



Response to the Finance Committee's consultation on:

Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2013-14

August 2012

Introduction

Chwarae Teg is funded by the Welsh Government to promote, support and develop the role of women in the Welsh economy. Since 1992, we have carried out valuable awareness-raising work to draw attention to the positive contribution women make to economy. We provide expert advice to Ministers and policy-makers in order that the barriers preventing women's participation in the labour market are addressed.

We welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Finance Committee's to support their scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget proposals for 2013-14. We understand that difficult decisions must be made around public spending at this time and hope that impact of these decisions on equalities groups will be fully explored and considered.

Consultation Questions

1. Looking at the indicative budget allocations for 2013-14, do you have any concerns from a strategic, overarching perspective?

Chwarae Teg is concerned about the impact of inflation on budget allocations as this is likely to reduce budgets even further, impacting on delivery. We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to equalities and trust that issues arising from an **Equality Impact Assessment** will be addressed. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently carried out an Appreciative Inquiry into the Equality Impact Assessment process for Welsh Government budgets and we hope that the learning from this exercise will inform the budgetary planning process for 2013-14. Chwarae Teg promotes **gender budgeting** as a tool to ensure that women are not disproportionately impacted by cuts. As a minimum, a process of **gender mainstreaming** should be applied to all decisions. This process ensures that the implications of policy decisions for women and men are considered before decisions are made so that both groups benefit equally.

2. Looking at the indicative budget allocations for 2013-14, do you have any concerns about any specific areas?

Women's earning capacity and spending power are crucial for economic recovery. Public spending cuts are likely to impact women's jobs disproportionately and have a detrimental impact to the wider economy. We therefore stress the importance of action that will support women to engage with the economy.

Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science

ICT Infrastructure

We are pleased to see that investment into ICT infrastructure continues to be a priority. For women, having access to the internet through high-speed broadband provides additional flexibility when engaging with the economy, and is also crucial to using public services and claiming benefits. ICT infrastructure also enables remote and flexible working which can bring a number of benefits, including:

- supporting the reconciliation of work and family life;
- encouraging innovative ways of working which may enable economic activity in rural and remote areas.
- encouraging enterprise, allowing individuals to access markets nationally and internationally.

Sectors and Business

We note a small increase in investment for the Welsh Government's priority sectors and support this investment into businesses that have the potential for growth. We would highlight the fact that women are under-represented in those sectors identified for investment and should be encouraged and supported to enter these sectors so that they too can both contribute to growth and enjoy the rewards.

We are also pleased to see continued support for business and enterprise, both as a key driver of the economy and as a route for many out of poverty. Given the continued differentials between the start-up rates for men and women, and the high proportion women comprise of those in poverty, we look forward to seeing business support schemes which address their often differing needs.

Education and Skills

We are pleased to see a small increase in the budget allocation for Education and Skills. Skills needs are changing as the economy evolves and it is important that individuals are able to continue learning in order to meet changing business needs.

Education and Training Standards

Chwarae Teg supports additional investment into education and training standards. We believe it is crucial that individuals are able to receive the best standard of education possible and so we are encouraged to see that the Welsh Government has prioritised this.

Skilled Workforce

We are pleased to see that there is a proposed increase in the allocation for workplace skills, given the continuing need for innovation in products, services and working practices to drive competitiveness. The workplace is changing and the workforce should be supported to adapt as required. We note also that investment in employability skills remains the same and we see this as a positive commitment although inflation will impact how much this allocation can provide. Steps should be taken to ensure that those in low-paid, part-time roles can also access training and education to help them contribute fully to the economy.

We do voice strong concern in relation to cuts in the allocation for education and careers choice. Information, Advice and Guidance is crucial for those making career choices, and especially to support young people to match their skills and aptitudes to areas of economic growth and skill gaps. This has particular relevance to women, who remain under-represented in certain areas of the economy, specifically certain of those identified as potential growth areas.

Central Services and Administration

Match funding

Chwarae Teg is very concerned to see a reduction in allocations for match funding. This money levers in value over and above the amount of the monetary investment for Wales and represents capital investment rather than revenue spend. Match funding is already difficult for organisations to secure and reduction will restrict valuable work in the most deprived communities.

Digital Inclusion

We are pleased to see continued investment to tackle digital inclusion as women are particularly vulnerable to exclusion and worse affected as a result. We hope that this includes support for those outside of convergence areas not supported by the Communities 2.0 project.

Equality and Human Rights

We can see that there is once again a reduction in funding for Equality and Human Rights for the forthcoming year and are concerned about the impact of this. Equality and Human Rights support the most vulnerable in our society and departments and organisations are already struggling to deliver more for less. The voluntary sector delivers excellent value for money and continues to do so under difficult circumstances. Welsh Government funding for the voluntary sector is already very small and cuts would make little difference to the immediate challenges the Government is facing and create more difficulties in the longer term as support services diminish.

3. What expectations do you have of the 2013-14 draft budget proposals? What spending commitments and priorities would you like to see reflected in the 2013-14 draft budget proposals?

Chwarae Teg expects that the Welsh Government will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on the final budget and changes made as appropriate before the budget is published. We believe that skills and enterprise should be the priority for the coming year to provide a much needed boost for the economy.

4. The new Welsh Government has published its Programme for Government. We will be using this document to guide our scrutiny of the 2013-14 draft budget. What changes would you propose to ensure that the budget delivers the objectives set out in the Programme for Government?

The third sector is recognised in the Programme for Government as a key delivery partner. As such, it is important to continue to fund the sector at the current levels. As we have already said, the level of funds allocated to the third sector is already very small in percentage terms. Further cuts to this allocation will be of little benefit to the Government in

the short term and will have serious consequences for the sector and the support it can offer in delivering priorities.

We also note that the Welsh Government makes a commitment to providing 'robust Labour Market Information to help individuals make informed choices' (p4) and wonder how this will be achieved if the budget for these services is cut.

Finally, we urge that appropriate funds are allocated to supporting women in the economy as the recession, cuts and reforms continue to hit women's jobs harder. Women's incomes are crucial in reducing poverty and there is a danger that continued pressure on women's jobs will cause poverty to increase.

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