

PSB 06

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: Gyngor Sir Ceredigion

Response from: Ceredigion County Council

Response from Ceredigion County Council to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee call for evidence for its inquiry into Local Approaches to poverty reduction: The Well-Being of Future Generations Act and Public Service Boards.

1. The evidence provided below is structured around the Committee's terms of reference for this inquiry, that is 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.
2. Examine how public service boards (PSBs) are targeting improvements to public services in Wales's most deprived communities.

In 2013 the Ceredigion PSB established a Poverty Sub-group which brings together elected members, CCC officers and managers from partner organisations including the Third Sector to coordinate work to combat poverty. The Poverty Sub-group has developed a Ceredigion Combating Poverty Strategy 2016-2018 that can be accessed from the Ceredigion PSB website, or by following this [link](#). The strategy sets out the vision for Ceredigion and the agreed priorities to mitigate the impact and effects of poverty in the County, including child poverty.

Poverty indicators used by the Welsh Government (WG) to measure the severity of poverty across Wales indicate that Ceredigion is not amongst the worst affected counties. Nevertheless, we have some areas of deprivation within Ceredigion that warrant enhanced support e.g. through the Flying Start programme. Rural poverty tends to get masked in large bodies of data and we are mindful of the increasing challenges that our rural communities face over the next few years with increasing costs, shrinking resources and growing demands. We are very aware that we must

keep working with partners both statutory and third sector, in order to effectively address our challenges. Ceredigion County Council (CCC) and its partners are committed to the combatting of poverty in our communities and makes extensive use of the Welsh Government's major tackling poverty programmes where available. We have seen the benefits that these programmes bring and are keen to see them continue.

3. 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.

Analysis of the relevant data on poverty and an ongoing assessment has given the PSB a clear perspective on the particular challenges that Ceredigion face. These can be summarised as follows:

- Ceredigion is a low income economy, with household income amongst the lowest in Wales despite having relatively high qualification levels in the workforce. In-work poverty is significant and affects a higher proportion of citizens in our county than in the acknowledged deprived areas in the Valleys and East Wales.
- Despite comparatively low jobless figures economic activity is relatively low, with high levels of part time employment, as well as a higher proportion of people working in the public sector rather than the private sector. In 2015 the employment rate in Ceredigion was 64.1%. This was the second lowest amongst the 22 Welsh Local Authorities.
- There is an over dependence on the public sector for employment and as the public sector is forced to shed staff; the outlook for future employment remains very challenging.
- Growth Value Added per head in 2012 stood at £11,948 in Ceredigion, this was the joint 4th lowest among the 22 Welsh Local Authorities. The gap is widening.
- In 2015 average weekly earnings in Ceredigion stood at £488. This was the third lowest among the 22 Welsh Local Authorities.
- We continue to lose young people to out-migration, which has long term issues for the economic sustainability of our community and bilingual culture.
- Deep rural poverty is affecting all our communities, where real deprivation lives alongside relative affluence. The rural nature and spatial dispersal of our poor residents is not picked up by the standard Welsh deprivation measures. Nevertheless, Cardigan and Aberystwyth towns have wards which have worrying concentrations of children who live in Income Benefit Households.
- Fuel poverty is a major issue for our communities, not least because of the lack of mains alternatives and the ageing housing stock that is most prevalent in the County.
- Housing costs in Ceredigion are relatively expensive, particularly in the north and mid of our County, where the rented accommodation market is distorted by the demand from our Universities.

- Property values are high, again in the north of the county, which makes it very difficult for young local people to get on the housing ladder.
- Lack of affordable housing options: Ceredigion has a relatively high percentage of home owners but there is a limited supply of 'downsizing' housing options to buy resulting in older people and single occupants struggling to meet energy and maintenance costs in old, large properties. Bungalow prices are high due to demand.
- Low skills economy: Cycle of rural decline

As noted in point 2 above, the County has been deprived of the Communities First Programme since 2012 when it was removed from the Penparcau and Tregaron areas. The impact on both communities following the removal of Communities First has been very different. In Penparcau, the 'Penparcau Forum' was established and community activity continues to be very strong. The forum has been very successful in attracting funding to the area for numerous projects. In the rural area of Tregaron 'Whilen Y Porthmyn' was established and unfortunately community activity hasn't been as vibrant. The lessons learnt for us from the removal of Communities First is that rural and more urban areas need a different type of support following the removal of Communities First.

4. Consider how PSBs are specifically addressing rural poverty as part of the development of their Well-Being plans.

Rural poverty is often a hidden issue, and linked to number of factors, including under-employment and low wages. Living in a rural area is often associated with additional costs, which can deeply affect people in work. We concur with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, 'A Minimum Income for Rural Households' that found that:

- People in rural areas typically need to spend **10–20 per cent more on everyday requirements** than those in urban areas. The more remote the area, the greater these additional costs.
- The biggest difference is the greater availability of **public transport** in urban areas, whereas rural households depend more on cars. Domestic fuel costs are also higher in some rural areas, because of **less fuel-efficient housing** and **lack of mains gas**.
- Single, working-age adults need to earn at least £15,600 a year in rural towns, £17,900 in villages and £18,600 in hamlets or remote countryside to reach what the researchers regarded as a minimum living standard, compared with £14,400 in urban areas.
- For couples with two children, the annual earnings requirement is much higher, about £33,000 to £42,000, depending on whether one or both partners work and the remoteness of the community.

Rural poverty is being addressed on an ongoing basis in Ceredigion and this will continue when the Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan is published. Over the past two years we have been working on our priorities that are to:

- Reduce the number of low income households and workless households
- Increase skills amongst adults and young people
- Reduce inequalities of opportunity for young people, children and young families – Education Outcomes
- Reduce health inequalities and improve outcomes
- Prevent housing need from escalating into housing crisis
- Tackling poverty through sustainable employment
- Raise awareness and delivery projects that tackle fuel poverty
- Maximise benefit entitlements for older people and other vulnerable groups
- Support residents in dealing with the impact of Welfare Reform
- Sustain and develop better access to services

Delivery of the above priorities is monitored regularly at the PSB Poverty Sub-group meetings when any matters of concern are raised and joint-solutions for tackling these matters are developed and agreed. The evidence and priority actions listed above were taken into account in the Ceredigion Assessment of Local Well-being and ultimately, when preparing the draft Local Well-being Plan. The Well-being Aims within the draft Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan are:

- Enable communities to become prosperous, sustainable and connected by supporting the transformation of economic prospects
- Create conditions for communities to support individuals from all backgrounds to live fulfilling, independent lives
- Create environmentally responsible and safe communities that can adapt and respond to the effects of climate change
- Enable every child to have the best start in life
- Enable people to create and grasp opportunities and meet challenges throughout their lives
- Enable people to live active, happy and healthy lives

The final Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan will be published in April 2018.

In addition to the above, the first priority within the Ceredigion County Council Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 is 'Boosting the Economy'. The strategy focusses on aiming to re-invigorate the local economy and providing a prosperous, healthy, safe and affordable environment in which the citizens of Ceredigion can live and work and which aims to try and retain young people in well paid jobs.

5. 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.

The experience of the Council in the development of the draft Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan has been very constructive and positive. The approach taken in Ceredigion to develop the Assessment of Local Well-being and draft Local Well-being

Plan has been truly collaborative and inclusive. All PSB partner organisations were involved from the outset through the establishment of specialist groups to look at various elements of assessment and plan development such as the initial situation analysis, engagement and consultation campaigns and assessment and plan writing and editing. The residents of Ceredigion have also been highly involved with 1,579 responding to the PSB's Well-being survey and a further 236 taking part in the participatory engagement activities (this represents approximately 2% of Ceredigion's population of 74,600 (ONS 2015 Mid-Year Estimate). In addition, nearly 200 individuals, staff and residents, took part in detailed workshops to develop the draft Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan.

A joint methodology framework was adopted between Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire PSB's for undertaking the Assessments of Local Well-being and elements of Well-being Planning. Whilst using the joint methodology each county have published their individual assessments and draft plans. A Regional Officer has been employed, with support from a Welsh Government grant, to assist with this work. Led by the Regional Officer, with support from PSB support staff, the Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire PSB's developed and prepared robust and comprehensive Assessments of Local Well-being for each County that resulted in improved analytical capacity and capability within public sector organisations across the region. The draft Local Well-being Plans for the three PSB's are currently out for public consultation.

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