

Wales Women's Budget Group (WWBG) and Women's Equality Network (WEN) Wales joint submission to the Finance Committee

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2026-27

September 2026

1. What are the main financial pressures you, your family or your organisation are facing between now and the end of the Senedd term 2030?

Women in Wales: The impacts of the cost of living crisis have not been felt equally. Women in Wales are being hit harder by rising costs and inflation and are being pushed into debt and poverty as a result. As revealed in WEN Wales' latest [State of the Nation 2026](#), single parent households in Wales - the vast majority of whom are headed by women - saw the sharpest jump in poverty rates from 39% to 45%, followed by single women, who saw an increase from 20% to 23%.

These disproportionate impacts are due to deep-rooted gender inequalities which mean that women in Wales are more likely to experience low pay, insecure work and reduced working hours, often due to unequal caring responsibilities. The situation is starker for ethnic minority and disabled women, as well as single mothers, who face intersecting discrimination and additional challenges to accessing and remaining in employment. These inequalities mean that women earn less than men, as evidenced by the gender pay gap which stands at 9.7% in Wales (an increase from 9% in the previous year). This unequal economic position leaves women in Wales more exposed to the impacts of rising costs and more likely to be living in poverty.

The WWBG recently surveyed close to 900 women in our Wales Women's Survey 2026. The results highlighted that women in Wales have felt the impact of rising costs most acutely in the areas of food (87%), energy (66%) and council tax (34%). To cope with these rising costs, women have cut back on spending for themselves (74%), over half have had to use savings (51%) and a quarter have taken on debt as a result (25%). These pressures have negatively impacted the mental health and wellbeing of 57% of women and have left 49% unable to save money as costs continue to rise. As discussed in Question 2 below, supporting women to navigate the cost of living crisis requires longer term action to tackle the structural causes of inequality alongside short-term hardship support measures.

Welsh third sector: The Wales Women's Budget Group (WWBG) is currently housed by WEN Wales, both of which are women's organisations within the Welsh third sector. Post-EU funding challenges, inflation and increases to National Insurance Contributions have all had marked impacts on the sustainability of the third sector in Wales. These pressures are amplified for the Welsh women's sector, which continues to face increased demand and operational costs alongside limited resource. Such financial constraints are a critical barrier to women's organisations being able to meet demand and deliver their vital services.

Alongside increased costs, women's organisations in Wales and across the UK rely on a small number of narrow funding schemes. As per the [Rosa Foundation \(2023\)](#), women's organisations receive just 1.8% of all charitable grant funding in the UK. This is further problematised by the short-term nature of grants, which rarely last more than two years. This uncertainty falls far short of the long term security needed to meet growing demand and provide sustainable specialist services. It also affects women's organisation's ability to plan strategically for the future.

The serious consequence of this situation is illustrated by the regrettable closure of longstanding organisations such as Chwarae Teg, which represented a significant setback in the fight for gender equality in Wales. To counteract the alarming loss of expertise in the Welsh third sector, the Welsh Government must take urgent action to protect its sustainability, by recognising the value of third sector in Wales and to protecting its organisations through targeted, medium to long-term funding.

2. How should the Welsh Government prioritise funding based on its stated priorities, and what areas of current spend should be deprioritised?

The new Welsh Government's stated priorities are:

- *cutting waiting lists, and building a health and care service fit for the future;*
- *helping families with the cost of living through affordable, quality childcare;*
- *unleashing the potential of the Welsh economy, and creating good, well-paid jobs;*
- *raising standards in our schools and ensuring the best conditions for learning;*
- *tackling child poverty;*
- *standing up for Wales and demanding fairness from Westminster.*

Our Wales Women's Survey 2026 indicates that the key priorities for women in Wales are NHS services and waiting times (57%), Cost of living support (43%) and Women's health (26%).

NHS and women's health: Currently, [32% of women in Wales are economically inactive due to ill-health](#), making it the biggest barrier that women face to labour force participation. Tackling the unequal economic position of women in Wales therefore requires concerted action and committed funding to tackle NHS waiting times and improve patient outcomes. Doing so also requires recognizing the value of social care in Wales and ensuring a holistic approach to funding health and social care. To prevent bottlenecks in hospital discharges and build a health and care service fit for the future, the Welsh Government must address the cost pressures and structural issues within social care workforce, [80.3% of whom are women](#). This requires ensuring all social care workers receive the Real Living Wage at a minimum, as well as tackling the prevalence of precarious, zero-hour contracts, lack of job security, and shortage of training and progression opportunities within the sector.

Health inequalities are exacerbated by entrenched gender biases in Wales' healthcare system. These biases mean that women experience barriers to accessing services and have poorer health outcomes than men. A key reason for this disparity is [the traditional underrepresentation of women in clinical trials](#), which has resulted in diagnosis, treatments and clinical guidelines largely based on men's experience of illness. Another reason is that health conditions which specifically affect women – such as endometriosis and menopause – remain under-researched and poorly understood. As a result, women report that symptoms are [often dismissed as 'normal' or erroneously attributed to psychological causes](#). This results in diagnostic delays and poorer health outcomes for women. For example, at [almost 10 years](#), Wales has one of the longest average diagnosis times for endometriosis in the UK. Such prolonged waiting times and multiple GP visits can lead to escalating symptoms and worse prognosis, significantly impacting patient employment, education, mental health and wellbeing as well as adding unnecessarily to the demand on already stretched services.

In this context, we welcome the Welsh Government's decision to appoint Wales' first Women's Health Minister and their substantial commitments to strength the Women's Health Plan 2025-35. In particular, we were pleased to see the Minister's commitment to tackling the normalisation of women's pain and her focus this year on endometriosis, abortion and maternity care. However,

without clear targets, adequate funding and firm deadlines, these commitments risk becoming empty words. We encourage the Government to implement diagnostic and treatment time targets for women's health conditions to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Welsh Government should also ensure the use of an intersectional lens in all women's health policymaking. Issues such as waiting times, dismissal and delayed diagnoses are often more acute for women in marginalised and rural communities, who experience additional barriers to healthcare access. For example, Asian women are twice as likely to die in childbirth than white women, with this figure rising to [almost four times for black women in the UK](#). The Welsh Government must take further action to ensure equitable access to healthcare across demographics and geographies in Wales. This requires ensuring consistency in care throughout Wales, implementing targeted solutions to improve access amongst the most marginalised women and working across government to improve public transport in rural areas. Finally, we strongly encourage the Welsh Government to address the evidence gap in women's healthcare by adequately funding ongoing research into women's health and by regularly collecting and publishing intersectional data on these issues and conditions, so that progress can be measured and tracked.

Cost of living support: Due to their unequal economic position, women in Wales are more vulnerable to the impacts of rising cost of living and more likely to be living in poverty. This is particularly the case for single mothers, who rely on a single income and lack a co-parent to share childcare responsibilities. Single parents – the majority of whom are women – remain the most likely household type to be living in relative income poverty in Wales, with [45% currently doing so](#). As discussed below, tackling women's poverty is fundamental to tackling child poverty, as women's economic insecurity directly affects the resources and opportunities available to children.

WWBG's Wales Women's Survey 2026 indicates that women have felt the impact of rising costs most acutely in the areas of food (87%), energy (66%) and council tax (34%). In this context, hardship payments such as the Discretionary Assistance Fund and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme are vital forms of support to help to reduce pressure on women's incomes as the cost of essentials remains high. However, the Welsh Government has not produced a gendered breakdown of applications nor uptake of these measures. To assess whether existing measures adequately supports women hit hardest by the crisis, the Welsh Government should provide gender-disaggregated breakdown on the uptake and impact of these payments and support measures.

While hardship payments are necessary, they are short-term measures which do little to address the structural causes of women's economic inequality. One of the most significant structural barriers is the disproportionate burden of unpaid caring responsibilities. This barrier is compounded by an overly complicated and disjointed childcare system in Wales that currently leaves many families on the lowest incomes behind. The Welsh Government's commitment to phase in a universal offer of 20 hours per week presents a major opportunity to address long-standing barriers to women's employment and reduce child poverty. It is critical that this expansion is appropriately resourced at every stage and that funding mechanisms support provider sustainability and better staff pay.

A recent report by WEN Wales (2025), based on research with over 780 parents in Wales and a substantive literature review, found that childcare policy could support families in Wales more effectively if it:

- Combines a universal core offer with scaled support based on individual or community need, such as income-dependent childcare subsidies

- Employs targeted funding mechanisms to prevent shortages in rural and disadvantaged areas, to ensure sufficient provisions for disabled children and better pay and condition for staff
- Enables families to use part-time entitlements flexibly, for instance by allowing them to combine 2.5 hrs daily Flying Start sessions into fewer days.

WEN Wales' findings show that limited part-time provision spread throughout the week does not effectively support parental employment and can create access barriers for families with work commitments, with limited transport or with multiple children. The impact of this is felt worse by families who cannot pay for additional hours or who cannot rely on wider family support.

While the above areas require urgent attention, it is important to recognise that tackling gender inequality is also key to delivering progress across Welsh Government's other priorities. There are discussed throughout our response below.

3. Given the limits on the amount of funding available, do you have any views about how the budget could be allocated more efficiently?

Gender budgeting is an internationally recognised approach to public spending used to advance gender equality. It is often misunderstood as separate budgets for women and men. In reality, it has a much broader application. As an approach, it involves using data disaggregated by gender and other protected characteristics to assess how public resources are distributed, and how spending and policy decisions impact different groups in society. This enables decisionmakers to identify and prioritise measures with more equitable outcomes, and to restructure decisions which may entrench inequality and disadvantage. In requiring decisionmakers to respond to the needs of different groups, gender budgeting advances the fairness, effectiveness and transparency of decision-making.

Crucially, gender budgeting also provides for more effective use of public money. Sometimes referred to as 'good budgeting,' gender budgeting ensures better targeting of the finite resources available. Its emphasis on evidence-based assessment leads to a clearer formulation of policies and the allocation of resources which actually meet the diverse needs of the population, beginning with the most disadvantaged. Gender budgeting also prevents losses from policy failure due to unexpected, gendered impacts. This is because, without it, the unequal consequences of seemingly 'gender-neutral' spending and policy decisions may only become apparent once harm or inequality has already occurred. Gender budgeting therefore reduces the risk of policies inadvertently reinforcing inequalities by providing a clear mechanism to identify these risks early and adjust policy and resource allocation accordingly.

In this context, we were extremely disappointed that [Plaid Cymru's manifesto commitment](#) to roll out gender budgeting in Wales was not carried over to the [Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2026-30](#). Despite inconsistent progress under the previous administration, important steps were taken to advance gender budgeting in Wales. For example, following the publication of Chwarae Teg's [Deeds Not Words: Review of Gender Equality in Wales](#) report, the then Welsh Government formally accepted all of its recommendation including a commitment to roll out gender budgeting in Wales. Plans to implement these recommendations were laid out in the [Advancing Gender Equality in Wales Plan](#), published in March 2020. As part of its commitment to roll out gender budgeting in Wales, the Welsh Government [commissioned three gender budgeting pilots in different policy portfolios](#). These included the Personal Learning Accounts (2019-21) pilot, followed by Young Person's Guarantee and E-Move pilots (2022-23). After some

delay, [the evaluation of these pilots](#) was published by the previous Welsh Government in November 2025. Although the evaluation was high-level in nature, it provided useful learnings, including some positive examples of how gender budgeting improved outcomes. Other gender budgeting advances include the development of an internal introduction to gender budgeting resource for policymakers, officials and the wider Welsh Government to raise awareness of gender budgeting and its key issues. The previous Welsh Government also undertook work to include two gender budgeting questions in departmental equality impact assessments (EQIAs). We strongly encourage the new administration to continue this important work.

Finally, the new collaborative approach to the [Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment \(SIIA\)](#) discussed below provided WWBG with the opportunity to deliver gender budgeting training to Welsh Treasury Directorates, officials, policymakers and civil society representatives. This was an important step towards building capacity and shared expertise of the approach across government.

Regrettably, there is a significant risk that this progress and the valuable learnings of the 2021–23 gender budgeting pilots will be lost unless the new Welsh Government commits to building on and embedding this work. Failure to do so would represent a serious setback to efforts to tackle gender inequality and adequately support women in Wales, who comprise 51% of the population. As discussed under Question 5, it would also present a major missed opportunity to progress the new administration's vision for effectiveness, transparency and ending siloed working.

We therefore urge the Committee to hold the Welsh Government to account in continuing to embed gender budgeting and addressing the barriers to its implementation in Wales. This will require improving the transparency of budget and impact assessment processes, particularly around the evidence being fed into the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) at a departmental level. In addition, further training and continued support is needed to build the necessary capacity amongst policymakers, officials, stakeholders and technical staff to implement gender budgeting. WWBG is very happy to support with this.

To inform this work, the Welsh Government must take action to improve the regular collection and use of data disaggregated by gender and other protected characteristics in decision-making, to support meaningful analysis and to give an accurate picture of how decisions impact gender equality.

4. Do you have any views on how the Welsh Government should use its current tax raising powers? [you can read more about the Welsh Government's tax raising powers here: <https://research.senedd.wales/financial-scrutiny/what-are-welsh-devolved-taxes/>]

The Welsh Government has limited taxation powers at its disposal to manage its budget and address funding shortfalls. The Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) has described this, alongside limited borrowing tools, as [a 'lack of fiscal firepower'](#), which constrains the Welsh Government's policymaking abilities in gendered areas such as health, economy, housing and transport. We recommend that the Welsh Government make full use of the taxation powers currently available to it to advance a fairer and more progressive tax system, while also advocating for the devolution of further fiscal powers to Wales. Doing so would provide Welsh Government with more capacity and flexibility to invest in the public services that women rely upon and work within, thereby tackling some of the key structural causes of women's economic inequality in Wales.

Income tax: Although income tax is more progressive than council tax, there is limited scope to use it as a fairer means to raise revenue in the Welsh context. Unlike in Scotland, the Welsh Government cannot adjust income tax bands (which are formulated on a UK basis) or create new ones. Instead, under Welsh rates of income tax, the Welsh Government can only amend the top 10p paid by Welsh taxpayers in every £1 of income in each tax band (Basic, Higher, Additional).

Current income tax thresholds are not suitable to income levels in Wales, where [88% of taxpayers pay the basic rate](#). The Welsh Government should make the case for further devolution of taxation powers to Wales, as in Scotland, to provide the necessary flexibility to respond to the needs of Welsh taxpayers. For example, the power to create new income tax bands could help protect lower earners, the majority of whom are women, from tax rises.

Council tax: As highlighted by our Wales Women's Survey 2026, 34% of women have felt the impact of rising costs most acutely in their council tax payments over the past 12 months. As a result of facing over [£350 million in unfunded pressures](#), Welsh local authorities have resorted to increasing council tax rates to plug funding shortfalls. The average Band D council tax rate in Wales has risen by over 12% over the last two years. As council tax is not based on income levels, these increases disproportionately impact low earning tenants and homeowners, the majority of whom are women.

In this context, the Welsh Government's Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Single Person Occupancy discounts are vital forms of support, reducing council tax bills with discounts of up to 100%. The Welsh Government could take further action to protect the most vulnerable by linking exemptions and discounts more closely to income and making them automatic for low-income households. This must be accompanied by fair and flexible multi-year funding for local government, to address shortfalls and ensure that vital services continue to be delivered.

Council tax, however, remains a regressive form of taxation which disproportionately impacts women and other low earning groups. We therefore encourage the Welsh Government to explore replacing or supplementing council tax with more progressive alternatives that better reflect the ability to pay. Such options include, for example, a land value tax based on the value of land itself rather than property, or a progressive property tax levied yearly on the value of the property. By targeting predominantly male held or owned wealth, these options could also help to narrow the gender wealth gap which stood at [23% in Wales in 2025](#).

Wealth tax: While the Welsh Government does not have the power to implement a wealth tax, they should actively lobby the UK Government to introduce a [2% annual wealth tax on assets over £10 million](#) in the UK, as proposed by Tax Justice UK. As noted in the inaugural episode of our podcast [WWBG Explains](#), such an initiative would contribute billions to the economy each year. This funding would not only help tackle deepening inequality and close the gender wealth gap, but it would also provide sustainable funding for the crumbling public services that women rely on and work within. While only 0.04% of the UK population would be affected by a 2% wealth tax, it would generate significant and vital revenue to support the most vulnerable in our society.

5. Do you think the Welsh Government can link funding for policies to outputs and outcomes and, if so, how?

Transparency of budgetary decisions is essential to ensuring public trust in the budgetary process. It is also central to achieving the Welsh Government's commitment to end siloed working and deliver meaningful, measurable change. To do so, departments must be able to

demonstrate why spending decisions have been made, what the cumulative impacts were across portfolios and whether they have achieved intended outcomes. This requires robust impact assessment and accountability mechanisms. Currently, these processes around the Welsh Government's budget – the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) and departmental Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) – are not transparent enough to support external scrutiny and accountability.

As external stakeholders, the SIIA published alongside the Draft Budget is our main source of information on the impacts of budget decisions. It aims to identify strategic and cumulative impacts on different areas and groups, so as to reduce disproportionate impacts on any one specific group or area and help reduce inequalities. While this approach is commendable, our previous experience of budgetary engagement suggest that it is hindered by entrenched siloed working practices between departments and the Treasury. These patterns mean that the Treasury must assess spending decisions on the evidence provided by each department, which may be cursory, incomplete or insufficiently disaggregated. Without any linking to the departmental evidence substantiating the SIIA narrative conclusions, it is impossible for external stakeholders to fully understand the impact of spending decisions or the extent to which they are driven by robust data and evidence. This lack of transparency severely curtails external scrutiny and can lead to poorer prioritisation of resources and reduced value for money.

In this context, we were pleased to see efforts by the previous Welsh Government to tackle siloed 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. This approach led to notable improvements within the SIIA such as the inclusion of case studies and identification of negative impacts and efforts to mitigate them.

The Welsh Government's commitment to new ways of working under the Ministry for Government Effectiveness present a significant opportunity to develop this approach. Strengthening procedures for impact assessment, including for scrutinising the cumulative impacts of budget decisions across different departments, must be an integral element of this work, yet at present it is uncertain whether this will happen.

To improve the transparency of budgetary decisions, we recommend that the Welsh Government:

- Publishes all departmental IIAs in a central repository and link to them within the SIIA.
- Establishes clearer linking between MEG/BEL tables and other budget documentation. At present, it is not always possible to cross-reference spending decisions (i.e. in the SIIA or budget narrative) with actual budget lines, because the MEG tables do not provide enough detail. This makes it difficult to contextualise spending decisions and understand how spending has developed historically.
- Incorporates gender budgeting within the Welsh budgetary process and the SIIA by including gender impact assessment case studies in different spending areas.

A central mechanism for ensuring transparency and improving the quality of impact assessment is the establishment of independent advisory groups to scrutinise government decisions and ensure that the voices of affected communities are reflected in policymaking and budgeting. Under the previous administration, the Budget Improvement and Impact Assessment Group (BIIAG) existed as a forum of external stakeholders and civil society representatives who advised the Treasury on the Welsh budget process from an equalities perspective. It is not yet clear whether such formalized equalities engagement with the budget process will continue under the new Welsh Government, either through BIIAG or a new format entirely.

6. What actions would you like to see in the Welsh Government budget to support economic growth in Wales?

Women's workforce participation, progression, and entrepreneurship are integral to supporting the Welsh Government's priority of unleashing the potential of the Welsh economy and its goal of halving the productivity gap with the rest of the UK. By tackling the barriers women in Wales face to economic activity and employment, the Welsh Government can increase women's participation in the workforce, hereby increasing productivity and income. This would bring additional tax revenue and social security contributions and reduce demand for welfare benefits and devolved support services.

However, data from WEN Wales' [State of the Nation](#) 2026 report highlights a lack of clear and consistent progress in this area, with some positive developments being undone;

- Progress on increasing women's employment rates continued to be undone in 2025 and now stands at 69.6%, compared to 75.8% for men.
- 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.
- Single parent households, the vast majority of whom are headed by women, saw the sharpest jump in poverty rates from 39% to 45%, followed by single women, who saw an increase from 20% to 23%.
- Women make up almost 58% of Universal Credit claimants. At 35%, women remain more likely than men (at 29%) to rely on Universal Credit even while in work.

In our Wales Women's Survey 2026, WWBG asked respondents about the barriers they experienced to entering, remaining and progressing in the workplace. The most common barriers are discussed in turn below.

Caring responsibilities (27%): According to our survey, the biggest barrier women face is caring responsibilities for children and adults (i.e. elderly and disabled relatives). This is further evidenced by WEN Wales' [State of the Nation 2026](#), which found that 21% of women are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities. A well-designed childcare system is fundamental to addressing this barrier and increasing women's labour force participation. Unfortunately, childcare provision in Wales remains unaffordable, disjointed and inaccessible, with high costs and gaps in provision pushing parents, particularly mothers, out of work. The Welsh Government's planned childcare expansion offers a valuable opportunity to address the structural issues within Wales' childcare sector and provide the support that families desperately need. As noted by [WEN Wales' Transforming Early Education and Care in Wales \(2026\)](#) report, this requires addressing long standing staffing issues with its predominantly female workforce, ensuring sufficient flexibility and providing adequate provision for rural and disadvantaged areas across Wales.

To support women with adult caring responsibilities, the Welsh Government must address the recruitment and retention issues within social care. This requires ensuring that the entire workforce – 78% of whom are women – receive the Real Living Wage and improving the poor working terms and conditions within the sector including the prevalence of zero hour contracts, lack of job security and shortage of training and progression opportunities.

Limited opportunities for promotion or career progression (20%) and a lack of job opportunities (18%): The unequal economic position of women in Wales is compounded by occupational segregation. Deep-rooted gendered patterns mean that women tend to occupy lower-paid and insecure employment sectors such as health and social care, food and accommodation. In contrast, women are underrepresented in major growth sectors such as [construction \(17%\)](#), [electricity \(17%\)](#), [manufacturing \(25%\)](#), and [information and communication \(37%\)](#). The skills demand in these sectors means Wales cannot afford to leave women behind. Women in Wales are also underrepresented in managerial and senior roles, [63% of which are occupied by men](#). At the same time, the latest available figures show that young women in Wales are more likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) behind and that gender disparities are worsening.

To enable women to enter, remain and progress within the workplace, the Welsh Government must invest in employability and flexible working programmes which support women into higher-paid and non-traditional occupations, improve pay and progression in female-dominated sectors and promote flexible working that does not limit career progression.

7. What is the single biggest issue in the budget that would make a difference to you, your family or your organisation?

As discussed above, gender budgeting is a powerful cross-cutting tool which can be used by the Welsh Government to tackle unequal impacts and make meaningful progress towards its priorities for this Senedd term. Gender budgeting requires decisionmakers to respond to the needs of different groups and therefore provides a mechanism for addressing many of the issues discussed above at the root. It also provides for the best use of public money, by ensuring evidence-led targeted spending, clearer formulation of policies and the allocation of resources which actually meet the needs of the population, beginning with the most disadvantaged.

By closing employment gaps and enabling women's participation in the workforce, gender budgeting increases productivity and income. This brings additional tax revenue and social security contributions, directly supporting the Welsh Government's aim of unleashing the potential of the Welsh economy. In tackling inequality and contributing to economic growth, gender budgeting strongly aligns with the wider wellbeing agenda encompassed by the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Welsh Government's Programme for Government 2026-30. Finally, its emphasis on evidence, data and robust impact assessment offers the transparency and accountability necessary to achieve the Government's aim of strengthening cross-governmental collaboration.

The Welsh Government's decision not to include a commitment to gender budgeting in its Programme for Government 2026-30 is therefore concerning and deeply regrettable. This not only risks losing vital progress made thus far but also leaves women and other vulnerable groups without the targeted support they need, allowing existing disadvantage and inequality to persist and deepen.

8. Should budget allocations change to invest more in preventative initiatives that reduce future demand for services? If so, how can this be achieved?

Addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality in Wales is key to prevention and reducing future service demand. For example, investing in earlier diagnosis and better care for women's health conditions reduces the likelihood of these conditions becoming severe. This reduces the

social care and NHS pressures associated with long-term ill-health and enables women to remain in or return to work more quickly, supporting their economic independence and sustainability.

Similarly, prioritising affordable, accessible childcare and early years support reduces financial pressures on families in Wales and allows parents – particularly mothers – to remain, return and progress in the workplace.

Investing in social care and meaningful support for unpaid carers reduces future service demand by cutting down on hospital admissions, discharge bottlenecks and wider NHS pressures. Addressing the structural problems within social care also supports its workers to remain and progress within the sector, helping to address the economic vulnerability of its primarily female workforce.

Furthermore, by taking concerted action to support more women into high-paid, non-traditional growth sectors such as construction, electricity, manufacturing, and information and communication, the Welsh Government can meet the skills demand within these sectors. Doing so also tackles the unequal economic position of women by enabling them to earn more over their lifetimes. This, in turn, can help to narrow the gender pension gap, which stands at [43% in the UK](#).

Each of the above initiatives would help address gender inequality at its root by preventing women from becoming trapped in low paid, part-time work or economic inactivity. They also, however, reduce the growing pressures on key public services. By tackling the unequal economic position of women, these allocations can help to lift women in Wales out of poverty and debt. This reduces reliance on social security, income support and hardship payments. It also has an immediate impact on reducing child poverty, as women's economic insecurity is often directly linked to children's economic insecurity.

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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