

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Post-legislative scrutiny

Views from local authority officers to support written evidence submission

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol | Equality and Social Justice Committee

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Abertawe | Evidence from: Swansea Council

Local Authority: Swansea Council

Submitted by: Martin Nichols – Chief Executive

This document discusses the post-legislative scrutiny of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, focusing on its implementation and effectiveness

Questions relating to the Committee's Terms of Reference	Views
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How far has the intended objective of the Act been achieved?	The Act has made progress in ensuring decisions and actions consider the needs of future generations while improving Wales' well-being. However, more work is needed to fully integrate these principles into systems. The Welsh Government's adoption of the Act's objectives will help drive change, but cultural and behavioural shifts have been slower than expected due to resource constraints. The Act's impact was often implicit, especially during the pandemic.
Views on any action which should be taken to improve the effectiveness of the Act and its implementation, including any specific drafting issues	The Act needs to be fully embedded at the national level to avoid contradictions and ensure public bodies can navigate its requirements effectively.
Are the review and reporting requirements under the Act are being met?	Swansea Council and the Public Services Board have met all review and reporting requirements, engaging in reflective and evaluative activities, e.g. those developed by the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner such as the Ways of Working Progress Checker Section.
Views on the effectiveness of guidance made under the Act	Initial guidance was effective, but there is now a need for more specific guidance and tools as best practices emerge, e.g. Audit Wales and Local Authorities recognise the need to reflect service user experience in performance but best practice to achieve this is not yet clear.
Views on how far the Act has been legally binding and enforceable	The Act is predicated on goodwill and self-interest rather than compulsion. Although penalties could potentially expedite adoption, the Act is perceived as a learning process for public bodies, which is considered a beneficial aspect of its implementation.

Views on how far the Act has represented, and will continue to represent, value for money	The Act facilitates long-term decision-making and sustainability, though its monetary value is challenging to quantify. Integrating its requirements into existing operations has proven to be cost-effective. The Welsh Government should contemplate establishing longer-term budgets for local government and making more efficient use of grants. The emphasis on 'Value for money' as a critical question underscores the importance of 'economic' well-being. However, the definition of that value now includes cultural, environmental, and social considerations, rather than being confined solely to economic terms and guidance on this for local government could be improved.
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