



National Assembly for Wales' Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee - inquiry in relation to Public Services Boards (PSBs)

Submission from Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW)
May 2018

Background to inquiry

1. Representatives from Third Sector Support Wales (TSSW) welcome the opportunity to provide evidence to the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee on the structure and effectiveness of Public Services Boards.
2. Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales. It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).
3. Our shared goal is to enable the third sector and volunteers across Wales to contribute fully to individual and community wellbeing, now and for the future. We work with citizens, volunteers and third sector groups to identify and address what matters to them. Our core activities to strengthen the third sector and volunteering focus on:
 - Enabling and supporting
 - Being a catalyst
 - Engaging and influencing
4. We have four pillars of activity that make up our universal offer, these are:
 - Volunteering
 - Good governance
 - Sustainable funding
 - Strategic engagement and influencing
5. The Chief Officers of the 19 CVCs are third sector members of each PSB across Wales.

Inquiry Terms of Reference

6. The response from TSSW will be structured around the Terms of Reference for the inquiry, which are to:
 - gain an understanding of the structure and functions of the PSBs;
 - explore the effectiveness of PSBs, resourcing and capacity; and
 - gather evidence of issues or barriers that may impact on effective working, and examples of good practice and innovation.
7. For reference, please see historic comments on PSBs submitted by WCVA in previous Welsh Government consultations:
 - Local approaches to poverty reduction: The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Public Services Boards, December 2017
 - Public services fit for the future, September 2017
 - Reforming local government: Resilient and renewed, April 2017

Gain an understanding of the structure and functions of the Public Services Boards (PSBs)

Third sector involvement in PSB structures

8. CVC Chief Officers and/or Chairs are involved in each Public Services Board (PSB) as an invited member on behalf of the third sector, and an important partner in engaging the third sector in understanding the PSB's work programmes and local service delivery by disseminating information through local third sector networks and facilitating opportunities for the sector to be involved in the work of the PSBs.
9. CVCs have been engaged in the development of well-being assessments and well-being plans and, as members of the PSB sub-groups and Public Engagement Networks, are working to involve local people and communities in how we develop a relationship and ongoing conversation that addresses what matters. This kind of approach requires a step change in the behaviours and skills sets of all PSB members.
10. CVCs and WCVA members report that the work of PSBs feels very distant from the reality of the day to day work of third sector organisations and it can be difficult to make the strategic agenda relevant. Large third sector national organisations wish to support the implementation of the Act but are not clear how to contribute to local implementation. It is also difficult for the smaller third sector organisations to recognise how they contribute to the PSB work.
11. For PSBs to be considered relevant, local people and communities need to feel involved in the process and a connection to the language that is used to express the issues citizens and communities face. Public Services Boards (PSBs) must work to the guidance in the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales and ensure that their membership includes those with experience of working in communities at grassroots level in order to include first-hand intelligence about the issues people face. To do so, there should be

increased involvement of the third sector and/or community representatives at PSB level, which might be achieved through an action plan arrangement between voluntary and community organisations, the third sector and PSBs.

12. The third sector has the potential for three levels of involvement with PSBs:

- Engagement with those who are seldom heard. The sector can be an avenue both for the dissemination and collection of information and as part of (not *the*) route for involvement.
- The third sector has a wealth of qualitative data that can identify current unmet need and be fed into the future trends work and assessments. This is not always recognised.
- Third sector as the deliverer of solutions in terms of meeting need and providing services differently.

Culture

13. The culture of PSBs feels like a local authority owned agenda, notably in areas where the number of local authority representatives outweighs that of other organisations. The perception of the current balance of power is reflective of the status quo, a 'two-tier' system with a clear onus on the four statutory partners versus the 'other' members; resulting in weak collective ownership of the work. This has been addressed in some areas e.g. in Pembrokeshire, the CVC Chief Officer is currently the vice-chair of the PSB.

14. The communication from the Future Generations Commissioner challenging PSBs to collaborate on certain key areas of work came too late in the development of the Wellbeing Plans. PSBs operating in one unitary authority do not currently have any governance arrangements established for cross boundary working. In addition, barriers to cross-boundary working may be impeded in some areas by differing party politics that are not conducive to working together. The recent Commissioner analysis of individual plans is welcome, but very challenging and would have had more value in shaping plans if available at an earlier stage. Some recommendations are substantially different from the pathway that had been established in the development of action plans

15. The commitment to working with the third sector is well understood at policy level. However, in practice the language and bureaucratic processes inhibit the sector from engaging more deeply. In addition, the approach to developing well-being plans by comparing corporate plans with emerging priorities, does not work from a third sector point of view as we are not a corporate entity, making it difficult to identify opportunities for collaboration.

Collaboration

16. At present there is a risk of new PSB partnership sub-groups duplicating work of existing partnerships rather than allocating work streams to existing structures. PSB Well-being Plans need to be embedded in normal working practices and deliver outcomes. PSB plans often have not been embedded

into PSB partners' own operational plans due to a timing disjoint - it may mean that strategic plans may not be inclusive until after year one of the PSB Action Plan has been reviewed. It is important that all Partnerships have a thread back to the PSB and Wellbeing Plans. With limited resources Partnerships that don't have a pathway could be deemed to have no real value. The interlinking of delivery Partnerships to the Strategic PSB will be crucial in determining the use of limited resources.

17. A key role for TSSW partners is to work through PSBs to ensure that there is an understanding of existing community assets at grass roots level, whose role should be acknowledged within each plan and considered in terms of how services are co-produced locally.

Synergy between WBFGA and SSWBA

18. There are synergies between the two Acts and their implementation on the ground that could be strengthened. CVC Chief Officers are involved in both the PSBs and Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs), which enables links between the local and regional agendas to be identified and scope understood for collaboration to ensure local and regional needs are met.

19. The governance structures for PSBs and RPBs also differ in terms of their arrangements for third sector membership and citizen involvement:

- PSBs have one or more local third sector member(s) eg in Pembrokeshire PAVS and PLANED are members;
- RPBs have two third sector members (one local, one national organisation); service user and citizen members.

20. Whilst the specific remits of PSBs and RPBs differ, there is clear synergy between partners who are involved in implementation on the ground. A structured link between the PSB and RPB governance arrangements could provide scope for a more joined up approach, more efficient use and pooling of budgets, etc.

21. The North Wales RPB recently received a presentation on Integrated Service Boards (of which there are three in the region), indicating a third governance structure that could potentially link with the RPBs and PSBs.

Explore the effectiveness of PSBs, resourcing and capacity

Capacity

22. CVCs observe that resources are available to support the delivery of social care and the work of the RPBs, e.g. the Integrated Care Fund, Delivering Transformation Grant; Dementia Fund; Transformation Fund, etc with significant capital being made available. In contrast, resources for the implementation of the work of PSBs appear to be minimal.
23. There is no dedicated resource for PSBs. Capacity is an issue. It remains to be seen whether or not PSBs simply become another 'solution looking for a

problem' and therefore an additional layer of bureaucracy. This was perceived to be the case with LSBs. If so, PSBs will be experienced as capacity and resource consumers, rather than capacity and resource creators.

24. Whilst genuine attempts have been made to enable people to 'have their say', this falls very short of co-production. Authentic community development cannot be incidental or accidental. It needs a deliberate approach, with dedicated resource. A community development fund (akin to ICF) for PSBs would be very welcome. Crucially, this should be a PSB fund, not something in the control of the local authority, and used exclusively for change and new work, not to maintain same old.
25. To bring about the transformative change that is envisioned by the Acts, we see a clear need for development support at strategic level for all PSB (and RPB) members in *collaboration* in order to bring about a set of changed relationships and behaviours (how to work effectively together); and for practitioners and front line staff on how to effectively implement the principle of *involvement*. This is new to many professionals and citizens and needs support and resource.
26. PSBs are encouraged to consider taking a similar approach to the Valleys Taskforce, by listening to the voices of local people and reflecting concerns in language that is readily understood. A 'you said / we listened / together we did' co-productive approach provides a benchmark against which public bodies can be accountable for their actions to improve the well-being of citizens. One survey respondent to WCVA's survey said simply: '*ask them, listen to the answers and act on the outcome*'. This was a core principle at the outset of Communities First, but it has become lost along the way.

Resources for third sector involvement

27. CVC Chief Officers consider their membership of PSBs to be of strategic importance to the third sector and therefore dedicate time accordingly. However, concerns are expressed at the apparent level of expectation of third sector members, which often falls to CVCs, to become involved in sub groups and project specific work. CVC Chief Officers are also involved in numerous regional partnerships (RPBs, health collaboratives, economic regeneration partnerships, RSPs, etc), none of which have displaced local (or locality) working arrangements.
28. This level of involvement is resource intensive for CVCs, and it is difficult for members of other third sector organisations to justify their involvement in workstreams when the work of the PSBs feels so distant from reality. One possible alternative is for sub roles to be allocated to other organisations who may have specific knowledge. They would, however, require resource to engage and would need to be hooked in with local CVC networks.
29. Whilst we welcome the positive legislative context which actively promotes third sector involvement in the implementation of the Act, the expectation and 'ask' of the third sector members of PSBs (and RPBs) needs to be articulated more clearly, consistently applied and with proper consideration of the

resource implications for CVCs and the wider third sector to engage with the plethora of meetings associated with PSBs and RPBs. To demonstrate the level of demand for CVC involvement in local and regional partnership arrangements, during 2017/18 NPTCVS facilitated the involvement of the sector in 74 strategic planning/working groups and its Director sat on over 50 key strategic external bodies; CVSC participated in approximately 60+ boards/forums/partnerships/panels and GVS was represented on almost 60 strategic partnerships and joint working groups.

30. At national level, Welsh Government has funded a part time post at WCVA for six months (Delivering Transformation Grant Co-ordinator) to support and promote the third sector's involvement in the delivery of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales), including pro-active co-ordination of the third sector RPB reps to strengthen their links with third sector networks. The disconnect on the ground between the two Acts has been highlighted as an issue by a range of stakeholders.

Delivery

31. The function of PSBs, to date, has focused on the well-being assessments leading to the establishing of the well-being plans. These are now in place and, for example in Powys, has 12, very high-level priorities. In many cases, the implications for operational delivery are not yet clear and nor is it understood how plans will be translated into action that builds on existing community assets. However, in Ceredigion, for example, delivery mechanisms are clear with project groups for each workstream established and involving third sector and Cabinet Member involvement.
32. The intelligence held by front line staff within both the public and third sectors is an under-utilised resource, particularly with third sector organisations, because often data collection methods are not sufficiently robust and protocols for sharing data may not be sufficiently developed. For example, one respondent to the survey undertaken by WCVA told us that: *'...we don't even know what PSBs do, who they are or how we can better engage with them. They should be interacting with the organisations on the front line and giving us an opportunity to feed back what we see and the struggles facing people.'* This should not be considered solely as a task for third sector members of the PSB to address, but rather the PSB acting as one to engage with a spectrum of service providers, to find ways of enabling third sector organisations to share evidence and data in a way that is useful and useable for local planning purposes. If this breadth and depth of engagement is envisaged, it must be matched with an investment in capacity and skills to achieve a step change.

Gather evidence of issues or barriers that may impact on effective working, and examples of good practice and innovation

33. There is a risk that PSBs only acknowledge and report on the funded/contracted activity and ignore the considerable voluntary/community activity that will feed into the targeted outcomes in the Plan, under-valuing the role of the third sector's contribution to well-being. Unfunded

preventative/community activity is vital for PSB plans to have an impact, yet this is not recognised.

34. Engaging fully and positively with elected members (County Councillors) is a problem - many see the PSB as an unelected quango, rather than a key partner in the delivery of well-being objectives for their constituents. This situation is not helped by the legislation, which puts the elected members in the role of scrutineers, not partners. Scrutiny would be better undertaken by a multi-agency panel (reflecting the membership of the PSB) and/or by citizen scrutineers. In Ceredigion, Cabinet representatives are sitting on each project group in an attempt to support positive links between elected members and key stakeholders.
35. The involvement of town and community councils on PSBs is also an issue. Town and community councils have an important role to play in developing resourceful communities, but in many cases they are reluctant partners. One Voice Wales has a seat on the Ceredigion PSB, but have found it difficult to engage. They have also been invited to put forward a representative to the Pembrokeshire PSB. Engagement with town and community councils will be essential in the implementation phase, particularly around those priorities associated with developing community resourcefulness.
36. The legislation makes it clear that PSBs should work in a citizen-centred way, involving people in the co-design and delivery of Well-being Plans. Whilst this process was not perfect (short timescales made it impossible to do things right), every effort was made to engage with as many people as possible, and this helped inform the development of the Well-being Plans. Pembrokeshire PSB took the decision not to target specific user groups within the Well-being Plan, taking the view that the Plan seeks to improve *community well-being*. Nevertheless, pressure has been brought to bear individuals/groups who want to see their particular area of interest written into the plan - for example, Older Persons' Commissioner (older people); Public Health Wales (first 1000 days); Arts Council for Wales, etc. Welsh Government and other national agencies must resist the temptation to micro-manage PSBs - this is what adopting a "*citizen centred approach*" means in practice.
37. The complex maze of corporate planning structures and timetables to create shared plans is also perceived to be a risk to implementation. A common measurement matrix of outcomes should be produced and all plans, whether within a public sector body or third sector, can be utilized to feed into local, regional and national monitoring. Failure to establish common monitoring will result in perceived gaps in some service areas when they do not exist but are measured differently.
38. CVCs have been engaged in the development of population assessments and well-being plans and, as members of the PSB Public Engagement Networks, are working to involve local people and communities in how we develop a relationship and ongoing conversation that addresses what matters.
39. A number of priorities in PSB plans can potentially only be delivered regionally if Welsh Government plans outlined in the Green Paper for greater regional

service delivery are implemented. There is little synergy at the moment between local and regional planning of services.

40. CVCs have undertaken a range of engagement work with local organisations, which could be shared more widely as good practice, e.g:

- Interlink RCT, BAVO and VAMT have established a local network/reference group specifically on well-being/WBFGA/PSB work to inform the CVC's role as third sector member of the PSB and to act as a point of contact for the PSB with the sector;
- NPT CVS has supported the development of a Citizen Engagement Scheme which has been formally adopted by the PSB;
- PAVS is a member of Pembrokeshire Co-production Network that brings together participation and engagement practitioners from across the PSB partnership. The intention is to establish the Network as the primary mechanism for PSB engagement with citizens and communities across Pembrokeshire. PAVS' Chief Officer is leading on this work in her role as Vice Chair of the PSB but progress is slow due to lack of resources;
- Some third sector organisations have welcomed the well-being plans and checklists as a useful tool for helping organisations to frame what they are aiming to achieve in the context of local well-being;
- NPT CVS leads on the transport sub-group which is exploring alternative transport solutions for communities in the area. This is a multi-agency group involving Third Sector as well as statutory partners and has recently secured funding to undertake a feasibility study (NPT CVS);
- Participation in work around digital inclusion, which has included a third sector digital survey that was developed by NPT CVS and the sector, supported by the Council.
- Mantell Gwynedd were successful in obtaining 480k of funding from the Lottery's Third Sector Skills fund which will enable North Wales CVCs to upskill staff so they are able to undertake the work of measuring social value. It is by understanding the social value of activities that we can work towards effectively managing the creation of well-being and this is essential to making the intentions of the Act a reality. The main focus of the project is to measure the value of activities and how they relate to the national well-being goals.

41. Community Voice was a strategic grants programme managed and funded by the Big Lottery Fund in Wales that came to an end in March 2018. The programme aims to build the capacity of citizens to engage in planning and running services and projects that respond to their communities' needs and advance community benefit. The programme provided £12 million to CVCs through eleven Community Voice grants. CVCs were each responsible for their portfolio of 5-10 individual projects to deliver locally co-produced initiatives, facilitating more effective engagement with key public sector organisations, helping people to influence decisions about services they receive and developing local services that better meet their needs. Big Lottery Fund have undertaken an evaluation of the programme, from which lessons could be shared. Without resources from this programme, the depth and breadth of citizen involvement achieved by each CVC is minimal.

42. Interlink (RCT) has a member of staff seconded to work at the Future Generation's Commissioner's office for approximately one day per week to support involvement and help link to SenseMaker initiatives. It is a connection to a member of staff who is an involvement 'practitioner' and provides a mechanism for feedback about what is happening on the ground in relation to strategic plans and programmes.
43. PAVS leads on the Pride in Pembrokeshire award scheme on behalf of the PSB, which recognises volunteer-led activity in local communities that improves individual and community well-being. Groups receive a certificate, a cheque for £200 and editorial/photograph in the Western Telegraph, giving them a platform to promote their work to the general public, potential funders and volunteers. This is a good mechanism for sharing good practice as well as publicising the PSB.
44. We recommend that PSBs seek to engage more effectively with each other in order to share experiences and good practice and offer a more effective, coherent approach to their work - recognising, of course, that different regions have different needs and so each PSB will still need to work in its own way.

Third Sector Support Wales
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