

Sioned Williams AS/MS
Dirprwy Brif Weinidog a Gweinidog y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder
Cymdeithasol a Chydraddoldeb
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Minister for Social Justice
and Equality



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref WQ 98495, 98496, 98497, 98520

Paul Davies MS
Paul.Davies-MS@senedd.wales

24 June 2026

Dear Paul Davies MS,

I am writing in response to the following Written Questions:

WQ98495(e) What new initiatives will the Welsh Government introduce to tackle rural poverty?
WQ98496(e) How does the Welsh Government intend to close the disability pay gap?
WQ98497(e) What steps will the Welsh Government take to protect the rights of women and girls?
WQ98520(e) What support will the Welsh Government offer to households in rural communities who rely on off-grid gas and heating oil?

We are now in a position to answer your questions in full. Please accept my apologies for the short delay in responding to you.

WQ98495(e) What new initiatives will the Welsh Government introduce to tackle rural poverty?

Our commitment to eradicating poverty is an absolute priority and support should be available to everyone in all parts of Wales. That is why we will deliver a new, targeted and radical plan to address child poverty for the whole of Wales.

We recognise the unique challenges faced by people living in poverty in rural areas, not least because in rural areas, people tend to be more geographically dispersed. That is why we will bring forward proposals for a new statutory duty on rural proofing, to ensure that Welsh Government programmes and funding models are fully responsive to the needs of rural communities.

We will implement a Rural Development Strategy, including targeted measures to tackle the particular challenges facing rural Wales and overcome the structural barriers to growth in the rural economy.

Welsh Government Offices, Cathays Park,
Cardiff. CF10 3NQ
Swyddfeydd Llywodraeth Cymru, Parc Cathays,
Caerdydd. CF10 3NQ

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Sioned.Williams@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Sioned.Williams@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn yr iaith honno ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We will deliver a transformative and universal new childcare offer for children from the age of 9 months to 4 years. We will look at ways to improve access to childcare for parents who work irregular hours and live in rural areas, including through expanding delivery via childminders. Strengthening the rural economy is a key priority. We will maintain and develop support for the agricultural sector as the key engine of rural development and empower our rural communities and we will continue to call on the UK Government to extend its Rural Fuel Duty Relief Scheme to Wales.

We will also commission a review of the funding formula for local government, to bring forward recommendations for reform so that it better reflects the real cost of delivering services in different parts of Wales”.

As we make the case for the devolution of powers over welfare we will work to improve the existing Welsh Benefits System, making it simpler for every eligible household, including those in rural areas, to receive the support they are entitled to.

WQ98496(e) How does the Welsh Government intend to close the disability pay gap?

We are committed to the social model of disability, recognising that it is societal barriers rather than individual impairments that disable people. We will act to remove these barriers and promote fairness and inclusion, ensuring disabled people can fully participate in, and progress through the labour market and all aspects of life.

WQ98497(e) What steps will the Welsh Government take to protect the rights of women and girls?

As I set out in my speech on 09 June, this Welsh Government is committed to achieving a gender-equal Wales. Women and girls should be able to live free from discrimination, violence and economic disadvantage, with equal power, pay and opportunity.

We will take a focused and practical approach to advancing gender equality, with a clear emphasis on progress for women and girls across Wales, supported by a stronger focus on evidence, data and lived experience to inform effective policy. We will work to embed gender equality across key policy areas, including education, skills and economic development, recognising that progress will depend on sustained action and partnership to address persistent barriers.

We have made a clear commitment to bringing forward a Human Rights Bill for Wales and we are considering how that commitment can be taken forward in a way that is legally robust, deliverable within devolved competence, and capable of making a practical difference to people’s lives, including rights relevant to women and girls.

WQ98520(e) What support will the Welsh Government offer to households in rural communities who rely on off-grid gas and heating oil?

Tackling the cost of living crisis is a priority for this government. The Prif Weinidog led a Cabinet discussion on the impact of the war in the Middle East on 18 May and made it clear that we will not hesitate to support families through this difficult time.

Low-income households who use heating oil or liquid petroleum gas as their main heating fuel, and who are eligible for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, can apply to their Local Authorities for a one-off payment of £200.

Support available through the Discretionary Assistance Fund for off grid fuel has been temporarily enhanced. The maximum award for heating oil has been increased from £500 to £750, and people can now apply up to twice in a 12-month period, a minimum of 3 months apart. The Fuel Bank Foundation, with Welsh Government support, has also increased the minimum delivery support through their National Heat Fund Scheme in Wales.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "S. A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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