



# **DEEDS NOT WORDS SUMMARY REPORT**



REVIEW OF  
GENDER EQUALITY IN WALES  
(PHASE TWO)

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## Overview

This summary report provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations of *Deeds not Words*, one of the final reports of the second phase of the Gender Equality Review. Alongside *Deeds not Words*, sits the *Roadmap for Gender Equality*, which outlines the policy actions needed in key areas to improve women's lives in Wales. The Roadmap should be read alongside this Summary report to understand the breadth of work of the Review. Both *Deeds not Words* and *the Roadmap for Gender Equality* are substantial pieces of work, drawing on stakeholder engagement, international best practice and original research from leading academics in the fields of equality, gender and public policy.

We understand that these are substantial reports, but changing entrenched gender divisions and inequalities is not an easy task, and the deep-rooted social, economic and cultural forces that drive stereotyping, discrimination and abuse will not disappear quickly, easily, or without sustained effort. These reports provide Welsh Government, other public bodies and wider civil society with a robust framework on which to create a Wales that can truly be a world leader for gender equality.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to a number of co-contributors who have made this Review possible. The findings in this report draw heavily on a number of reports from leading academics, providing an invaluable evidence-base for our conclusions and recommendations. In places, original text from these reports has been included in relevant chapters, and we would recommend that these reports are read in conjunction with *Deeds not Words*. We are particularly grateful to the following individuals, whose reports for this Gender Equality Review we draw on heavily in both this summary, and the substantive report:

Dr Alison Parken (*Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities, and Equality Mainstreaming: Policy Development Model*)

Wales Centre for Public Policy - Dr Angela O'Hagan, Emanuella Lau Christenson, Dr. Helen Tilley and Suzanna Nesom (*Tackling Inequality through Gender Budgeting Evidence and Models*)

Wales Centre for Public Policy – Emma Taylor-Collins and Suzanna Nesom (*Gender Equality: Learning from Nordic Nations Gender Equality Review Phase Two*, Wales Centre for Public Policy (2019))

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# **1. Introduction**

Gender equality matters; to ensure that women, men and non-binary people can enjoy the same rights, opportunities and outcomes but also to drive economic growth and increase wellbeing in our nation, so that in future generations, our sex, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, education or socio economic profile, or the community that we come from, will not dictate our ability to achieve happiness and fulfilment, and make the fullest contribution to society.

In March 2018 the then First Minister outlined a vision for Wales to be a world leader for gender equality, and an ambition for Welsh Government to be a feminist Government. The current First Minister and his Government have asserted their commitment to this vision, and supported it with the leadership and resources for this Review.

In 2019 as we mark and celebrate twenty years of devolution in Wales it is right to reflect on our progress towards equality, and consider what further, additional or different steps we need to take to make that vision a reality to women, men and non-binary people across Wales. Over the past two years, there have been many opportunities to reflect on the journey towards equality, not least as we celebrated 100 years since some women first got the vote in the UK. It is important that we benchmark our progress to date because an understanding of the past, what we have tried and failed to achieve is crucial to setting and delivering our ambitions for the future.

We know that many challenges remain if we are to achieve gender equality and the barriers that women encounter across the board must be tackled. We cannot afford to continue to under-utilise women's skills and potential, and must take steps to ensure women can access and progress in fair work with decent pay. This will require changes to our workplaces, more effective challenge to persistent stereotypes and a world class and childcare service that delivers for children while supporting parents to work.

It's simply unacceptable that women's voices remain under-represented in key decision-making positions across Welsh society. The pace of change remains painfully slow; in business, in local government and across the structures where power lies.

This inequality not only harms our economic performance, but also leaves women at risk. Wales will not be the safest place to be a woman unless the risk of violence, harassment, poverty and isolation is eradicated. Improving women's economic situation will reduce some of these risks but there remains a need for wholesale societal and cultural change where gender-based violence becomes a thing of the past.

The Roadmap for Gender Equality, which sits alongside this summary and Deeds not Words, sets out a number of actions that can help to address the inequality women continue to face. However, to truly deliver lasting change we need to do more than just change what we

do, we also need a radical shift in how we do things. We cannot afford to continue to develop policies and programmes that, inadvertently, recreate and reinforce longstanding inequality by failing to consider historical and structural inequalities as part of development, pilot and evaluation.

*Deeds not Words* therefore makes recommendations to deliver this radical shift and drive wholesale institutional change to ensure that equalities is properly mainstreamed into the work of government. This report summarises those findings and recommendations, which are based on a variety of pieces of work carried out by Chwarae Teg, Dr Alison Parken and the Wales Centre for Public Policy and has been supported by a Steering Group Chaired by the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, an Expert Advisory Group of Stakeholders and wider consultation with groups of women and the general public. A detailed methodology is contained in the full report.

To deliver lasting change we are clear that good intentions alone are not enough, and to date have not resulted in the changes that we need to achieve gender equality. We need to see continued political commitment, changes in the way Welsh Government functions as an institution that develops and delivers policies and programmes and the development of new policy-making tools to truly embed equalities in the process.

We strongly recommend that this summary is read in conjunction with the other papers, particularly the Roadmap, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings and recommendations we are making.

We are acutely aware that this Review takes place in a challenging context. We are approaching nearly ten years of austerity, in which budgets have been squeezed and difficult decisions have been taken, including an ongoing recruitment freeze within Welsh Government. Brexit uncertainty persists, with serious concerns about the potential roll back of rights and protections following our exit from the EU. However, these challenges also affect the everyday lives of the people of Wales and only make it more important to place equality at the heart of what we do, to protect hard won progress and to continue to push forward.

Despite these current and real challenges we are firmly of the view that this is the time, twenty years since the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales and of government in Wales, to respond with renewed vigour and commitment. The next twenty years should be characterised by much more radical action towards equality. Necessarily this Review looks at the current situation, and the recent past- but it is also situated in an understanding of what devolution is trying to achieve. Government closer to the people, more attuned and better able to respond to those people's needs and experiences. It is our view that in Wales we have all (not just government) often been too quick, too content, to accept that something can't be done, that there isn't sufficient time or resource, or that the challenges we face are too great to enable us to achieve our ambitions. We reject this as a collective failure (not just of government, but also of wider civil society), which also betrays

the promise of devolution. We must use this opportunity to refocus with greater energy, innovation and commitment to do things differently so that all the people of Wales can have a meaningful role to play in shaping our collective future.

Therefore this report, *Deeds not Words*, contains recommendations that must reach beyond this Assembly term. Early work in Phase Two developed a new, radical vision for gender equality, which will require action in the short and long-term to become a reality. We have deliberately made recommendations that can be implemented now, but we are aware that the new vision takes us far beyond the current status quo and have therefore also made recommendations for long-term, structural change.

## **2. Key definitions**

A critical concern at the outset of Phase Two was to ensure clarity of purpose, including a shared understanding of what was meant by gender, gender equality and intersectionality. Working with the Expert Advisory group and drawing on the responses to wider consultation these definitions have been developed. These apply to all of the work of the Review and should be kept in mind when reading the report.

### **Gender**

*By Gender we mean both identity and the way in which gender shapes society and day-to-day life. While it can include sex, it is not synonymous with (the same as) sex and does not only refer to gender identity or gender expression. Gender identity can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as masculinity, femininity and non-binary, and can be regulated by stereotypes and norms.*

*Gender also shapes the organisation of our society, the economy and power relationships, as ideas about what is considered appropriate for men and women are carried through social, legal, cultural and economic policy, practices and processes. These processes reproduce inequality by ascribing differently valued attributes, behaviours and roles to men, women and non-binary people.*

### **Intersectionality**

*By Intersectionality we mean recognising the way in which power structures based on factors such as gender, race, sexuality, disability, class, age and faith interact with each other and create inequalities, discrimination and oppression. Crucially, it is about understanding the way in which characteristics, such as gender, race or class, can interact and produce unique and often multiple experiences and disadvantage in specific situations.*

*One single form of discrimination cannot and should not be understood in isolation from another. A truly intersectional approach ensures that this does not happen.*

### **Gender Equality**

*By gender equality we mean that regardless of sex, gender identity or gender expression people enjoy the same social, economic, and political rights, resources, opportunities and protections. An egalitarian society must seek to address the imbalances in power and resources that gendered systems create, which prevent equality of outcomes. It does this on an intersectional basis recognising that gender is always intersected by all the other dimensions of inequality.*

### **3. Vision and Leadership**

Phase One identified confusion about what was meant by gender equality, that in some instances was leading to a fear of ‘getting it wrong’ and tending to aim for gender neutral policy-making and analysis which in reality was often gender-blind.<sup>1</sup> Phase One therefore recommended that a vision for gender equality be developed that was based on the concept of equality of outcome, not merely equality of opportunity. We argued that in articulating this vision Welsh Government would need to be bold, and it has been.

#### ***3.1. Welsh Ministers have adopted a radical vision for gender equality, that is built on redistributive intent and equality of outcome.***

##### **Vision Statement:**

*A gender equal Wales means an equal sharing of power, resources and influence for all women, men and non-binary people. This is a vision where the government aims to create the conditions for equality of outcome for all.*

##### **Aims:**

*We want a Wales where:*

- *All women can have economic independence and paid and unpaid work is valued*
- *Diverse women are fairly represented in positions of influence and empowered to play a meaningful role in society*
- *All women are free from discrimination and free to live their lives as they choose*
- *Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence stops*
- *Existing power structures that disadvantage women are challenged*
- *All women, men and non-binary people enjoy equal rights and protections and equality of outcome*

#### ***3.2. To become more than a theoretical aspiration there will need to be a seismic shift in how Welsh Government works. The principles for feminist government set out the values and approaches that need to be central to this change.***

##### **A feminist Welsh Government:**

- *Is committed to equality of outcome for all women, men and non-binary people and actively works to drive cultural and structural change;*
- *Pro-actively works to advance equality and remove the barriers against all women’s participation in the economy, public and social life;*

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<sup>1</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Rapid Review of Gender Equality Phase One July 2018*

- *Puts a gender perspective at the heart of decision-making, resource and budget allocation;*
- *Takes an intersectional approach to all of its work and ensures diversity of representation, participation and voice;*
- *Is people-focused and collaborative, ensuring that all communities are meaningfully engaged in its work;*
- *Is open, transparent and accountable and welcomes scrutiny through a gender lens;*
- *Makes use of policy development and analysis tools to embed gender equality into all of its work and actively monitors progress towards equality using a robust evidence base;*
- *Leads by example and supports other public bodies to take action to deliver equality.*

**3.3. The new vision can be delivered by moving to an equalities mainstreaming strategy that is built on an equity model (explained in more detail below).**

Focusing on equality of outcome takes us beyond current legal minimum requirements and closer to an equity approach, which is the foundation of approaches in a number of Nordic countries. Current legislation is focused around delivering equal treatment or equal opportunities, which intends to “level the playing field”.<sup>2</sup> The key difference between this and an equity approach, is that the latter recognises that inequalities can prevent some from getting to the “playing field” in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

**An Equity Model**

*By equity model, we mean an approach based on the concept of equity rather than equality of opportunity.*

*Equality is taken to mean “equal treatment”, with an assumption that if everyone is treated the same they will benefit equally. This however, does not recognise the different barriers that different people will experience.*

*In contrast equity is the quality of being fair, which can require treatment that is not the same in order to ensure a fair outcome for all. This approach recognises that there are structural inequalities that could prevent people from participating in the first place and therefore action may be required to tackle these inequalities so that people are able to compete equally.*

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<sup>2</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Mainstreaming, whether framed as gender mainstreaming or equalities mainstreaming, has been adopted in many countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and, more recently, Canada. Adopting a mainstreaming approach in Wales will support the necessary institutional change and ensure a focus on equality of outcome. It will enshrine equality as a guiding principle for all of Welsh Government's work, embed mainstreaming methods and tools into core processes and ways of working and drive a systematic and planned process for organisational change.

### **Mainstreaming**

By mainstreaming we mean the systematic integration of equality into all systems and structures, all policies, processes and procedures, and into an organisation's culture.<sup>4</sup> It involves that integration of an equalities perspective in to the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality and combating discrimination.<sup>5</sup>

Mainstreaming can be applied at multiple levels including the political, local and organisational.

The issues discussed in this report are all integral to effective mainstreaming. Vision and leadership is key to outline clear, shared goals on which SMART equality objectives can be based.<sup>6</sup> The Welsh legislative framework has the potential to provide the necessary underpinning for mainstreaming to be adopted not just within Welsh Government but across the public sector. Moving to an evidence-based mainstreaming model of policy development will support officials to make effective use of a range of methods and tools for mainstreaming, while implementing gender budgeting will do the same for Welsh Government's fiscal policy. Mainstreaming can only be implemented effectively if there is sufficient capacity and if officials have been supported to build their equalities competence and knowledge. And crucially, this kind of institutional transformation can only take place if organisational culture is taken into account.<sup>7</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine.

This is a programme of work that will need to reach beyond this Assembly term, but important steps can and must be taken now to start putting the foundations in place.

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<sup>4</sup> Rees, T. (2005) "Reflections on the uneven development of gender mainstreaming in Europe" *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, 7, p.555-574

<sup>5</sup> EIGE *Gender Mainstreaming* Online Platform <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming> Accessed July 2019

<sup>6</sup> SMART meaning Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

<sup>7</sup> EIGE (2016) *Institutional Transformation: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit*

**3.4. Welsh Ministers will need to play a much needed leadership role to make this vision a reality and officials will need to be supported to move to a new way of working**

Shifting to a focus on equality of outcome and equity model, and making the vision a reality, will require a step-change in how we do things. Such change will only be successful if Ministers, and senior civil servants, act as champions for equality and challenge others to work differently. Equally, officials will need to be supported to move to a new way of thinking and developing policy, with clear communication about how the vision and principles for feminist government should be built into their day-to-day.

**3.5. Recommendations**

1. To ensure success there is a need for leadership and demonstrable commitment at the highest level from all Ministers and Senior Civil Servants.
2. Now that there is a vision in place, Phase One Recommendation Five should be accepted and implemented, which called for a shared statement from the entire Cabinet setting out how they are advancing gender equality and individual statements by Ministers on an annual basis on how their portfolio is advancing equality of outcome.<sup>8</sup> This should be connected to annual equality reporting requirements that are already in place.
3. Welsh Government should find creative and innovative ways to engage government staff, sponsored bodies and agencies and the wider public. This should be done directly and through stakeholders, to ensure that there is widespread understanding and support for the new vision, including how it aligns with existing agendas such as WFG Act and human rights.
4. Senior Officials and Welsh Ministers should ensure that they use their positions of influence to challenge policy and practice that falls short of the new vision, including through Permanent Secretary Challenge sessions (across Government), Ministerial Advice and other methods
5. Welsh Government should build on progress that has already been made and the evidence-base provided by the Gender Equality Review, to work with experts and develop a Welsh equalities mainstreaming approach, based on an equity model. The implementation of this approach should be structured, focused on organisational change and accompanied by a clear timetable.

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<sup>8</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Rapid Review of Gender Equality Phase One July 2018*

## **4. Strengthening our legislative framework**

In Phase One, we outlined that the current legislative and regulatory framework fails to articulate a shared vision for gender equality in Wales that is well understood by Welsh Ministers, Officials, stakeholders and the general public, and that as a result actions can be fragmented and incoherent. While developing a radical new vision for gender equality and set of guiding principles for a feminist government is crucial in addressing this, we are clear that good intentions alone are not enough. We need to strengthen the alignment of this legislative framework to enable public bodies to deliver on the vision. This is not a straightforward task, not least because many of the levers to achieve gender equality are not devolved- equality law itself, but also much of the tax and benefits system, criminal justice, employment legislation and key aspects of healthcare affecting women, such as abortion rights.

However, as we have outlined, successive Welsh Governments have introduced ambitious and visionary legislation, and the Equality Act 2010 enabled Welsh Government to bring in specific duties for Welsh public bodies in respect of equality, specifically to enable the better performance of the main duty under section 149. Here we outline the steps needed to better align that framework of powers and existing legislation and improve outcome through new ways of working. This chapter draws heavily on the report from Dr Alison Parken *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities* and includes some original text from the report.

### ***4.1. Robust legislation is important in underpinning efforts to achieve gender equality. Wales has a strong legislative foundation but effective implementation remains a critical challenge and declarations of intent are not a replacement for robust actions.***

Despite the relative weakness of the Equality Act 2010, it is generally agreed that legislation is a significant lever, and important framework for advancing equality. The importance of robust legislation to “*underpin attempts to achieve greater gender equality which might otherwise be downgraded by a change in government*” was reiterated by experts from Nordic countries.<sup>9</sup>

Current activity by both Welsh Government and public bodies may be found to meet legal requirements, however compliance alone does not always lead to change and concerns remain around the effectiveness of the action currently being taken under the equality duties by public bodies in Wales. Therefore, the forthcoming evaluation by the EHRC will need to be considered alongside the work of the Review to answer this question and consider how WSED can be strengthened to ensure compliance leads to meaningful change.

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor-Collins, E. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Gender Equality: Learning from Nordic Nations – Gender Equality Review Phase 2*, Wales Centre for Public Policy

**4.2. *Aligning the processes required under existing duties, notably the Welsh Specific Equality Duties (WSED) and Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act, could support more effective implementation but process alignment will not in isolation close the implementation gap identified in Phase One.***

To consider whether better integration of the existing framework is possible and whether it delivers on the new vision for gender equality, research was carried out by Dr Alison Parken and a working group made up of key stakeholders. The group considered the Welsh Specific Equality Duties (WSED), Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG), Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) and Social Services and Well-being Act (SSWB). As the statutory duties underpinning the legislation are distinct and some elements are not devolved, the working group considered alignment rather than integration.<sup>10</sup>

Alignment does not come without its challenges. For instance, well-being, equalities and human rights are often interpreted in different ways and different academic disciplines tend to direct research away from linking well-being and equalities.<sup>11</sup> Current differences in respect of aims, timescales, coverage and footprint also prevent the possibility of producing one plan to cover all requirements.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to align the processes required predominantly by the WSED and WFG Act, which could support more effective implementation. Many of these recommendations could be actioned through the cooperation of public bodies, FGC and EHRC, including joint guidance, with further support from Welsh Government, where appropriate.

While better alignment could contribute to better outcomes, it will not in isolation solve the implementation gap highlighted in Phase One or deliver against the new vision for gender equality. This will require Welsh Government and public bodies to set challenging objectives that focus on equality of outcome and adopt new ways of working.<sup>12</sup>

**4.3. *Solving the implementation gap will also require looking beyond alignment and the setting of challenging objectives based on equality of outcome. Welsh Government and public bodies need to move to a reflexive, mainstreaming model of policy development (outlined below and in detail in Chapter Six) that allows the necessary space to think, analyse, vision and act in pursuit of stronger equality objectives***

Successful implementation of the duties relies on public bodies being able to respond to social, participative, cultural and economic goals and move beyond compliance to inclusive,

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<sup>10</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

effective policy-making and service delivery.<sup>13</sup> This approach will depend on institutions having the capacity to support learning, adaptation and use of research and engagement.

The value of a reflexive mainstreaming model is explored in more detail in Chapter Six, but in essence enables space to think, analyse, vision and act, supported by equalities evidence, engagement activities and mainstreaming tools such as impact assessment and gender budgeting. If Welsh Government and public bodies were to move to this model, there would likely need to be an increase in the capacity and resources available, at least in the short-term, to drive the agenda forward, develop new mainstreaming policy-models, tools and training and provide support to colleagues as equalities competency is bolstered throughout the organisation.

#### *Reflexive Learning*

By reflexive learning we mean the process by which people are able to observe what happens to them and others, reflect and decide on courses of action. Reflexive learning models involve active, project-based collaborations between policymakers, academics, equality organisations and ‘experts by experience’, in an open, curious and exploratory process.<sup>14</sup> Crucially, they provide an opportunity to consider circular relationships between cause and effect and to constantly ‘sense-check’, adapt, learn and revise. They require sufficient capacity and resource to foster movement from monitoring and compliance-focussed behaviours, which are often transactional and can hide challenges and realities, towards a learning culture.

A reflexive policy development model is set out in detail in Chapter Six.

***4.4. Lessons must be learnt to ensure that new duties, such as the socio-economic duty, are developed and implemented with alignment with existing duties in mind. The forthcoming review of Welsh Specific Equality Duties (WSED) provides further opportunity to align overarching goals and objectives and must consider how to push public bodies beyond process focused compliance to meaningful action and ambitious objectives.***

The renewal of WSEDs provides an opportunity to consider how to strengthen the ‘due regard’ requirements (which are often identified as the ‘weakness’ in equalities legislation) in relation to promoting equality and may also provide transferable lessons for Well-Being of Future Generations, Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and Social Services and Well-Being Acts. Numerous reports have pointed to the weakness of ‘due regard’ and a lack of clarity about what this looks like in practice has resulted in a reliance on case law to determine compliance. The review of WSED could determine how to strengthen this ‘due regard’.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> A. Parken (2019) *Equality Mainstreaming: Policy Development Model*

New WSED provide an opportunity to move focus to improved outcomes and therefore could help close the implementation gap as well as align overarching goals and objectives across equalities and well-being. In the future Welsh Government will need to consider whether it has sufficient powers to strengthen the legislation and regulations in the way that delivers on its ambitions for equality. This may stretch the current devolution settlement.

The existing legislative framework in Wales has great potential, if it is embedded in a way that transforms the way institutions work. This will require organisational and cultural change, and the capacity and resources to influence inform and inspire innovative thinking.<sup>15</sup> Currently, the lack of alignment between WSED, and the WFG, VAWDASV and SSWB Acts, is creating further challenges to effective implementation. There is clear scope to better align processes to foster joint assessments, setting of objectives and evaluative practice across the frameworks.<sup>16</sup> However, this will only get us so far. Further work will be needed to embed equality and well-being in the normal business of organisations, to bolster evidence-informed decision-making and to consider how to better integrate equality and human rights through reflexive institutional learning.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4.5. Recommendations - process alignment<sup>18</sup>**

6. It will be necessary to select a date, and decide upon a point in time at which Welsh Government and public bodies might align the processes for engaging/ involving, objective setting and planning delivery against their well-being and equality objectives.
7. Ensure that Public Services Boards, Regional Partnership Boards, and Regional Learning and Skills Partnerships demonstrate how their work has promoted equality, and encourage City Deals such as the Cardiff Capital Region to do so (even through they fall under UK Government for reporting). If bringing any of these into the scope of equality duties is problematic, using softer mechanisms such as Ministerial remit letters or internal audit mechanisms may be appropriate.
8. Welsh Government and Public bodies should:
  - Incorporate objectives and strategic plans for well-being, equality and VAWDASV into corporate plans or equivalent documents. This would situate aims and objectives within the core business and may increase awareness of the connection between well-being and equality with staff working in different policy areas.

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<sup>15</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> The recommendations summarise those provided by Parken et. al and the Wellbeing and Equalities working group (2019)

- Undertake joint engagement and involvement activities to inform equality and well-being duties to demonstrate the inter-relationships between equality, well-being and VAWDASV and identify common issues and solutions.
  - Set mutually reinforcing well-being, SSWB, VAWDASV and equality objectives
  - Integrate equality research into well-being assessments to draw out structural dimensions of inequality, which is necessary to successfully implement both WSED and WFG Act duties. This may require changes to statutory guidance related to the assessment of local well-being.
  - Carry out equality impact assessments on well-being statements and plans to ensure that they are focused on equality of outcome.
9. FGC and EHRC should:
- Publish joint advisory guidance to help public bodies to consider the inter-relationships between well-being and equality, the shared aims, and benefits alignment can bring.
  - Publish a combined engagement and involvement framework using the principles of the WSED and WFG Act to support public bodies to foster better links between staff working on equalities and well-being and deliver joint engagement work.
  - Work with other regulators and inspectorates to improve information sharing to identify bodies that may need further encouragement to fulfil their well-being and equality duties in a meaningful way
  - Issue joint non-statutory guidance on the practical application of the combined operation of the well-being goals, the PSED and socio-economic duty.
10. Regulators and inspectorates must have a bigger role in assessing how equality and well-being is being promoted through policy delivery, as well as checking for compliance with the duties. Aligning assessment, engagement and reporting requirements could support this.
11. Refreshed WSED should require that annual reports and action plans are published on a central, searchable website, which will support better monitoring and scrutiny.

#### ***4.6. Recommendations - Building the evidence-base linking equalities and well-being***

12. WG has recently consulted on the national milestones under WFG Act (April 2019). Steps should be taken to ensure equality is included in these and there is also some read across to the SSWB Act framework.
13. A series of 'think pieces' that bring an equalities 'lens' to community cohesion, individual resilience, how equality and well-being could be promoted through inclusive and low-carbon economies, access to green spaces, sports and community activities etc.
14. A worked case study with Local Authority and/or national body to provide practical insights into aligning well-being, equality, VAWDASV and SSWB Acts. Work on

aligning well-being and equality is already taking place within the National Public Bodies Network and the North Wales Public Sector Equality Network, suggesting they would be good candidates for a case study. Depending on timing, the research remit could include assessing how ‘the socio-economic duty’ and well-being duty can work in concert.

#### **4.7. Recommendations – Improving Outcomes: The Socio-economic duty and Welsh Specific Equality Duties**

15. In implementing and commencing the socio-economic duty, Welsh Ministers’ should:

- Draw upon the wider definition of social and economic disadvantage set out Scotland, and set out how socio-economic disadvantage interacts with poor well-being, and how people with certain protected characteristics can be more likely to be in low pay and find it difficult to escape poverty.
- List the strategic documents to which the duty must be applied in statutory guidance and set out a clear vision that aligns with existing visions for equality Ensures that consultation considers the intersection between low income, inequalities and poor well-being.

16. When reviewing the WSED, consideration must be given to how Welsh Government and public bodies can deliver on the ambition set out in the gender equality vision, as well as better meet the requirements of the PSED. This should include:

- How we tackle the most severe inequalities, as highlighted in *Is Wales Fairer?* and other reports and benchmarks such as our *State of the Nation 2018*.
- How greater alignment between WSED and other duties can be further strengthened
- How a new specific duty could require public bodies to take steps that are necessary and proportionate for the progressive realisation of equality, leading to coherent equality objective-setting across public bodies in Wales
- How a new specific duty could require public bodies to apply the WFG Act ‘five ways of working’ to the setting of equality objectives, noting that short-term objectives will also be needed
- A new ‘mainstreaming equality duty’ which requires public bodies to show how all the equality duties (General and Specific) have been mainstreamed by becoming integral to structures, behaviours and culture.
- A new specific duty that strengthens the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) at the beginning and throughout policy development to challenge supposedly ‘gender-neutral’ policy-making, and to change their use as retrospective checking instruments.
- A new specific duty that requires public bodies to publish their Well-being Statements or plans, strategic equality plans and annual reports, on a central searchable website.

## 5. Assessing Impact

Reviewing the tools and processes used by policy makers is key to changing the way policy is developed. In Phase One we highlighted a number of challenges with the use of equality impact assessments, a key tool in the policy process in Wales. There were concerns that equality impact assessments were not being approached in a meaningful way, were happening at the end of the policy development process rather than the start and generally lacked critical analysis through an equalities lens. As a result, the approach was often ‘gender-blind’ or in other words, failed to understand that there are different gender roles, needs and responsibilities and therefore failed to realise that policies, programmes and projects can have different impacts on people of different genders.<sup>19</sup>

Since Phase One, the Welsh Government have developed the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Tool that brings together over twenty required impact assessments with the central aim of reducing duplication and complexity. This is now the main vehicle through which the equality impact of policies, legislation and programmes are assessed.

Whilst not the only tool available, if used effectively, equality impact assessment ensures that equality is considered throughout the development, delivery and evaluation of policies and programmes. They are used extensively around the world, which means that is a wide range of international practice, from Nordic nations and other feminist governments, which can strengthen the use of equality impact assessment in Wales.

In the long-term, if recommendations to move to an equalities mainstreaming approach are accepted, further thought will need to be given to which tools can most effectively support officials and Ministers. There may be a need to look at new policy development models, such as that set out in the next chapter. However, these changes will take time, which means there is a need to improve existing tools and approaches, such as the IIA, to improve outcomes as far as possible and lay the foundations for a more fundamental shift in ways of working that will be required in the future. Therefore we set out a number of recommendations here, and in the additional paper *Assessing Impact*, focused on improving the IIA tool itself and how it is used across Welsh Government.

### ***5.1. Within Welsh Government impact assessment is now delivered through the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) Tool, which frames all necessary assessments within the framework of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.***

Equality Impact Assessments are a key mechanism of compliance, and a crucial tool for embedding a gender lens into policy-making. In theory, equality impact assessments should be applied at all stages of the policy life-cycle. They should prompt and guide policy-makers to seek and gather evidence and should form an important element of policy advice

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<sup>19</sup> UN Definition of “gender blind” cited in Chwarae Teg *Rapid Review of Gender Equality 2018: Phase One* 2018

alongside fit, cost and management of work.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, equality impact assessments have had a tendency, within Welsh Government and other public bodies, to become tick box exercises; a compliance based exercise that lack detailed analysis, do not comply with the requirements of the specific duties on equality information or engagement and are not done at the appropriate time to meaningfully influence and inform policy and legislation.<sup>21</sup>

Increasingly, impact assessment is being viewed through the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This is most marked within Welsh Government, through the development of a new Integrated Impact Assessment Tool (IIA), which has been reviewed as part of this Gender Equality Review. The IIA tool was developed with the primary goal of ensuring people take an integrated approach to assessing impact, and reducing complexity and duplication across the required impact assessments, as a means of tackling the perception of impact assessment being overly burdensome. In this respect it may be a step in the right direction.

***5.2. Examples of best practice internationally, including the GBA+ model used in Canada, provide a rich evidence-base as to what works well and can therefore inform a strengthened approach to impact assessment in Wales.***

A key aim of this part of the Gender Equality Review was to identify and analyse different models of assessing equality impact from across the world. Through our analysis we have identified the Canadian model, GBA+ as particularly significant and worthy of further exploration in the Welsh context. GBA+ is an analytical tool used in Canada to assess how diverse groups of women, men and gender-diverse people may experience policies, programmes and initiatives.<sup>22</sup> The ‘plus’ is to acknowledge that the tool looks beyond just sex and gender and considers a wide range of identity factors.<sup>23</sup>

The GBA+ model appears to be a more comprehensive approach to impact assessment, with a stronger focus on evidence and analysis, including analysis through an intersectional lens. Importantly GBA+ is not the only tool being used in Canada to meet the aim of being a feminist government. There are plans to introduce new legislation to enshrine gender budgeting in the federal government’s budgetary and financial management processes, additional funding has been made available to bolster equalities evidence and a Gender Results Framework has been developed setting out gender equality goals, associated actions and measurement indicators.

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<sup>20</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Rapid Review of Gender Equality 2018: Phase One*

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Status of Women Canada <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acis/index-en.html> Accessed 20.1.19

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

**5.3. In the short term there are some simple changes that could be made to bring equalities more to the fore in the IIA tool and guidance.**

There are some clear positive about the new IIA tool, however there are some missed opportunities to mainstream equalities more thoroughly in the process and there remains a sense that equality is an “add-on”. There is also limited opportunity or prompts to consider issues from an intersectional perspective. A number of simple changes and additions to the tool could therefore be made, which are set out in the paper *Assessing Impact*.<sup>24</sup>

**5.4. In the medium term, work is needed to improve guidance and training, put stronger challenge functions in place to improve both compliance and quality, clarify the role of senior leaders in driving behavioural change in relation to impact assessment and build both equality and analytical capacity and competency.**

The IIA tool has been developed with a very specific goal of improving integration and reducing complexity and duplication of impact assessment. In some ways it marks a step forward, and a willingness, seeking to bring impact assessment within the framework of the WFG Act and make the process appear less burdensome, therefore removing one of the barriers to effective implementation. However, without further change in behaviour and ways of working, the IIA tool will have limited impact. Here, there are lessons that can be learnt from the Canadian experience of GBA+, which have informed a number of recommendations related to training and guidance.

This can build on work already being developed to test the IIA tool and develop online support with the aim of enabling people to consider impact iteratively as they develop policy

**5.5. In the long-term the impact assessment as it is currently designed and delivered is unlikely to be capable of delivering against the new vision for gender equality.**

In the longer term we do not believe that IIA/ equality impact assessment as currently understood or used is fit for purpose. In its current form it favours a strand-focused approach to considering equalities, which presents a challenge to adopting an intersectional approach and it leans towards equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome as a result of the current legislation.

This may pose significant challenge in the context of the new gender equality vision, which is more radical in its intersectional approach and focused on equity. The vision will not be

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<sup>24</sup> Chwarae Teg (2019) *Assessing Impact Supporting Paper Gender Equality Review Phase Two*

well served by a reductive interpretation based on comparative ‘disproportionate impact’ between protected characteristics.<sup>25</sup>

There will need to be a shift to a more reflexive model of policy making that has more effective impact assessment and analysis built in. This is discussed in Chapter Six where we set out a reflexive, mainstreaming policy model that we recommend be implemented as part of a move to mainstreaming. However, we recognise that change of that scale will take time. It is therefore necessary to consider changes to the existing IIA tool and practice to improve outcomes in the short to medium term.

### **5.6. Recommendations (Medium term)**

17. Make immediate changes to the current tool as set out in the supporting paper *Assessing Impact*.<sup>26</sup>
18. Review and refresh training and job aids in relation to IIA to ensure it includes reference to statutory equalities requirements and that they are engaging and user friendly. The GBA+ job aids and training suite provide a strong example of good practice which could be replicated.
19. The Assembly Commission should review processes for induction and continuous development of those who scrutinise Welsh Government, including Assembly Members and Committee Support Staff, so that they are informed of the purpose and application of the new IIA tool and build confidence and competence across Welsh Government, regulator and auditor functions and bodies to strengthen ability to challenge, and scrutinise with a gender and broader equalities lens- looking beyond compliance to quality, and equality of outcome.
20. Leadership and challenge from senior figures in government is essential to successful implementation of IIA. The role of Ministers and senior civil servants in championing the role of IIA and challenging both quality and compliance should be clarified and leaders within Welsh Government must ensure better use of equalities evidence as part of the impact assessment process. Policy officials should engage with Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) at an earlier stage in the process. To do so may require the up-skilling of policy officials to improve their evidence analysis skills.
21. Introduce a process for systematic auditing of a sample of IIAs from across Welsh Government departments to routinely assess for quality, compliance and progress towards the vision for gender equality. This would be best delivered through external scrutiny, so Welsh Government should work with Wales Audit Office to implement this change. Such review should not only report on compliance with IIA requirements but also on use of training and resources, and inclusion of IIA findings in ministerial advice.

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<sup>25</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities*

<sup>26</sup> Chwarae Teg (2019) *Assessing Impact Supporting Paper Gender Equality Review Phase Two*

22. Review the Ministerial Advice process to analyse how well the current practice of requiring impact assessment summaries is working, and consider a mandatory requirement for equalities analysis to be included.

## **6. Moving toward an evidence-based, mainstreaming model**

The new vision for gender equality pushes us to look beyond the legal minimum of equality of opportunity and move to an equalities mainstreaming approach, built on the concept of equity (see Chapter Three). Effective equalities mainstreaming hinges on an evidence-based approach to policy-making, with adequate capacity and competency to analyse evidence through an equalities lens.

This approach may require us to move away from relying on tools like Equality Impact Assessment/ IIA as currently designed, as in practice these do little to get under the skin of a policy problem. Instead we may need to consider an approach to policy and programme development that is more reflexive and encourages a constant check-back against questions of equality and well-being, based on the evidence collected (reflexive learning models are defined in Chapter Five and explained in more detail in Chapter Six). Reflexive learning models involve active, project-based collaborations between policy-makers, academicism equality organisations and experts by experience. Such an approach requires a robust equalities evidence base and strengthened analytical capacity to ensure that evidence can be interrogated and used effectively.

Since Phase One a new programme of work has begun to strengthen and develop the policy profession within Welsh Government. This includes work to build policy capability, provide guidance and training on consultation and involvement and the policy cycle. Questions raised in chapter six will need to be considered as part of this work.

The recommendations made in the previous chapter would improve current approaches to impact assessment and lay the foundations for a more significant shift in how policy is developed. This chapter sets out a new policy development model, which would more effectively support a mainstreaming approach and deliver on the Welsh Government's vision for gender equality. It draws heavily on the reports from Dr Alison Parken, *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities* and *Equality Mainstreaming: Policy Development Model*, including the use of some original text.

### ***6.1. There are a number of wider challenges with the policy process within Welsh Government that could affect the successful implementation of mainstreaming.***

Guidance on the policy life cycle in Welsh Government sets out five stages: case for change; options; preferred option; implementation and evaluation/ review. The main vehicle through which equalities is considered throughout this process is the IIA. In theory impact assessment should be used “to test your thinking and help garner the evidence for the

*policy*” at each stage of the cycle.<sup>27</sup> However, as set out in the chapter five this is not happening in practice.

Other challenges fall into a number of broad themes including availability and use of evidence, analytical capacity and capability, resources and time pressure and relationships with key stakeholders.

***6.2. Welsh Government collect a large amount of evidence but this is not used as effectively as it could be. Knowledge and Analytical Services are often looped into the policy process at too late a stage to provide support with building and interrogating the evidence-base or give consideration to the role of monitoring and evaluation.***

The lack of disaggregated equalities data is often cited as a challenge by those within and outside of Welsh Government. Solving this issue is not easy. Small sample sizes are a particular challenge in Wales and boosting surveys can be an expensive exercise that don't necessarily deliver what we need. This is partly due to how small some groups are in terms of population, which means even if sample sizes are doubled or tripled in existing surveys, it would remain difficult to capture outcomes. To address this issue, there is a strong focus on improving data linkage between administrative data held by government as this can provide far more detailed information about smaller groups of the population at far lower cost.

We also found a tendency towards overreliance on quantitative data. While statistics are an important part of the evidence-base, in isolation they are unlikely to provide insight into the experiences of smaller population groups. While quantitative data can identify where inequality exists it can't necessarily explain what causes this inequality. Stakeholders are therefore keen to see greater value placed on qualitative evidence and greater use of mixed research methods. Accompanying statistical releases with more analysis could also help enhance the evidence already available.

Consultation and engagement are another important means of gathering evidence, but we heard some concerns about whether enough value was placed on stakeholder engagement and network building as skills and also a possible over-reliance on central units like the Equality Unit to link policy officials with external organisations.

***6.3. Officials must be supported to become informed users of research, evidence and analysis so they can interrogate the evidence already available and identify gaps.***

Improving the analytical capacity and capability within Welsh Government should be a priority and it must be recognised that resource and time pressure are also considered barriers to evidence-led policy-making.

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<sup>27</sup> Welsh Government *Refresher on Policy Making for IAs*

Queries from policy officials are a key driver of what analysis is carried out on existing data. Therefore improved analytical capability across Welsh Government could help build better analysis through a gender lens. Members of the working group that supported Dr. Alison Parken's research into alignment and improved outcomes were of the view that *"policy-makers needed more support with how to interpret research to understand the drivers of poor well-being, gender-based violence and abuse, inequalities and care support needs"*, which would support better identification of policy priorities.<sup>28</sup> Better analytical capacity could empower officials to be more pro-active about providing evidence-based policy options to Ministers.

***6.4. Strong relationships with other research bodies is an important means of linking evidence and increasing the capacity for analysis, while relationships with external users of statistics and evidence is vital to inform what evidence is needed and most useful.***

Strong relationships with other research bodies is an important means of linking evidence and increasing the capacity for analysis, while engagement with users of statistics and evidence helps to shape what is collected and how it is published. There are some existing forums, like the Third Sector Statistical Users Panel convened by the Welsh Government in partnership with the WCVA, which provide an important platform to bring Welsh Government statisticians and researchers and third sector representatives together.

However, there was consensus that these existing forums could be strengthened and recognition of the need for closer working relationships to provide a clearer steer to Welsh Government on what evidence is needed. Connected to this was the question of capacity and capability within the third sector to make use of evidence and awareness of what is already published.

Accessibility of evidence is as important as availability. Increased analysis within regular releases and an online hub for equalities evidence could support better use of the evidence that is already available.

***6.5. To realise the ambitions of the gender equality vision, we will need to adopt a new approach to policy making, that is more reflexive, evidence-led and mainstreams equality.***

To underpin the mainstreaming of equality in Wales, the Phase One GER report called for a reflexive equality mainstreaming model that would enable policy makers to consider complex social or economic policy issues from an equality perspective. Reflexive learning models involve active, project- based collaborations between policymakers, academics,

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<sup>28</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Improving Well-being and Equality Outcomes: Aligning processes, supporting implementation and taking new opportunities*

equality organisations and ‘experts by experience’, in an open, curious and exploratory process.<sup>29</sup>

In Phase Two of the GER, we undertook a ‘mini-test’ of an evidence-informed, reflexive equality mainstreaming model developed previously in action-research, but not implemented.<sup>30</sup> The model, originally developed to assist policy-makers to integrate equality and human rights, also uniquely provides an intersectional approach to understanding how inequalities can combine to compound disadvantage. For the purposes of the ‘mini-test’ two policy areas were decided upon; progression from low pay and diversity in public appointments. These policy areas were drawn from a wider list of ‘pathfinder’ areas identified through bilateral meetings between the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip and cabinet colleagues. The model is set out in detail in the supporting report from Dr Alison Parken *Equality Mainstreaming: Policy Development Model*.<sup>31</sup>

This type of policy model relies on a robust evidence-base and analytical capacity and capability. Work is needed to bolster both of these across Welsh Government, and with external bodies and organisations. It will mean moving beyond tools like the current IIA, which focus on assessing and mitigating negative impacts and investing in both the policy profession and research and statistical capacity.

## **6.6. Recommendations**

23. Welsh Government should run a ‘real-time’ pilot of the policy model set out in this Chapter, and in more detail in the supporting paper, and consider how it could be embedded into Welsh Government as part of wider work to build the policy profession. Consideration will need to be given to time and resource pressures which are currently perceived as a barrier to evidence-led policy-making.
24. To build analytical capacity within Welsh Government, work to bolster the policy profession should include upskilling officials to analyse evidence through an equalities lens and re-value qualitative evidence. As a result, officials should be more informed users of research and evidence and better able to interrogate evidence and identify gaps.
25. KAS should create a set of questions or expectations that Ministers, public authority scrutiny mechanisms, and regulators can use as questions to integrate what is working/what thinking there is about testing, reflection and change. The guidance should enable scrutineers to ask: ‘What evidence have you used and how has it been applied?’ ‘What creates this inequality/poor well-being/ behaviour/ lack of

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<sup>29</sup> Parken, A (2010 ) / Woodward, Alison (2003) ‘Building velvet triangles: Gender and informal governance’, in: Thomas Christiansen & Simona Piattoni (eds.) *Formal Governance in the European Union*, pp. 76–93 (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar)

<sup>30</sup> Parken, A. and Young, H. (2007) *Integrating the promotion of equality and human rights into policy-making*, research report for the Department for Communities and Local Government and Welsh Assembly Government pp.88

<sup>31</sup> Parken, A. (2019) *Equalities Mainstreaming: Policy Development Model*

participation’? ‘How far has this issue changed’? ‘What have you learned, and how would you do it differently’?

26. To build analytical capacity among external users of evidence consideration should be given to the value of training for the third sector, delivered in partnership with the WCVA.
27. Partnership working should be strengthened through:
  - The creation of an equalities research forum that brings together the Welsh Government, universities, research councils, public sector, third sector and research funders.
  - Analysing whether it is possible or desirable to create data ‘read-across’ from various indicator sets including the EHRC’s Measurement Framework and National Indicators.
  - Closer working with the ONS, particularly the Centre for Equality and Inclusion
  - Closer relationships with third sector organisations and other external stakeholders through forums like the Third Sector Statistical Users Panel. Awareness of these forums must improve to widen participation.
28. The availability and accessibility of equalities evidence should be improved by:
  - Revisiting previous evaluations of Welsh Government programmes to consider broad themes, including impact on equalities and well-being
  - Continuing with data linkage projects. All public bodies, including UK Government Departments should cooperate and provide access to databases to support this work.
  - Exploring the opportunity for joint PhDs with Welsh universities focused on equalities.
  - Making it clearer to external stakeholders that the Annual Well-being Report is part of a suite of evidence and improving online links between related releases.
  - Including in the next Future Trends report further information on how inequalities might be diminished or widened by changes in the economy, employment, public service provision and societal change, and how current inequalities may impact on Wales’ ability to take advantage of opportunities in these areas.
  - Creating a dedicated and engaging Welsh Government website for equality policies, monitoring information, equality evidence and infographics (Phase One Recommendation). This can be informed by other hubs for equalities evidence.
29. Consideration should be given to the creation of an equalities unit within KAS. This unit could support greater equalities analysis as part of regular releases, as well as provide expert advice and guidance to colleagues designing new surveys and research projects and take a pro-active role in reviewing existing equalities evidence and commissioning projects to plug identified gaps.

## 7. The budget

In Phase One we identified a disconnect between policy and budget setting processes. We outlined how budget processes were not aligned to policy-making processes, which led to budgets focussing on financial pressures rather than on impact or even need.<sup>32</sup> Failure to address this disconnect will result in an inability to meet desired aims around gender equality, and also wider Welsh Government ambitions.

As we said clearly in Phase One, the changes required will need a seismic shift in both what we do, and how we do it. Reforming budget processes is one of the most important elements of that change. This report recommends 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. Identifying equality-related needs in different policy areas as well as the gender-impact of policies allows the government to target resources more effectively to promote equality and ensure policies do not negatively affect equality.<sup>33</sup>

Putting ambitions equality goals in place is an important first step, but if fiscal policy and budgetary decisions do not contribute to the achievement of these goals, progress will be difficult.

In the Welsh context, budgets are complex multi-layered and nuanced, with budget decisions and impact assessment being carried out at the strategic level and within departments. Some of these processes are overseen by Welsh Treasury, such as the development and publication of Welsh Government's *Annual Budget*, while others are owned by officials in financial and policy roles within departments, which includes budgeting activity, which happens outside of the process of setting Annual Budgets. To deliver on gender equality ambitions, it's likely that change will be necessary at all levels, and changes in approach will be required from officials both within Welsh Treasury, financial roles and in policy roles with delegated budget responsibilities across Welsh Government.

As part of Phase Two consideration has been given to gender or equalities budgeting. This is explored in greater detail below and in the supporting paper *Tackling Inequality through Gender Budgeting*.<sup>34</sup> O'Hagan et. al argues that "*gender budgeting activates gender mainstreaming by focusing on how resources to fund policy objectives are raised and allocated in such a way that existing gendered inequalities are addressed and not exacerbated.*"<sup>35</sup> Therefore the way in which budgets, fiscal and economic policy are

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<sup>32</sup> Chwarae Teg *Rapid Review of Gender Equality Phase One July 2018*

<sup>33</sup> OECD (2018) *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality Implementing the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

<sup>34</sup> O'Hagan, A., Christensen, E. L., Tilley, H. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Tackling Inequalities through Gender Budgeting: Evidence and Models*. Wales Centre for Public Policy

<sup>35</sup> O'Hagan, A., Christensen, E. L., Tilley, H. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Tackling Inequalities through Gender Budgeting: Evidence and Models*. Wales Centre for Public Policy

approached by Welsh Government is a crucial consideration if the vision and aspirations for equality are to be realised.

Effectively implementing gender, or equalities, budgeting will take time and should be done as part of a wider mainstreaming approach, that is reflective of the Welsh context and builds on our existing legislative foundation. In the meantime, as with impact assessment, there are changes that could be made to existing tools and approaches to improve the consideration of equalities throughout the budget process and lay the groundwork for a move to equalities budgeting, by upskilling officials in financial roles and encouraging a cultural shift in which equalities is not treated as an “add-on”.

This chapter draws on a range of sources including desk-based research and analysis of existing budget documents, interviews with Welsh Government officials and research commissioned by the Wales Centre for Public Policy into gender budgeting approaches around the world.

***7.1. Effective budget processes are key to realising the vision for gender equality.***

***There are two key challenges to address, the first being issues of transparency and disconnect between budget and policy processes and the second, being meaningful consideration of equality of outcome within budget processes and wider fiscal policy.***

Through interviews with officials we were able to further unpick the issue of a disconnect between budget and policy processes. Feedback from officials suggest that discussion of budgets start with a focus on the current budget, not on wider policy objectives and budget processes can seem difficult to engage with for those who are not currently budget-holders. While there was recognition that approaches to budgeting are shifting, there remains a sense among officials that the strategic budget process is too far removed from policy-making and not transparent enough to enable effective collaboration and scrutiny.

***7.2. Equality continues to be insufficiently considered as part of budget processes.***

For example, despite being a key part of the equalities infrastructure within Welsh Government Equality Leads are not engaged in budget discussions within their departments. There has also been little change in the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) of the Annual Budget between the Phase One report and Phase Two. Use of equalities evidence in the SIIA remains limited and when it does appear is not linked to spending decisions. It's therefore difficult to discern whether the analysis of evidence has informed budget allocations in any meaningful way. This echoes findings from the Assembly three-committee report, *Assessing the impact of budget decisions*, which stated that “*the current SIIA does*

*not provide an effective analysis of spending decisions and could arguably be failing to fulfil its legislative requirements as a result.”<sup>36</sup>*

**7.3. Existing forums to support engagement with experts, such as the Budget Advisory Group for Equalities (BAGE), are not functioning effectively. This has implications for Open Government commitments as well as equalities.**

It’s difficult to determine the extent to which the input from BAGE has shaped the final Annual Budget proposals and there remain some concerns about how well it is delivering on its aims. Interviews with officials suggested a perception that given there are already a number of existing equality forums BAGE’s relationship to these other forum could be better defined and the current format and structure of BAGE do not easily facilitate evidence provision and analysis. Furthermore, it’s felt that the timing of the budget process presents a challenge to maximising BAGE member’s input.

From an external perspective, BAGE appears to play less of an advisory role than the Scottish Equality Budget Advisory Group (EBAG), which continues to evolve and play a more prominent role in the budget process. Based on the information available online, EBAG has a more clearly defined role and membership and is a more robust example of engagement with experts as part of the budget process.

**7.4. Gender budgeting offers a different way of doing things that would better deliver on equalities ambitions.**

To make the new vision for gender equality a reality we need to radically change what we do. This is not possible without being radically different about how we spend money and allocate resources. This is no small challenge. In a context of Brexit, ongoing austerity and historical issues of under-funding from the UK Government, there can be a tendency to stick with the status quo and focus on ‘firefighting’ or ‘salami slicing’ budgets

The opportunity to deliver this radical change is now. Welsh Government officials are keen to explore new ways of doing things, including revisiting the budget process. There are also new commitments in the Open Government Action Plan to “*support greater understanding, awareness and openness in relation to how the Welsh Government gets its funding, how money is raised through taxes devolved to Wales and how that funding is spent across devolved public services.*”<sup>37</sup>

It’s our view that a move to equalities budgeting can help to address some of these long-standing challenges with the budget process, and some early piloting is underway. The supporting report *Tackling Inequality through Gender Budgeting* provides a rich evidence-

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<sup>36</sup> National Assembly for Wales Children Young People and Education, Equality Local Government and Communities & Finance Committee (2019) *Assessing the impact of budget decisions*

<sup>37</sup> Welsh Government (2019) *UK Open Government National Action Plan 2019-21: Welsh Government Commitments*

base of how gender budgeting has been implemented in different nations, and lessons on what works well. It has informed a number of the recommendations in this report and should be read in conjunction with the work of the Review.

Gender budgeting has been described as “good budgeting” and means “*applying gender analysis to how governments raise and spend public money. It is a critical review of how budgetary allocations affect the economic and social opportunities of women and men, and it seeks to restructure revenue and spending decisions to eliminate unequal outcomes, while understanding the context in which those differences arise.*”<sup>38</sup> In essence, it’s a suite of tools that enable governments to examine how budgetary allocations affect the economic and social opportunities of women and men, and restructure revenue and spending decisions to eliminate unequal outcomes.<sup>39</sup>

For equalities budgeting to be successful, there will remain a need for wider work to improve transparency around the budget and engagement from external and internal stakeholders. However, a move to equalities budgeting could help identify solutions to some of these challenges to ensure that policy officials, external stakeholders and scrutiny bodies are better able to support effective budget decisions that advance equality.

***7.5. To be successful gender budgeting needs to be delivered as part of a wider equalities mainstreaming approach and will require political commitment and leadership, time, robust gendered data and the application of a range of analytical tools and processes to reveal the status quo and actions for change.***<sup>40</sup>

Gender budgeting has been adopted by numerous countries around the world, most commonly as part of a wider gender mainstreaming strategy. Some argue that gender budgeting activates gender mainstreaming by bringing a focus on how resources to fund policy objectives are raised and allocated in a way that addresses gendered inequalities and does not exacerbate them.<sup>41</sup>

***7.6. There are numerous examples of gender budgeting from around the world that can inform the development of a Welsh model. These are outlined in the accompanying report from the WCPP Tackling Inequality Through Gender Budgeting, which should be read alongside this chapter in particular.***<sup>42</sup>

International examples provide invaluable lessons that can inform the development of a distinctly Welsh approach to gender budgeting.

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<sup>38</sup> O’Hagan, A., Christensen, E. L., Tilley, H. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Tackling Inequalities through Gender Budgeting: Evidence and Models*. Wales Centre for Public Policy

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> O’Hagan, A., Christensen, E. L., Tilley, H. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Tackling Inequalities through Gender Budgeting: Evidence and Models*. Wales Centre for Public Policy

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

There are three building blocks for gender budgeting<sup>43</sup>:

1. Clarity of purpose and understanding
2. Robust and consistent political commitment
3. Process and structures that support and engage politicians, officials and civil society to develop an approach to gender budgeting

*“Gender budgeting need not be complex; but it does need to be robust: based on data and analysis and a common understanding of concepts and purpose. The international evidence highlights that those engaged in policy making and budget preparation need to supported to develop their understanding of the gendered dimensions of public policies i.e. that the impact of public spending and revenue decisions have different impacts for women and men.”<sup>44</sup>*

Research into international experiences offer further learning points<sup>45</sup>:

- Leadership by the ministry of finance has consistently been identified as an essential element of the successful adoption of gender budgeting. This was echoed by Nordic experts who recommended that responsibility for gender budgeting sit with the Minister of Finance, with dedicated officials trained in gender budgeting integrated into the Ministry.<sup>46</sup>
- Legal requirements for gender budgeting are important
- Gender budgeting goals should be aligned with national gender equality plans. Gender equality goals “should be visible and actively pursued across all areas of policy, including economic and fiscal policy; and not only focused on spending, which has been a more typical focus for gender budgeting, but also on taxes and tax policies.”
- Gender budgeting can be implemented successfully at the national state and/or local levels
- Capacity building is broadly needed but technical-level staff in many countries would benefit from additional training

***7.7. In the long-term, a Welsh approach to gender budgeting should be developed in partnership with experts as part of an equalities mainstreaming approach.***

While changes can be made to existing tools and approaches that could more effectively embed equalities analysis into budget processes, in the long-term we need to think more radically. Therefore our recommendations focus on developing a Welsh approach to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> Talyor-Collins, E. and Nesom, S. (2019) *Gender Equality: Learning from Nordic Nations*

equalities budgeting. The report on gender budgeting commissioned and published by the WCPP provides an invaluable evidence base to inform the development of a Welsh approach. This approach must be developed in partnership with experts and we would caution against engaging pilots before more work is done to set out the aims and objectives of gender budgeting and to place gender budgeting in the context of a wider equalities mainstreaming approach. It will be difficult to judge the success of any pilots without clarity around the equality objectives that spend is being assessed against.

Driving this radical reform will take time and require resource and political commitment but is vitally important to making the vision for gender equality a reality and would be in-line with feminist government principles, notably putting a gender perspective at the heart of decision-making, budget and resource allocation.

### ***7.8. Recommendations: Short-term***

We support all of the recommendations made by the cross-committee report and would urge Welsh Government to move forward with these as a matter of urgency. In addition:

30. A strengthened IIA tool could be used for the budget as well as policy development to bring greater consistency to impact assessment across Welsh Government
31. Training should be developed and rolled out to officials within Treasury and in financial roles across Welsh Government departments to build equalities competence. As well as improving current impact assessment this will be an important foundation for equalities budgeting
32. Training should be developed for Ministers to build equalities competency and support them to ask challenging questions throughout the budget process
33. BAGE should be reviewed to consider, as a minimum, the following questions:
  - Is there clarity of purpose for BAGE? Is this understood across Welsh Government and by members of the group?
  - Is BAGE engaged with at the right time and at the right level?
  - Is there a need for better engagement with BAGE from departments, when they are impact assessing their indicative spending proposals? Should BAGE members be funded to ensure that they are able to support the budget process with evidence and analytical capacity
34. There should be a mandatory requirement for all submissions to Treasury, including draft budget proposals, to have a full IIA attached. This will require Directors, Deputy Directors and Finance Leads to provide leadership, ensuring that equality of outcome is considered in proposals.

### ***7.9. Recommendations: Long-term***

35. A Welsh approach to gender or equalities budgeting should be developed in partnership with experts and within the context of a wider equalities mainstreaming

approach. This will need to align with the work underway to build the policy profession and embed the WFG Act.

36. The leadership role of the Treasury in developing and implementing gender budgeting should be defined and communicated widely within government and dedicated capacity for gender budgeting should be put in place within Treasury
37. Gender or equalities budgeting should be piloted and rolled-out as part of a wider equalities mainstreaming approach, which includes clarity of equality goals and/or objectives. This will likely require training for officials, ministers and scrutiny bodies, job-aids and other resources to support implementation, more robust challenge functions within government and an improved BAGE to provide expert advice, analytical capacity and evidence.

## **8. Capacity, expertise and gender competence**

Making the new vision for gender equality a reality can only happen if the right capacity, resource and expertise is in place to support the organisational change this report recommends. In Phase One, equalities capacity emerged as an area of concern, concluding that capacity was fragmented and inconsistent.

Lessons from Nordic nations and others that have implemented mainstreaming demonstrate the importance of equalities capacity, not just in terms of numbers of officials but also in terms of gender or equality competence. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) define gender competence as comprising commitment, methodological expertise and specialist knowledge.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the UN highlight capacity development as one of six key elements to successful mainstreaming and the OECD include clearly assigned roles and responsibility for gender equality and gender mainstreaming as a step in their Gender Mainstreaming self-assessment tool.<sup>48</sup>

Since Phase One, the Futures and Integrated Policy department has been set-up to build policy capability across Welsh Government and support further implementation of the WFG Act. It is therefore timely to consider existing equalities capacity and expertise across Welsh Government and how this can be strengthened to deliver on the new vision for gender equality.

Our recommendations are predominantly focused on the short to medium term. If recommendations to develop and implement an equalities mainstreaming strategy are accepted, there will be a need to revisit the question of capacity, resource and competence to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is put in place to support successful implementation.

***8.1. Sufficient capacity, expertise and resource matter. While everyone should have responsibility to think about equalities in policy and programme development, this does not negate the need for dedicated, experts who can support colleagues to build their own competencies in relation to equality as well proactively look at improving systems and processes, training resources and provide a much needed challenge function. This is particularly important during the implementation phase of equalities mainstreaming.***

As we have said, making the new vision for gender equality a reality will not only require a change in what Welsh Government does, but a radical shift in how it works. There is a desire from Ministers and leaders within the civil service to embed equalities into the policy

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<sup>47</sup> EIGE (2016) *Institutional Transformation: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit*

<sup>48</sup> UN CEB cited in EIGE (2016) *Institutional Transformation: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit* / OECD (2018) *Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality Implementing the 2015 OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*

process, but this cannot happen unless there is sufficient capacity, resource, competency and expertise in place to support changes in process and culture.

Capacity, in terms of dedicated staff, expertise and competence, is a key lesson to learn from international approaches. Most of the Nordic experts reflected on the role of dedicated equalities officials, whether these were full or part time roles and the importance of building capacity through training. It was therefore a core objective of Phase Two to explore whether there is sufficient equalities expertise, capacity and resources across Welsh Government to support a consistent approach to developing gender inclusive policy. Our findings in this Chapter draw heavily on interviews with Welsh Government officials and examples of best practice from Nordic nations and other world leaders for gender equality.

Capacity challenges go beyond equalities, impacting on the ability to carry out evidence-led policy-making. Creating more time and space for good policy-making and critical thinking are central to good government and pay dividends in the end.

We also recognise that there are ongoing challenges to dealing with the issue of capacity. There has been limited external recruitment (perceived by many as a recruitment freeze) for a number of years and there is a perception of limited organisation-wide workforce planning, which can leave some posts left vacant and put pressure on already stretched teams. A lack of new voices, experiences and expertise coming into government reduces the space for new ideas and innovative ways of doing things and creates additional barriers to becoming a more diverse employer. These issues are discussed in a little more detail in the next chapter and will benefit from being thought about alongside this question of equalities capacity.

***8.2. Within Welsh Government, Equality Leads are a key part of the equalities infrastructure but often fulfil this role as a small part of their substantive post. The central Equality Team is a key source of support and advice for Equality Leads and other officials.***

Most departments have some form of embedded equalities capacity, often is in the form of an Equality Lead, who holds this responsibility alongside their main role. This results in them being more reactive and unable to engage in core functions of government including budget discussions or reviewing documents such as Ministerial Advice (MAs). However, there is consensus that without Equality Leads in place to challenge and question, there would be limited consideration of equalities within day-to-day functions and policy development.

Economy Skills and Natural Resources (ESNR) offers a different model, with a larger Equality Unit, which is generally regarded as being effective and enabling more pro-active work.

The central Equality Team is the main source of support and advice for most officials, but there are concerns the team are overstretched and are juggling multiple roles, e.g. managing grants and providing expert advice and support. There may also be an

overreliance on the Equality Team, which is exacerbated by a lack of up-skilling for officials on equalities.

***8.3. Capacity challenges are compounded by time pressures, which also limit opportunities to develop new ways of working, develop evidence-based policy and effectively utilise impact assessment as a policy-making tool.***

Addressing issues of capacity and time pressure have the potential to deliver change beyond equalities. People need the time, space, capacity and tools to do effective evidence-based policy-making as well as effective impact assessment. Many officials engaged in Phase Two of the Review have reflected on the value of having time to step back and discuss these important issues. Moving forward consideration needs to be given to how this space can be created.

***8.4. There is a perception that expertise is undervalued within some areas of the civil service.***

There is a perception among some officials that success is often modelled on progressing to the next rung on the ladder, which generally requires developing general competencies and demonstrating the transferability of skills. This creates an environment in which some officials feel that developing specialist subject expertise is not always seen as being valued.

This has implications for equalities advice, which is a complex area with legal requirements, and also for institutional memory. While there will always be a need for generalists, it's not clear that the balance between experts and generalists is currently effective in supporting equality priorities.

***8.5. Recommendations***

38. The role of the Central Equalities Team should be clarified and consideration given to whether it is currently sufficiently resourced to perform this role. This should consider capacity, as well as expertise and equalities competence.
39. Equality Leads should be full-time positions with sufficient expertise at an appropriate level of seniority to challenge and inform core processes such as MAs and departmental budget discussions. There should be a clear job description setting out roles and responsibilities and their role must be clearly communicated to staff to ensure the skills and support made available have an impact on policy development.
40. Other departments should replicate the mode in ESNR, with equalities units and government business teams created. This will ease pressure on central units, such as the Equalities Team, and enable all departments to develop equalities capacity, with adequate knowledge of the specialist policy areas, e.g. Education and Public Services.
41. A programme of training should be developed to up-skill all policy officials and build gender and equalities competence.

## **9. Delivering Change: Ways of Working**

In Phase One we identified that Welsh Government must lead by example when it comes to advancing equality. We looked at Welsh Government's role as an employer and a policy maker to "drive sustained effort that results in lasting change"<sup>49</sup> Welsh Government has taken on many recommendations from Phase One and the spirit in which officials have entered into Phase Two has been almost universally very positive. The challenge will be to maintain this focus and momentum once the external focus of the Review is no longer present. In this chapter we draw out some of the key themes that have emerged from the Review, and necessarily this draws on the interviews we conducted with officials from across Welsh Government, reviewing policies and processes and looking at best practice in how organisations can lead change.

Even in the extended Phase Two of this Review, it will not have been possible to review and understand every policy, procedure or process that guides how Welsh Government works in practice. To that extent, there may be good practice that we have not identified, which could help deliver on the ambition of this Review and the vision for gender equality. We encourage approaching our recommendations with openness, and willingness to undertake further self-reflection to identify further changes in addition to those we suggest here.

In previous chapters, and in Phase One, we identified an implementation gap between the vision and ambition to deliver greater equality, and practice. We also explore in this Review how better alignment of legislation and regulations could provide a ways of moving beyond compliance in terms of equality. Similarly, in this chapter we explore how real change could be embedded within the way Welsh Government works. Culture change is difficult and takes time, but it is achievable and can deliver real rewards for Welsh Government, and for Wales.

### ***9.1. The importance of leadership and continuous messaging 'from the top' about the need to make progress towards equality cannot be underestimated. This should include both Ministerial leadership, and from the Senior Civil Service.***

Leadership to implement the recommendations in this Review will be crucial. Welsh Government has already shown considerable leadership in commissioning and engaging with this Review, and we have found engagement from the most senior levels within the civil service which has been crucial to our work, and for which we have been grateful.

Welsh Government has shown great willingness to identify the need to make further progress towards equality, the next step is to embrace the 'implementation and measure phase' and continue to evaluate and improve.

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<sup>49</sup> Chwarae Teg (2018) *Rapid Review of Gender Equality Phase One July 2018*

We do not underestimate the challenges here, however to successfully implement the changes we propose in this Review, there needs to be a sea change in the organisational culture of Welsh Government. It is a complex organisation, and change is not easy, but concerted effort to focus on areas of improvement must also include a willingness to be more self-aware, self-critical and open to some failures. It also requires a more systematic process and commitment to performance management. It is our firm view that having set an ambitious radical approach to gender equality in Wales, Ministers cannot expect perfection immediately, but neither can they allow the status quo to continue, because the pace of change is too slow.

Throughout this Review we have been able to identify and demonstrate that political leadership has a significant impact, and that the current shift to a greater focus on equality of outcome is certainly as a result of political commitment to 'shift the dial'.

This may require consideration of how aspects of government business are currently conducted, and whether there are more efficient and effective approaches that would meet Ministers' needs, while also allowing a dynamic, more flexible civil service to emerge. This will also require better use of technology by both officials and Ministers, and a willingness to question and challenge 'the way things have always been done'.

***9.2. Most staff we engaged with judge Welsh Government as being committed to being a diverse and inclusive employer, however that there is a significant way to go.***

Through our interviews with Welsh Government staff we gained a clear sense of government as a good employer, with good terms and conditions and opportunity. We found some examples of good practice which we would expect to support efforts to further promote equality across government. This includes particularly the piloting of flexible working (Merthyr) and the subsequent roll out of Smart Working and new IT equipment to enable staff to work remotely and with more autonomy. The introduction of 'Let's Talk' is also positive, supporting greater focus on wellbeing and offering more regular touch points between staff and line managers.

However, we also found some inconsistency in how some policies, such as flexible working, are implemented with some staff suggesting there is significant variation depending on the manager (and their view). Senior leaders in the civil service should ensure focus on consistency to ensure all staff and teams are able to benefit from more agile working.

In our discussions with officials, it was clear that visible role models, and senior leaders with high standards of accountability for themselves, and their behaviours has a positive impact. However, when we explored ways of encouraging and enabling more women to take on more senior roles within Welsh Government there was a clear perception of long hours, loss of benefits (like flexitime) and a perception of needing to 'fit a certain mould'. We are very aware that many senior jobs in Welsh Government are extremely demanding, and there will

of course be requirements to meet those demanding needs. However, the current perception of Senior Civil Service is acting as a barrier and disincentive for many others (women and men) to seek to progress. Leaders in Welsh Government need to find ways to demonstrate positive behaviours that encourage more diverse groups of individuals to seek promotion to Senior Civil Service roles.

Overall, in considering recruitment, and retention and progression approaches, we did not find evidence of a strategic approach to workforce planning. The very limited external recruitment (which is perceived as a recruitment freeze by many in Welsh Government) may exacerbate this problem, but there should be a closer alignment between the priorities of Ministers and resources, capacity and expertise to be able to meet these.

***9.3. It was clear through our interviews that diversity within Welsh Government is a persistent problem, and there needs to be significant and sustained effort to address this.***

While we were able to identify many examples of good practice within Welsh Government when it came to equality, diversity and inclusion, too often they were reactive or ad hoc, and not clearly aligned to identification of the current ‘problems’ and a clear strategy for improvement. It was clear through our interviews, and stakeholder engagement, that diversity (of staff) within Welsh Government is a serious problem, and there needs to be significant and sustained effort to address this. Leaders must find more creative and urgent ways to increase diversity in Welsh Government, including use of secondments to build experience, outreach to build trust and networks with more diverse communities and different approaches to recruitment that rule out bias.

During the course of this review we met many extremely committed civil servants, with a real and deep commitment to their work and to achieving positive change in Wales, and a willingness to think creatively. However we were also struck by a clear view that currently Welsh Government/ the civil service does not operate in such a way as to facilitate or enable that creativity or innovation to embed, and that thinking differently or approaching issues in a new way is not rewarded or particularly encouraged. This is not to criticise or lay blame but rather to illustrate how much needs to change to become a more dynamic organisation.

This is the challenge to ‘business as usual’ way of operating that we believe is necessary to achieve the vision Welsh Government has committed to.

Through our interviews with staff across Welsh Government, and the analysis we have been able to undertake of policies and processes it is clear that Welsh Government is committed to the principle of improving equality, diversity and inclusion within the workplace. The analysis in this Review should not be read as a criticism of Welsh Government, because only by being prepared to open itself to scrutiny is it able to change, and it should be commended for that. We heard positive reports of a significant shift over the last two years

to really place equality at the heart of what government is doing, and that strong messaging from the First Minister, Deputy Minister and Chief Whip and previous Leader of the House and Chief Whip as well as the Permanent Secretary all helped to place equality at the heart of Welsh Government thinking, as well as some significant changes to the way in which staff work.

There is still further to go, and this is not without challenge. Changing entrenched gender divisions and inequalities is no small task and discrimination and abuse will not simply disappear quickly or easily, or at the behest of one Welsh Government policy or action. But we cannot let this be an excuse for not trying, and having made a really strong commitment to change, adopted a radical new vision, this is the right time to push further forward.

There are some significant challenges, which cannot be underestimated. On the whole, civil servants are likely to be white, middle class, and well educated. It is a significant risk that too many staff are not sufficiently connected to, or understanding of the everyday experiences of many women, ethnic minorities and individuals with other protected characteristics. This is not to criticise any individual staff or teams, who we found on the whole aware and sympathetic to this problem. However, many also felt powerless to effect change, and there should be more effort to ensure officials are able to get out of government more, and bring experts by experience in, to inform our policy and decision making.

We recognise that this is not just a problem for Welsh Government, many of the issues identified here are likely to be features of other large workforces, which only goes to strengthen the requirement for Welsh Government to show leadership. There is still a concern, and a gap, that only those with existing 'interest' in equalities will read, take interest in, and act upon the findings in reviews such as this one. While this Review of Gender Equality cannot correct all the 'wrongs' and inequalities in our society, it is crucial that those organisations and employers with significant power and influence show leadership to ensure people start to change, and that we all begin to accept that equality matters to us all.

#### **9.4. Recommendations**

42. There needs to be a significant change to the normal way of working in Welsh Government that will require leadership from the very top and Ministers and officials working closely together. Oversight of the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this Review should be supported by continuation of external scrutiny- including members from the steering group and/ or expert advisory group.
43. Commitment to sustained effort to communicate the vision (inside and out of Government) and the principles of a feminist government across Welsh Government including working with stakeholders to do so.

44. Develop a more strategic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation that makes use of management information, and understanding of the experiences of current staff, and works with staff networks
45. Review what steps can be taken to ensure SCS are able to access the same flexibility in working practices as the rest of Welsh Government employee bands to encourage greater numbers of more diverse candidates are encouraged into senior roles.
46. Work with HR senior leaders to ensure policies and procedures (such as flexible working requests, shared parental leave) are implemented consistency and senior leaders in the civil service should role model these behaviours to ensure all staff and teams are able to benefit from more agile working.
47. Roll out of Smart Working (as piloted in the Merthyr Tydfil office) is monitored and reviewed to ensure all staff are able to access
48. Review recruitment practices to ensure fairness and transparency in pay, terms and conditions and equality of outcome. Particular focus should be given to any differences between internal and external recruitment, and reviewing recruitment processes through an intersectional lens so that the diversity of the workforces is improved
49. Building on the review of Let's Talk, senior leaders should continue to monitor and review performance management across the organisation to see if improvements can be made which would drive up performance, creativity and innovation, and remove barriers to retention and progression of effective staff.
50. Review the approach to workforce planning across Welsh Government, to ensure that the civil service is able to respond to Ministerial priorities.

## **10. Conclusion**

In commissioning this Review Welsh Government have shown commitment to bold ambitions for equality, articulated clearly in the new vision for gender equality. Making this vision a reality will not be a small or quick task. This report makes recommendations for large-scale organisational change that will require ongoing vision and leadership beyond this Assembly term. This should not lead to inaction. We are at the start of an important journey to tackle the structural inequality that continues to blight our society and it's important the steps are taken as soon as possible to begin the necessary process of change.

Wales has strong foundations on which to build. We should be proud of these foundations and of the clear desire to do things differently. The recommendations in this report, along with the Roadmap and other supporting papers, include short-term changes to improve current tools and longer-term action for organisational change focused around an equalities mainstreaming approach. This approach will embed an intersectional, equalities lens at the heart of Welsh Government's work.

This will require a shift in how Welsh Government works, and will only be successful through culture change.

We've made ambitious recommendations in this review, but with the right commitment, capacity and leadership we are confident that it can be achieved and that Wales can realise the ambition of being a world leader for gender equality.



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