthcoming legislation on Reform of the Welsh Parliament should include provisions on legally binding gender and diversity quotas;
- Establish an Access to Elected Office Fund in time for 2021 elections;
- Amend the Local Government Bill to make explicit that job sharing must be available for all, including backbenchers;
- Introduce paid support to complete casework as part of the parental leave offer to councillors, alongside current maternity leave provisions;
- By 2020 implement an action plan to increase the involvement of BAME women in public and political life;
- Require local authorities to collect and publish diversity data from all candidates.

GLOBAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS SCORE: AMBER

Wales aims to be a globally responsible nation. This is one of the seven goals enshrined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015⁴⁸. It requires the Welsh Government to work towards Wales becoming “a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether this makes a positive contribution to global well-being.”

Refugees and asylum seekers

Although the UK Government controls migration and asylum policy, successive Welsh administrations have supported integration for asylum seekers and refugees from the moment they arrive in Wales, including access to free healthcare. This ‘nation of sanctuary’ approach is to be applauded. A proactive approach to refugee resettlement, alongside communities and all 22 local authorities, has helped Wales welcome 1,307 refugees including 88 under the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme⁴⁹.

The United Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees has endorsed Welsh Government’s ‘Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan’⁵⁰. However, despite the strong vision and aims of the Plan, progress in some areas has been slow and front-line support organisations are calling for it to be strengthened. A range of concerns have been raised; for example, the lack of childcare is a continuing barrier to women wanting to access English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes. The Welsh Government’s Childcare Offer does not include people seeking asylum, or those who are unemployed, disproportionately impacting asylum seeking and refugee women. This should be revisited as a matter of urgency.

In the sanctuary seeking community, women’s needs are not always clearly recognised, for example, migrant women are at greater risk of violence and exploitation. At a UK level, it is positive that in 2019, the Home Office published revised Domestic Abuse Guidance strengthening the protection available to women seeking asylum at risk of

domestic abuse – allowing them access to specialist refuge accommodation and associated support services. However, access is only for women who are entitled to asylum support. Refuge is not provided for women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) or women whose Appeal Rights are Exhausted (ARE) who are in precarious living situations. The Women for Refugee Women report⁵¹ (to which several Wales based organisations contributed) highlighted the challenges faced by destitute asylum seeking and refugee women. The report highlights the numbers of women who have been sexually assaulted or forced into unwanted relationships because of NRPF.

International development

Some progress has been made in this area in the last 12 months in terms of commitments. However, these positive words now need to be followed up with strong action and progress on the ground.

The Welsh Government has published its new International Strategy for Wales⁵², which includes establishing Wales as a globally responsible nation as one of its core ambitions. This ambition must be considered when trade or other promotional decisions are being taken, so that women's voices, and the impact on women, is a consideration in such decisions. Incorporating equalities expertise into international relations and trade teams is essential to address gender and intersectionality in international trade and investment. The inclusion of gender and equality is welcomed but, it seems there is no additional resource for this and questions remain on how it will be mainstreamed.

To date, the Welsh Government's contribution to international development has been delivered principally through the Wales for Africa programme, which supports projects that benefit both Welsh and African communities. This appears to continue to be working well in Wales: the sector has a high proportion of women in leadership roles; and organisations consciously monitor women's participation; have recruited more women onto their boards and implemented policies to help women stay in work. It is difficult to assess the impact on women's lives in Africa and although there is progress regarding women in leadership roles in Uganda, evidence suggests that much more needs to be done to raise awareness of domestic abuse and its impact on identity, self-esteem and confidence. For example, development workers in Uganda could be provided with training to become facilitators to sensitise communities on the Government of Uganda's Domestic Violence Act 2010⁵³ to raise awareness and prevent domestic abuse on the ground.

There is a belief within the international development sector that Wales lags behind comparable nations in budget and strategy for international development, and that the globally responsibility goal in the Well-being of Future Generations Act has not yet had a noticeable impact. This is an opportunity that Welsh Government should grasp.

Climate change

Key natural resources are being depleted faster than they can be replenished, biological diversity is declining, and no ecosystems in Wales have all the features needed for resilience⁵⁴. It remains to be seen what impact the Planning Policy Wales 2018⁵⁵ restrictions on mining, oil and gas extraction and fracking will have.

In April 2019, Welsh Government declared a climate emergency, and in May 2019, Welsh Government accepted the recommendation of the UK Committee on Climate Change for a 95% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050⁵⁶, but also announced its ambition to go further and bring forward a target to reach net-zero emissions by 2050.

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We welcomed the First Minister's decision in June 2019 to reject the building of the M4 relief road, which considered the needs of current and future generations and ensured protection for our wildlife and environment.

Legislation is expected to be brought forward in Autumn 2020 to set a target of at least a 95% reduction in all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

RECOMMENDATIONS⁵⁷ - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Introduce a monitoring and evaluation framework that includes clear gender focused performance indicators, success measures, and a review structure;
- Ensure free childcare for those wanting to take ESOL classes;
- Conduct human rights and gender equality assessments of its existing and emerging trade policies;
- Invest in gender and safeguarding training, including for international trade staff;
- Commit funding to increase women's leadership in projects supported by Wales and Africa;
- Ensure greenhouse gas emissions targets are in line with climate science and principles of global equity and responsibility;
- Ensure public spending is in line with plans to reduce emissions;
- Ensure that the development of the 2021 Low Carbon Delivery Plan incorporates the vital contribution of women in mitigating climate change.

FAIR FINANCE⁵⁸ SCORE: AMBER

Jobs and pay equality

The picture for women and the economy in Wales is showing little change. Chwarae Teg reports some recent positive changes for women, including an improvement in women's employment rates⁵⁹. Nevertheless, the gender pay gap has increased to 14.5% in Wales, a 1% increase on 2018, (but it is still below the UK average of 17.3%). In Torfaen the gap is as stark as 25.6%⁶⁰, therefore we still recommend that Welsh Government sanction local authorities that do not report on their gender pay gap and set targets to close the gaps. We welcome the commitment of Welsh Government and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to work with stakeholders to improve the availability of disaggregated data in Wales⁶¹.

42% of women in Wales are working part-time, compared to 14% of men⁶³. 28% of women in Wales are economically inactive, citing the reason 'looking after family or the home', compared to just 7% of economically inactive men⁶⁴, showing how unpaid care duties can impact on women's behaviour in the labour market.

"The availability or otherwise of good quality, affordable childcare and policies around maternity, paternity and parental rights, are important in shaping parents' (particularly women's) labour market participation."

Fair Work Report⁶²

All women regardless of race, sexuality, disability, class, age and faith should be able to reach their potential. In 2019 we recommended that the Welsh Government develop a strategy for identifying and tackling the barriers to employment facing BAME women and set a target for the numbers of disabled women in work by the end of 2019.

Despite the proportion of ethnic minority women in employment in Wales increasing marginally from 48% in 2018 to 55% in 2019⁶⁶, BAME women experience greater disadvantage in the Welsh economy than is experienced by White women or BAME men and are therefore more likely to be in more precarious work, be unemployed or be at a greater risk of poverty⁶⁷.

Further work is needed to ensure that BAME and disabled women are not further disadvantaged in the workplace. Following the publication of the Fair Work report, we hope to see new indicators disaggregated by gender and other protected characteristics.

“BAME and disabled women face multiple barriers, often experiencing discrimination at every stage of the recruitment process.” WEN Wales⁶⁸

Budgets and taxation

We were pleased to see that Welsh Government published its Budget Improvement Plan 2020-2021⁶⁹ for the first time alongside Welsh Government’s Draft Budget in December 2019⁷⁰, which includes plans for assessing the impact of budget decisions.

Last year we recommended that Welsh Government introduce gender budgeting to help determine spending. The Gender Equality Review examined gender budgeting alongside equalities budgeting and recommended that “Welsh Government adopt an equalities mainstreaming approach. This will only be successful if an equalities perspective is also put at the heart of budget processes, economic and fiscal policy.”⁷¹

Welsh Government is taking forward a gender budgeting approach as part of the two-year Personal Learning Accounts (PLA) pilot, launched in September 2019. This project supports employed adults in low paid and low skilled work to switch careers or enter employment at a higher level in priority sectors with known gender effects. The Budget Improvement Plan sets out how they will implement gender budgeting within the pilot’s delivery and an evaluation of the current pilot with a gender lens will inform the wider roll-out of the PLA pilot.

Welsh Government plans to continue to engage with key stakeholders such as the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (BAGE) as it evolves its approach to assessing the impact of budget decisions into the longer term⁷². Nevertheless, in its current iteration, BAGE is not fit for purpose.

It is essential that the terms of reference of BAGE are reviewed to ensure clarity of purpose and support timely, meaningful engagement with members during impact assessments for all spending proposals.

“Not enough women are entering professions where wage growth is the most pronounced (most obviously, but not exclusively, technology), and women face the perennial problem of insufficient care infrastructure and access to capital.” World Economic Forum⁶⁵

“Existing forums to support engagement with experts, such as the Budget Advisory Group for Equalities (BAGE), are not functioning effectively.”

Phase Two of the Gender Equality Review⁷³

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Tax

In November 2019, Welsh Government issued the third in a series of annual updates on longer term proposals to develop local taxation as part of the wider local government finance framework. Welsh Government is currently exploring different approaches looking internationally at the best examples (such as land value tax and local income tax).

New taxation powers to Wales mark a significant moment in devolution – this is an opportune moment for Welsh Government to develop tools for analysing the gender impact of taxation decisions and address shortfalls in the budget process. For example, Wales' gender pay gap affects part-time working women the most, therefore an increase in taxation could have a detrimental effect on women barely making ends meet now.

In 2019 we recommended that Welsh Government develop tools for analysing the impact of any new Welsh income tax and other taxation decisions on women in Wales, and this holds true in 2020. Recent social security and tax changes have hit women hardest with approximately 80% of savings estimated to have come from women's pockets⁷⁴. It is imperative that there is a thorough analysis of the impact of the new Welsh income tax and other taxation decisions on women in Wales.

In 2019 we asked Welsh Government to use its policy-making powers to introduce a progressive Council Tax system. Council Tax levels have risen faster in Wales than in Scotland or England over the past decade, increasing the burden on lower income households. Welsh Government has however provided local authorities with funding to maintain the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which is likely to have benefitted women in poorer households. The discounts for carers may also benefit more women.

RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Set a target to reduce the gender pay gap by half to 7% by 2028;
- Set a target for the numbers of disabled women in work by the end of 2020;
- Monitor and report annually on the effectiveness of the Economic Action and Employability Plans and Economic Contract in narrowing the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps;
- Legally require and enforce all public bodies listed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act to report on their gender pay gaps alongside collating and publishing ethnicity and disability pay gaps;
- Integrate an equalities mainstreaming approach across all budgets as soon as possible;
- Make it a requirement that all businesses in Wales accessing business support provide gender pay gap information in line with that of public bodies and ensure that they demonstrate a commitment to advancing equality for all;
- Develop tools for analysing the impact of any taxation decisions on women in Wales including investing in data capacity to enable reporting on progress in key indicators;
- Reform and improve the Terms of Reference of the Budget Advisory Group on Equality (BAGE);
- Use its policy-making powers to introduce a progressive Council Tax system.

TACKLING GENDER HEALTH INEQUALITIES

SCORE: RED

Health and social care play a role in women's poverty in Wales⁷⁵. Despite living longer than men, women report a higher proportion of long-term health conditions and a higher proportion report that their daily activities are limited by poor health⁷⁶. In addition, there is often a lack of understanding of the specific health issues experienced by women and girls⁷⁷.

Attitudes towards women when reporting their medical symptoms can be based on archaic stereotypes of women being 'hysterical' and 'weak'; whilst at the same time other troubling medical symptoms are normalised (for example, pelvic pain, hormone-mediated mental health, hot flushes, etc)⁷⁸. This combination of unconscious bias and normalisation of medical issues facing women results in the continuation of women suffering in silence and unacceptable delays in diagnosis⁷⁹. Health conditions that predominantly affect women historically attract less funding for research, with misdiagnoses and diagnostic delays rife and treatment outcome below par⁸⁰. The Welsh Government's publication of 'A Healthier Wales'⁸¹ fails to make any explicit reference or recommendations around women's health.

Welsh Government and companies conducting clinical trials have a responsibility to ensure that Wales-based clinical trials recruit equal numbers of women as they do men, and that diagnostic models for conditions that affect women and men are not based solely on male symptomatology (for example, cardiac disease, heart attacks, autism, abdominal aortic aneurysm)⁸².

Ensuring women's health through the life course is not a taboo subject

It is essential that women's health is not just examined through the prism of maternity, but that a whole life perspective is taken. Women's health issues are often seen as taboo. However, gynaecological health, particularly menstrual-related issues, need to be spoken about openly and addressed through early education and awareness raising. From 2022 menstrual well-being through the life-course will be optional on the new school curriculum. However, as an issue that affects such a large proportion of the population, it should be a mandatory element of the Health and Well-being Area of Learning & Experience in the new school curriculum⁸³. Welsh Parliament's Petition Committee discussed this in January 2020 and agreed to write to the Minister for Education to have it included in the 'What Matters' statements in the new curriculum⁸⁴.

It is imperative that all professionals and members of the public have access to accurate, evidence-based information on the menopause. Despite NICE guidelines published in 2015, many women still find themselves offered antidepressants rather than hormone replacement therapy (HRT)⁸⁵.

Patchy and inconsistent access to healthcare services

All women in Wales should have equal access to the health care services they need, regardless of geographic location and other demographics.

Disabled women living in Wales do not have equal access to health care, and disabled people are more likely to die younger, experience health inequalities and have major health conditions, compared to other people⁸⁶. During the Gender Equality Review, the issue of equal treatment and a lack of equalities awareness from health professionals came

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through particularly strongly from LGBT+ stakeholders⁸⁷. Welsh Government must ensure that women who face multiple inequalities can access health services on an equal basis.

There are currently no dedicated recurrent miscarriage clinics in Wales. Research has indicated that most women do not feel that the current level of psychological support they receive after suffering a miscarriage is enough⁸⁸ and high levels of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression after early pregnancy loss is common⁸⁹.

In addition, there are currently no specialist peri-natal Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) in Wales. At present, the choice for women in need of this service is to stay at home with the baby (which may present certain risks and does not offer 24-hour specialist care); be admitted to an adult psychiatric unit without their baby; or be admitted to hospital outside of Wales but separated from family and support networks. Urgent action is required by Welsh Government to prevent women who need this service being isolated from adequate support or their infants.

The Welsh landscape of endometriosis support is also inconsistent and inadequate. Despite endometriosis being a common chronic condition, there is a demonstrable lack of understanding of the condition amongst some health professionals, resulting in significant delays in diagnosis and poor management of symptoms, which then results in negative outcomes for those patients affected⁹⁰. In 2020, there is still only one specialist endometriosis centre in Wales, which is over-subscribed.

It is essential that Welsh Government ensures enough provision and equality of access to specialist health services for women in Wales, as a priority. The best way to make sure women's health needs are recognised and better understood is by including a diverse range of women in the decision-making process around the funding and design of healthcare services. Welsh Government should ensure that services are co-designed and produced with women who have lived experience of various health conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS - WELSH GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Invest in high quality research into women's health and treatment;
 - Ensure that Wales-based clinical trials have a 50:50 gender split;
 - Make 'Menstrual Well-being Throughout the Life Course' a mandatory element in the new school curriculum;
 - Make menopause the subject of a dedicated Public Health Wales campaign;
 - Open specialist Mother and Baby Units (MBU) in Wales;
 - Ensure the provision of a pan-Wales diagnostic and management service for endometriosis, which includes the provision of specialist nurses in every health board;
 - Open at least two dedicated recurrent miscarriage clinics in Wales;
 - Ensure all patient facing healthcare practitioners receive mandatory training to include specific health conditions and processes related to the health needs of people with protected characteristics;
 - Make co-production of service design and delivery, including information and resources, a priority, in keeping with the spirit of the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the Well-being for Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
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METHODOLOGY

For each policy area under consideration we considered relevant Welsh Government statements, legislation, policies and practice; examined evidence from specialists in each field; analysed statistics where available; and spoke to experts in each of the fields. We are very grateful to everyone who shared their time, knowledge and data. We rated each area using a traffic light system (red, amber and green), indicating 'very little', 'some', or 'significant' progress towards equality for women and girls in Wales between April 2019 and February 2020.

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Written by **Oxfam Cymru and WEN Wales**

ABOUT WEN WALES

Our vision is a Wales free from Gender Discrimination.
Join our coalition to help deliver that vision.

<https://wenwales.org.uk/join-us/>

Charity number: 1145706

Company number: 07891533

ABOUT OXFAM

At Oxfam, we put women at the heart of all we do to help end the injustice of poverty for everyone, for good.

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Charity number: 202918

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WON'T
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