

Gender Budgeting as a means to fulfil Public Sector Duty on Gender

Paper for Minister for Finance, Local Government & Public Services

1. Background

January 2006

In January 2006 the WWNC and Wales Gender Budget Group (WGBG) were asked to amalgamate their papers on the public sector duty on gender and disaggregated statistics into one for the next planning meeting for Sue Essex, Minister for Finance, Local Government & Public Services.

2. Why amalgamate the two areas?

The Sex Discrimination Act, implemented 30 years ago, is now in the process of being radically updated. April 2007 marks the implementation of the Gender Equality Duty. It places a firm obligation on public bodies to deliver services and employment opportunities that take account of gender equality. Public bodies will have a duty to actively promote gender equality, encouraging a greater understanding of gender needs and increased awareness of how policies and practices affect men and women differently. This includes recruitment, retention, promotion and other aspects in relation to staff as well as all aspects of service delivery, for example transport issues (the way the buses are operated across Wales or whether there is enough lighting at the bus stops) and victim support for women (especially from the BME communities). Many issues of service delivery are local authority ones. It is evident that the needs of women and men are different in many areas of life. The public sector duty on gender means that these differing needs should be met in order to allow equality of opportunity for all.

Wales Women's National Coalition and WGBG fully support and welcome the government's drive towards implementing this duty and considers it an opportune moment for the Welsh Assembly Government to incorporate it into their policy process.

In preparation for the public sector duty on gender, the National Assembly for Wales and local authorities should, as a first step, **undertake the collection and presentation of disaggregated statistics by gender and employ time use studies**. This will demonstrate what the target group is doing with their time and will feed into the participatory and gender-sensitive policy making processes. An assessment can then be made as to how to provide the best services to fulfil the needs of all within present financial constraints.

3. How can the public sector duty on gender be satisfied?

Gender Budgeting is a useful tool that can be used to monitor performance delivery of the Public Sector Duty on Gender Equality. Using gender disaggregated statistics the Welsh Assembly Government and public bodies could map progress. It is then in a position to undertake gender budgeting.

This is a process by which the allocation of public funds is assessed to see whether and to what extent the different needs of women, men, boys and girls are part of the financial decision making process. It is not a separate budget for women. Instead, it is an approach that answers the questions: is the allocated spending adequate to women and men, boys and girls' needs? Will the allocation of the funds fulfil the aim the policy is trying to achieve taking into account equality of opportunity for all? What impact does public spending have on perpetuating, or addressing gender inequalities? To this end it crosses boundaries.

4. What are the benefits of using gender budgeting?

Using gender budgeting will provide **value for money** for several reasons. Not only does it go a long way to fulfilling the public sector duty on gender it also ensures **transparency, accountability and participation** in policy making; it addresses the issue of **economic sustainability**; and looks at **all the equality strands**, taking the needs of all women into account, for example BME women and able and not able-bodied women. It thus goes a long way in measuring equality of opportunity for all.

5. Proposals

The Minister is asked to:

- Take the lead in actively promoting the Gender Equality Duty within the Welsh Assembly Government, taking the necessary steps to ensure the duty is incorporated into the everyday workings of public bodies.
- Make a written commitment in the budget to the use of gender budgeting in all areas of allocation of funding by the Assembly and local authorities.
- Make a commitment to using gender budgeting in the budget process of all public bodies.
- The policy agreements with local authorities should include an obligation to ensure all future data collected is disaggregated by gender in order to better ascertain compliance with the duty on gender and provide the evidence to support the assertion that service provision for all meets the needs of all in Wales.

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20 February 2006