

PSB 03

Dulliau gweithredu lleol ar gyfer lleihau tlodi:

Deddf Llesiant Cenedlaethau'r Dyfodol a byrddau gwasanaethau cyhoeddus

Local Approaches to poverty reduction:

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and public service boards

Ymateb gan: Comisiynydd Cenedlaeth'r Dyfodol Cymru

Response from: Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

National Assembly for Wales

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Consultation on Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and public services boards – December 2017

The Committee's terms of reference for its inquiry are to:

- examine how public service boards (PSBs) are targeting improvements to public services in Wales's most deprived communities;
- assess the quality of evidence used by PSBs in the development of their local Well-Being Plans in relation to the needs and experiences of people living in poverty, including how PSBs are approaching the impending demise of Communities First;
- consider how PSBs are specifically addressing rural poverty as part of the development of their Well-Being plans;
- explore and understand the experiences of organisations (public, private and third-sector) and individuals in the development of well-being plans and the potential impact of greater regional working in the future.

Dear Chair and Members of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee,

1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written evidence to your inquiry. As Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, my office has been engaged formally and informally in the work of Public Services Boards (PSBs) and public bodies during the last eighteen months. Therefore, I hope you find the below evidence helpful in your inquiry.
2. With regards to the four points provided in your terms of reference, I would like to remind you about my approach to responding to the Local Assessments of Well-being ("well-being assessments") that PSBs published earlier this year and my method of providing advice to the PSBs on how they might take steps to meet their draft objectives (a statutory duty under Part 4, Section 42 of the Act).
3. In relation to the second point included in the Terms of Reference, the well-being assessments provide the evidence PSBs have used to develop their draft Local Well-being Plans ("well-being plans"). Therefore, I would like to draw your attention to the resources my office produced this year, which should be useful to you in your work as a Committee.

4. I saw the well-being assessments as the first indicator of the readiness of PSBs to challenge business as usual and embrace the new ways of working that the Act requires. Therefore, as a statutory consultee to the well-being assessments but with no obligation to respond, I took the decision to not only respond to the PSBs, but to provide personalised, individual feedback.
5. In addition to engaging with PSBs on an informal basis during their collection of evidence, my office developed a partnership with Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Cardiff University and Mark Lang Consulting to provide more formal analysis and evaluation of the 19 well-being assessments. This enabled me to respond to each PSB during their consultation periods with tailored feedback on their draft assessments; these letters are available on our website: <https://futuregenerations.wales/letters-public-services-boards/>
6. My office then brought together the findings of this analysis with insight and information gathered from others to publish my recent report 'Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow' (https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FGCW_Well-being_in_Wales-Planning_today_for_a_better_tomorrow_2017_edit_27082017.pdf)
7. This report is a result of the key findings of our work with PSBs and provides a shared learning resource, as we seek to make the best of the Act to secure a Wales fit for future generations. The report is structured in two parts. Part One sets out what the 19 well-being assessments tell us (and what they do not tell us) about well-being in Wales, particularly in terms of how well-being is addressed as defined in the legislation through the seven national well-being goals.
8. In Part One, I have addressed where PSBs used social and economic data about poverty, how the issue was analysed and how well PSBs integrated issues (such as this) with others. For example, many assessments provide a helpful narrative about links between attainment and poverty levels (p10); the importance of fuel poverty is picked up by some assessments, particularly those relating to rural areas; but, in general, the assessments do not recognise the potential for addressing fuel poverty to deliver multiple benefits across elements of well-being (p16). The links between poverty, mental / physical well-being and crime are less explicit across assessments, also.
9. In general, there was a lack of acknowledgement or evidence that specific issues, such as poverty, impact on many of the seven national well-being goals. There was a tendency to link

poverty to the prosperous goal or equal goal, rather than integrating issues and seeking a holistic view of the local area.

10. Part Two of the report sets out the key learning from the development of well-being assessments, drawing on the work of the research team and raising key questions for well-being planning. I believe the key findings of the report will be helpful to you in the context of local approaches to poverty reduction. These were:
- a. **Public Services Boards are to be congratulated for the positive approach taken to completing the assessments.** They have taken an important first step in the right direction but the work highlights the real challenges ahead.
 - b. **Active leadership will continue to be important.** There is a need for a clearer demonstration of the willingness to do things differently. PSB members must make sure assessments are an opportunity to embed intelligence-led problem-solving on an on-going basis.
 - c. **More work is needed to build a better understanding of people's lives.** The assessments showed clear effort but more needs to be done to move to an on-going conversation about the future, to draw on the information held by partners and day-to-day intelligence gathered by services working at the heart of communities.
 - d. **The assessments highlight a number of alarming trends.** PSBs need equipping with the skills, resources and expertise to better understand future trends, the needs of future generations and how to respond to these.
 - e. **We need to dig deeper into data.** The assessments should not just be a collection of data, they should be an opportunity to make connections between key issues and ask 'so what' is the result of the data. The understanding and skills to do this across organisations is limited and needs to be further developed.
 - f. **Issues are often still being tackled in isolation.** PSBs need to demonstrate a broader understanding of well-being – rooted in all seven well-being goals and recognising the connections between issues.
11. Part Two of my report draws upon an independent report published by Netherwood Sustainable Futures, Cardiff University and Mark Lang Consulting, reflecting on their work on well-being assessments: <https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Netherwood2c-Flynn2c-Lang-Ofgc-Overview-Report-2.0-1.pdf>

12. I have also worked with the office of the Older People's Commissioner on a report she produced in August 2017: 'PSB Assessments of Local Well-being overview' (http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Uploads/OPCW_Overview_PSB_Assessments_of_Local_Wellbeing_ENG.sflb.ashx) The Older People's Commissioner has reflected that older people living in poverty is not an issue that features predominantly in well-being assessments (p8).
13. In relation to the third and fourth point of the Committee's terms of reference, I have a statutory duty to provide advice to PSBs on how they might take steps to meet their draft objectives (Part 4, Section 42 of the Act). I collaborated with a number of public bodies and representatives of PSBs in designing a method for providing this advice and wrote to PSBs outlining my approach in April 2017: (<https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/20170410-Letter-to-PSBs-FINAL.pdf>)
14. My team have supported the 19 PSBs as they develop their well-being plans during the maximum 14 week period, within which I was required to provide written advice. This has involved attending workshops, meetings, providing face-to-face / telephone advice and support and receiving their draft well-being plans. This has provided me with a greater understanding of the experiences of public bodies and PSBs in producing their draft well-being plans and I have reflected on this in providing advice to the PSBs.
15. This approach resulted in a personalized, individual letter of advice to each PSB on how they might take steps to meet their draft objectives, which they must publish at the same time as their well-being plan by May 2018.
16. Powys PSB have chosen to publish their letter of advice alongside their formal consultation draft of the well-being plan, as an example: (http://pstatic.powys.gov.uk/fileadmin/Docs/Consultations/Well-being/2017_09_22_Advice_from_the_Future_Generations_Commissioner_for_Wales_to_Powys_PSB.pdf)
17. Most PSBs have published their draft well-being plans for consultation and many include well-being objectives around poverty, transport, digital exclusion, adverse childhood experiences and safety. I am aware that several have discussed the impact of the demise of Communities First in developing their plans and have considered alternative approaches to tackling poverty, reflected in these draft plans. I would suggest the Committee uses this information in their inquiry.

18. With regards to the impact of potentially greater regional working in the future (the fourth point of the terms of reference) the Committee may also want to consider the advice I offered the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal last year: <https://futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/20161212-City-deal-FinalEng.pdf>
19. In this letter, I highlighted the differences in levels of deprivation across the Cardiff Capital Region and advised that the pursuit of prosperity is not a goal in isolation but a means towards well-being in its widest sense; which includes addressing long-term challenges such as persistent poverty, poor health and improving life chances for everyone, particularly the most disadvantaged.
20. I hope the Committee will find this evidence useful and my office will be pleased to provide you with any further information you require.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Further information on the role and statutory duties of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales can be found here: <https://futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-commissioner/>