# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Welsh Government Equality Funding from April 2022** |
| **DATE**  | **28September 2021**  |
| **BY** | **Jane Hutt, Minister for Social Justice**  |

I am writing to set out arrangements for Welsh Government Equality funding from April 2022.

Consultation earlier this year has demonstrated support for continuing funding to support Welsh Government’s equality agenda (as reflected in the Programme for Government, Strategic Equality Plan & related action plans), through Welsh organisations with relevant expertise and links to grassroots networks.

Respondents recognised the substantial progress that has been made in recent years to promote equality in Wales, together with the need for further action in line with the Welsh Government’s current ambitions, reflected in our equality plans and other commitments. There was, in particular, strong support for a longer term, collaborative, intersectional approach delivering Wales-wide provision with a regional dimension.

At the same time, stakeholders were clear there needs to be continued focus on specific issues in relation to Black, Asian & Ethnic Minorities; disabled people; gender; LGBTQ+; Gypsies, Roma & Travellers (linked to respective WG action plans).

Expert support for victims of hate crime and refugees and asylum seekers remains crucial. Fresh procurement processes have begun to ensure continuity of these two particular services.

Contracted funding is considered to be less appropriate for other protected characteristics, because support needs are likely to vary over time and formal procurement processes tend to exclude some key stakeholders who may bring valuable perspectives. Grant funding is likely to remain the preferred option in these areas.

Rather than launching a fresh competitive bidding process, however, I want to work with our strategic equality organisations to help us shape the future of this work. I believe that a co-designed programme, making full use of the lived experience of a wide range of people, is most likely to deliver the unified, all-Wales programme of support we are seeking.

In the spirit of co-creation, we want to support a facilitated process which will bring organisations together to design a new programme and agree the most appropriate mechanisms to allocate available funding.

I know that co-design and co-production of this sort takes time, but consider this is a necessary and worthwhile investment to create the best possible outcome for equality organisations and the people and groups they support.

The time and effort in co-designing the new approach will have the added advantage that the programme can be finalised once there is greater clarity about future budgets. This is likely to be towards the end of 2021.

I am now seeking expressions of interest from organisations with knowledge and experience of providing strategic equality support in Wales which want to be part of this process of co-production.

Further decisions about the co-design process will be taken shortly, once I know the level of interest. I expect that the co-designing will include the following elements:

* + Focus on outcomes to support the Welsh Government’s equality plans [links to be added].
	+ All-Wales provision with strong regional and grassroots/lived experience aspects.
	+ Getting the right balance between intersectional/partnership working and focused, expert support for specific groups and issues.
	+ Priorities are likely to include: support and engagement with policy leads to co-design/evaluate new and old programmes, advocacy; removing barriers; signposting to support; raising awareness; amplifying voices; prevention & protection; encouraging participation; celebrating and promoting success; addressing under-representation.
	+ Ultimately we expect the programme to include a combination of larger, blocks of funding to support our strategic aims, combined with smaller, short-term grant funding.

I envisage that a very important part of this process will be to ensure the best possible links with other relevant provision, such as our Community Cohesion Programme, Health Outreach programmes, Third Sector Support Wales and other support. I know that resources will be limited so we jointly must ensure the best possible overall value for money and joined up delivery.

The aim remains for the new programme to start from April 2022. By that time we expect the overall shape to be clear although we now expect it to take a little longer before the programme as a whole is up and running.

As previously announced, the current programme will end on 31 March 2022 and will not be extended further. We will, however, hold further discussions with each of the organisations currently in receipt of funding. This will include consideration of whether there are any elements of the current programme where it might be appropriate to consider bridging arrangements to support transition to the new programme from April 2022.