

Diverse Cymru (Formerly Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People (CVCDP) and Awetu)

Call for information response

Finance Committee: Welsh Government draft budget proposals for 2012-13

Respondent's Details:

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Publication:

We are happy for this response to be published in full, or in parts and to be available to the public. This includes the above named person and contact details.

We would also be happy to appear before the committee or to provide any further evidence and/or information the Committee feel would be useful to them.

Background to the organisation:

Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People (CVCDP) campaign on a local and national level to make a positive difference to the daily lives of all disabled people. Awetu is the All-Wales BME Mental Health organisation.

We advise a range of statutory, private and voluntary sector organisations on disability, BME mental health and equality issues, encouraging them to adopt a Social Model approach to their work.

We operate an Advocacy Service, a Youth Service, a Service User Involvement Service and an Outreach Service. We also run an Independent Living Scheme, working with people who receive Direct Payments. This scheme provides information, support, and training to disabled people who wish to employ people to provide their personal support. Clients supported are referred from Mental Health Impairment, Older People, Older People Mental Health, Children's Services, and Learning Difficulties Social Work Teams.

CVCDP and Awetu offer advice and signposting to disabled and BME people experiencing mental distress in the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan area, and our campaign/work with service providers helps to ensure that they deliver the services they have a right to access. We currently have in excess of 350 members, all of whom have some form of impairment in addition to a BME Mental Health service user database.

Our response to this consultation is specifically related to our role as an equalities organisation in Wales, and therefore focuses on equality related issues regarding the Welsh budget only.

Summary and Recommendations:

- Thorough Equality Impact Assessments are required on each budgetline and in relation to the overall budget
- Equality Impact Assessments should lead to alterations to the budget where significant detrimental impacts on one or more protected characteristic (equality) group(s) are identified
- Seemingly insignificant detrimental impacts of one budget allocation or reduction can be compounded by others with disastrous effects on disabled people and other individuals within the Protected Characteristic Groups
- Cuts to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion budgets should be carefully examined to identify whether they have a disproportionate impact on Protected Characteristic Groups and alternative actions should be explored.

Overview of the issues:

1. The reduction in spending on equality, diversity and inclusion is a significant concern from two perspectives. Firstly the implementation of the Specific Duties for Wales under the Equalities Act 2010 requires investment in order to ensure that public sector bodies are compliant with the new Duties and understand both the duties themselves and the rationale behind them.
2. Secondly a reduction in spending on equalities, diversity and inclusion at this point in time sends a negative message to Local Government, Local Health Boards and other Public Sector Bodies, implying this is an appropriate budget to reduce. In fact the engagement and involvement aspects of the Duties, which we warmly welcome, will require investment in these initial stages of the Duties. All too often equalities is seen as a 'soft target' for budget reduction, which was seen during the last recession. **We urge the Welsh Government to ensure that investment in equality, diversity and inclusion is seen as essential within all public sector organisations and services in Wales and as a means of promoting prosperity.**
3. We recognise that in these hard times all budgets must be carefully scrutinised and all areas may be affected. However we believe that any measures which disproportionately impact on disabled people, BME people or people from other Protected Characteristic Groups would be detrimental not only to individuals, but also to the Welsh economy. These people are often furthest from the labour market and living in poverty.
4. There is overwhelming evidence that disabled people find it more difficult to enter and retain employment, that families are often living in poverty and that there is a poverty of aspiration associated with being disabled. This is evident in a range of research, including the July 2011 research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation entitled "*Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Wales 2011*"¹ Therefore **it is essential that budget decisions should not deepen the economic and social divide between**

¹ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-Wales-summary.pdf>

disabled and non-disabled people in Wales.

5. We also believe that comprehensive **Equality Impact Assessments are essential in order to identify disproportionate impacts of budget decisions on any Protected Characteristic Group**. There are often hidden impacts of budget decisions on particular groups. Equality Impact Assessments can be an effective tool in the early identification of potential negative and/or disproportionate impacts on any Protected Characteristic Group.
6. Such Assessments should also lead to changes to budgetline and/or other policies, strategies or measures to address such differential negative impacts. In our opinion it is not sufficient to state there is a negative impact on disabled people, above the general impact of a change and to simply justify this change. This often leads to policies and practices which further disadvantage disabled people.
7. **There should be in-depth consideration of the causes and implications of pursuing budget decisions, which have a disproportionate impact on disabled people or any other Protected Characteristic Group. Such considerations should also include a thorough exploration of other ways of achieving goals, and whether other steps could be taken to mitigate this disproportionate impact.**
8. The recent UK research into the impacts of spending cuts on disabled people by Local Authorities in the UK "*Coping with the Cuts*" released by Scope², indicates that whilst individual cuts and spending decisions may have been deemed to have only a minor differential impact on disabled people, when taken together the cumulative effect of these differences has been significant.
9. As a result of a variety of UK and Local Government changes to spending, for example changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA); Employment Support Allowance (ESA) changes; reductions in spending on social services and other cuts disabled people are facing significant reductions in income and increasing costs, pushing them further into poverty.
10. However, as the study identifies, there are some Local Authorities who are finding alternative methods of reducing spending and having a minimal differential impact on disabled people, whilst others continue with cuts that significantly disproportionately affect disabled people.
11. **It is essential that spending cuts and budget decisions identify and address the cumulative differential impact on disabled people and other Protected Characteristic Groups, identifying alternative methods of achieving policy and budget priorities without disproportionately affecting vulnerable people.**

² <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/copingwiththecuts>