

PSB 18

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: Cyngor Sir Fynwy

Response from: Monmouthshire County Council

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute evidence on the above subject. Monmouthshire PSB published its well-being assessment in April 2017. As a rural county, public services here are acutely aware of the importance of this issue and the assessment re-enforced this, surfacing a range of evidence pertinent to our understanding.

Monmouthshire is often perceived as affluent and on many measures it is. Our work highlights that rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas. A lack of affordable and available childcare in rural areas, limited access to the internet and low frequency of public transport are barriers to employment. Unemployment in the county is low but the prevalence of low paid and fragile employment contributes to the risk of in-work poverty, we know that the earnings of those who live and work locally is lower than those earned by those who live here but commute. We also see a significant wage differential between male and female workers in the county.

The well-being assessment culminated by identifying a number of challenges and opportunities for public services. This included the statement that:

There is inequality between communities and within communities. This includes in educational attainment, wage levels and health outcomes. This is put in sharp focus in a county where people, and in particular children, live in poverty close to areas of real affluence. Research shows that inequality has a negative impact on many aspects of well-being with more equal societies experiencing better outcomes.

The PSB is presently developing its well-being plan and is exploring potential solutions to these challenges. It has set an aspiration to reduce inequalities between communities and within communities. I am not yet in a position to offer a definitive action plan as we are exploring potential solutions with partners and other experts.

Individual public bodies will also be using the evidence to develop their own well-being objectives and taking forward actions. As one illustration, following the local elections in May 2017 Monmouthshire County Council created the post of Cabinet Member for Social Justice and Community Development which signifies the importance of this agenda to the local authority. Cllr Sara Jones was subsequently appointed to this position. Cllr Jones has held a seminar for members on the subject and has instructed officers to develop a Social Justice Strategy that will begin to address some of the issues highlighted in the well-being assessment.

The strategy, while presently in draft form, is likely to contain actions to ensure we give children the best start in life, overcoming barriers to attainment and opportunity; economic inclusion - overcoming inequalities in access to economic prosperity and social inclusion - tackling the scourge of loneliness and isolation.

Top-down solutions can often create dependency and we are keen to take an asset-based community development approach focusing on community-building and understanding that the assets to solve these problems often exist within communities if services can work in partnership to create the conditions that enable them to emerge.

We also have a number of multi-agency partnerships in place in the county, overseen by the PSB, such as the Financial Inclusion and Digital Exclusion Partnership, who are addressing these issues.

I trust this information will be of some use to the committee. If you have any queries or require further information on any of the above points then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Gatehouse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew Gatehouse
Head of Policy and Governance