

Joint Consultation Response: Priorities for the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

September 2026

1. What are the most important issues relating to public administration that the Committee should focus on this Senedd term?

Gender equality is a cross-government responsibility. While previous Welsh Governments have, at times, expressed a commitment to this ambition, siloed working and a lack of shared accountability have frustrated efforts towards meaningful progress.

This is evidenced by WEN Wales' latest State of the Nation (2026) report, which highlights an overall lack of clear and consistent progress since the Welsh Government first committed to making Wales a world leader in gender equality in 2018. The report also identifies areas where progress achieved in previous years has since been reversed, demonstrating the urgent need for a more coordinated and accountable approach across Government. For example:

- Economic activity rates for women stood at 72.5% in 2025 (compared to 79.2% for men) and have seen almost no movement from their base level of 72.2% in 2018.
- Women remain over three times more likely to be economically inactive due to caring responsibilities, and almost three times more likely than men to work part-time.
- Across Wales and England, over 80% of sexual violence offences are committed against women. We still lack data disaggregated to Wales, despite many figures being based on regional police force data.
- With poverty levels in Wales back on the rise, single parent households saw the most significant increase from 39% to 45%, demonstrating the intricate link between child poverty and women's poverty.

Gender budgeting is an internationally recognised approach to public finance which advances fairness, effectiveness and transparency of decision-making. It involves analysing spending decisions from a gendered and intersectional perspective, assessing how those decisions - and the policies they fund - impact different groups of women and men. In doing so, it provides policymakers with the tools to respond to those differences, and to prioritise decisions with positive outcomes for equality. As well as tackling inequality, gender budgeting improves government effectiveness by ensuring more effective targeting of resources.

As an approach, successful gender budgeting requires meaningful impact assessment processes, robust external scrutiny and the use of high quality gender and intersectionally disaggregated data. However, despite a commitment under the previous administration to roll out gender budgeting in Wales, progress was hindered by structural issues such as siloed working, high staff turnover, a lack of transparency and limited access to gender disaggregated data. To ensure that this pattern does not repeat itself, the Committee must hold the Welsh Government to account in implementing Plaid Cymru's manifesto commitment to embed gender budgeting in Wales. As detailed in our response to Question 2, this will require strengthening cross-government collaboration and transparency in the Welsh Government's impact assessment and budget process, as well as improving the use and availability of gender disaggregated data in decision-making.

2. The Cabinet Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution made a Plenary statement on his priorities on 23 June 2026. Which areas raised by the

Cabinet Minister relating to public administration should the Committee consider further during this term?

Tackling siloed working: Through our budgetary engagement, we have encountered entrenched siloed working practices between departments and the Treasury in Wales. Siloed working has hindered the impact assessment process and the quality of the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) published alongside the Draft Budget. As external stakeholders, the SIIA is our main source of information on the impacts of budget decisions. However, siloed working has meant that the Treasury must assess spending decisions on the evidence provided by each department, which can be cursory, incomplete or insufficiently disaggregated. This severely curtails the quality, robustness and transparency of the SIIA. Siloed working is also a significant barrier to gender responsive budgeting in Wales. In analysing how public spending affects women and men differently, gender budgeting supports decisionmakers to target resources more effectively. This ensures that that policy and spending decisions meet the diverse needs of people in Wales and ensures best use of public money. However, successful gender budgeting requires strong, intersectional evidence-based decision-making, which is currently impeded by siloed working patterns. We were pleased to see recent efforts by under the previous Welsh Government to tackle these patterns by rolling out a new collaborative approach to the SIIA. Through a series of online workshops, the Treasury brought together policymakers, finance officials and civil society representatives to work together to improve the quality of the SIIA. It is unclear, however, whether this approach will continue under the new Welsh Government. We encourage the Committee to hold the Cabinet Minister to account in implementing his priorities regarding strengthening the centre of government, coordinating departments and breaking down departmental siloes.

Increasing transparency and accountability: As discussed above, the SIIA and impact assessment process are not transparent enough to support external scrutiny or accountability. The lack of transparency regarding the evidence being used to assess the impact of decision-making makes it difficult for external stakeholders and citizens to understand why spending decisions have been made and whether they are achieving intended outcomes. This undermines public trust in the budget process. By hindering scrutiny, it also leads to poorer prioritisation of resources and reduced value for money. Furthermore, without transparent, gender and intersectional impact assessment, gender budgeting is not possible. This means that spending decisions may inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities across Wales.

Improving use and availability of data: Improving the quality of impact assessment and the robustness of decision-making in Wales can only be achieved by increasing the availability and use of gender and intersectionally disaggregated data. Despite the establishment of the Equality, Race and Disability Evidence Units under the previous Welsh Government, there is still a lack of gendered and intersectional data here in Wales. Without this evidence base, decisionmakers cannot fully understand who is benefiting from public spending, where inequalities persist or how resources can be better targeted to address them. To support meaningful analysis and the effectiveness of decision-making, the Committee must address this lack of disaggregated data and strengthen expectations for its collection, publication and use by the Welsh Government.

3. Anything else?

We would like to emphasise the importance of the budget in strengthening government effectiveness. At the heart of decision-making, the budget process determines how limited public resources are allocated and which policies and services are prioritised and

delivered. A strong budget process therefore plays a critical role in government effectiveness, ensuring that resources are directed towards areas of greatest need. Embedding robust evidence, impact assessment and equality considerations within this process is essential to ensuring that public spending delivers maximum value for money and improves outcomes for people across Wales.

Gender budgeting provides an accessible framework through which to do this. By requiring greater transparency, collaboration and use of evidence in decision-making, it strengthens the basis on which resources are allocated and enables government to better understand who benefits from public spending and whether it is delivering effective and equitable outcomes. The Welsh Government's commitment to implement new ways of working under new Ministry for Government Effectiveness – for example, strengthening cross-government collaboration and improving the use of evidence in decision-making – presents a significant opportunity to accelerate the implementation of gender budgeting and improve the fairness of decision-making. Doing so directly supports Plaid Cymru's manifesto commitment to ensure public spending is more effective, transparent and focused on delivering measurable progress. It also aligns closely to Plaid Cymru's other manifesto commitments around introducing gender budgeting and improving the collection and use of gender-disaggregated data. We therefore encourage the Committee to prioritise gender budgeting and the budget process within its work, recognising their central role in strengthening government effectiveness and accountability. WWBG/WEN Wales would be very happy to provide further support to the Committee regarding these issues through training, briefings or meetings with members.

About the Wales Women's Budget Group (WWBG): The WWBG is an independent charity working to build a more prosperous and equitable Wales. Housed within the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales, we exist to expose and challenge the structural economic inequalities that affect women across Wales. Through robust analysis, training and engagement with policymakers, we work to influence Welsh spending decisions and resource allocation, ensuring that they are fair and gender equal.

About the Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales: Our vision is of a Wales free from gender discrimination where all have equal authority and opportunity to shape society and their own lives. We work with our vibrant coalition of organisational and individual members to transform society. Our work sits under three pillars. We will Connect, Campaign and Champion women so our vision is realised.

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