

Dear Chair,

Re: Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2012-13

We note with interest the Finance Committee's consultation on scrutiny of the Welsh Government's proposals for its 2012-2013 draft budget.

As a regulator it would not be appropriate for the Commission to comment directly on budgetary allocations. Our expectation would be that the budget should narrow gaps rather than increase inequality and we offer the following observations on the process of developing the budget.

The supporting narrative from the Welsh Government around last year's budget contained prominent references to the importance of fairness in determining its allocations. We would anticipate that this year's budget would maintain this focus. The specific equality duties, passed unanimously by the National Assembly earlier this year, give further impetus and provide a clear framework for assessing the impact of proposals on people from protected groups.

As the Finance Committee looks at the budget from a strategic, overarching perspective, it is well placed to help ensure that the budget assists the advancement of equality across portfolios of the Welsh Government and beyond to the Assembly Commission, Auditor General and Public Services Ombudsman.

The Welsh Government's emphasis is on the delivery of outcomes. The specific duties require the use of equality impact assessments to help drive spending decisions that advance equality and foster good relations.

We strongly urge the Finance Committee to consider how submissions to its consultation promote equality or exacerbate inequality. We would also encourage you to influence other scrutiny Committees to consider proposals before them within the context of the new equality duties and the use of equality impact assessments.

If your members or officials would like to discuss any issues arising from this letter, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Bennett.

Kate Bennett
National Director for Wales
Equality and Human Rights Commission

Cc: Huw Brodie, Director: Policy Integration
