

Attendance

Bethan Proctor (NEA)	Ben Lloyd (Save the Children)
Emma Curtis (Childrens Commissioner)	Emma Holmes (Cardiff and Vale University Health Board)
Gill Peace (WCIA)	Hibah Iqbal (People and Work)
Jen Duffin (PAAS)	John Griffiths (Chair)
Kerry Moore (Cardiff University)	Lotty Talbutt (The Big Issue)
Lorraine Davies (DWP)	Michelle Lewis (Citizens Advice Cymru)
Nick Ireland (USDAW)	Rachel Cable(Oxfam Cymru)
Sarah Germain (FareShare Cymru)	Sarah Thomas (NFWI)
Sean O'Neill (Children in Wales)	Steffan Evans (Bevan Foundation)
Susan Lloyd Selby (Trussell Trust)	

Apologies

Allison Hulmes (BASW)	Duncan Holtom (People and Work)
Kath Hopkins (Charter Housing)	Neil Binnell (SRCDC)
Tom Davies (Childrens Society)	

1. Welcome

John Griffiths welcomed everyone to the meeting and updated the group that the Independent Members Debate has been scheduled for Wednesday 5th June 2019 which signals a continuation of the dialogue with the First Minister

2. Future Generations Commissioner Q&A

The Commissioner gave a comprehensive overview of the breadth and depth of her work. The Commissioner stressed that her responsibilities cover all policy areas, the entire Welsh population including those who are yet to be born, and all within the smallest budget of the statutory commissioners. Given this breadth of work, the Commissioner is focusing on six key areas of priority in which her office can make the biggest impact. These are: planning, transport, housing, skills and jobs, adverse childhood experiences and alternative models for keeping people well.

The Commissioner explained that she is responsible for monitoring all 331 objectives set by public bodies, the initial assessment for this is currently underway and should be completed around July. Initial findings suggest that there remains a traditional focus on skills rather than, looking at the holistic skills a person may need to be mentally and physically healthy to deliver jobs within a green economy. The Commissioner's office is currently working with the Welsh Government on its review of digital innovation and Cardiff University on how organisations are planning and upskilling staff to ensure jobs are fit for the future. The Commissioner highlighted that preparing children with the skills for future employment will also boost resilience and emotional intelligence.

In relation to housing, the Commissioner's office played a role in challenging the Welsh Government commissioned Affordable Housing Review to look beyond just numbers of homes. Recommendations included, a five year rent

settlement to give greater control and limits on rent banding, consistent service charges and a need to ensure all tenures comply with Welsh Housing Standard.

In relation to the health system, The Commissioner argued that the biggest issue that needs to be tackled is in relation to spending. 15-20% of the budget is spent on the healthcare system which means other social determinants of health are squeezed out such as housing, jobs and economy, air pollution, green spaces, social connections etc. The Commissioner's Office will shortly be announcing further work that they will be undertaking in challenging government on health spending. The Commissioner is also looking at monitoring the broader budgeting process of the Welsh Government.

The Commissioner highlighted that the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act represents a whole new way of working and whilst there won't be change overnight there are 'frustrated champions' within public bodies who are making progress. For example, Car Free Cardiff which ties in public transport, clean air and GP 'Next Bike' prescriptions through one scheme.

To demonstrate how change is possible, the Future Generations Commissioner's Office is producing a set of journeys entitled 'Art of the Possible' These journeys set out practical steps, showing what progress can look like from simple changes through to owning ambitions. The Commissioner recognised there is a gap within these journeys on a socio-economic angle and therefore invited members to feed into their development and welcomed feedback and comments.

John Griffiths opened up the floor to questions for the Commissioner from members.

A question was asked in relation to the role of the Commissioner's Office on the 'Equal Wales' goal given the gap between rich and poor is amongst the most unequal in Europe. The Commissioner responded that her office is working with Lord John Bird to develop a Private Member's Bill to raise this agenda politically. There is also interest internationally in the Future Generations Act, for example Gibraltar will be enacting an almost identical piece of legislation, there have been changes in Canada and recent budgetary changes in New Zealand. The Commissioner argued that our current economic model is unfit for purpose both in terms of fairness and in protecting our planet. As Commissioner, she tries to pick the big, strategic issues which can be challenged, in order to move away from GDP to look at inequality and the principles of the Act, for example, challenging the M4 relief road.

A question was raised relating to how Universal Credit can be delivered in line with the Act. The Commissioner replied that Public Service Boards (PSB) are the prime forum for those discussions. Out of the 331 objectives, only 5 specifically focus on health, the Commissioner highlighted that whilst this seems alarming on the surface, other objectives do have a focus on poverty for example, skills development, so encouraged members to look deeper at the integrated actions.

The Commissioner was asked if she faced challenges in relation to UK Government legislation undermining the principles of the Act and the role of the Commissioner's Office in these cases. The Commissioner replied that challenges do exist and drew on an example from Anglesey. However, her office is focusing on building a movement within UK Government to replicate a similar piece of legislation which would force Westminster to take notice and due regard.

A question was asked relating to how the Act overcomes commissioning barriers when looking at the social determinants of health. The Commissioner referenced the Healthier Wales journey in providing that practical guidance and welcomed input into the draft. The Commissioner's Office will be using their review powers in the area of procurement and commissioning this year. The intention is to call in a number of contracts such as social care, infrastructure and goods and services to see how the Act is embedded within contracts. The challenge in this, is the level of capacity to look at all these areas within budget; the Commissioner therefore welcomed any potential partnerships from members. The Commissioner also highlighted the confusing nature of having 46 national indicators in order to meet 7 Wellbeing Goals.

A number of questions were returned in advance of the meeting related to gender and questioned if the Commissioner took a gendered approach to her work, particularly in relation to budgeting. The Commissioner responded that she was not taking a specific gendered lens when looking at the budget or other areas of work given the broad nature of the legislation but welcomed any specific expertise in this area.

A follow up question was raised which argued that when looking at certain issues, a specific lens is sometimes critical, i.e class, race, sexuality etc and therefore how does the Commissioner account for these lenses. The Commissioner responded that the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) worked with her office on the development of the journey documents. The Commissioner is a member of their Wales committee and operationally the two offices work closely day to day.

A question was asked regarding how the Commissioner takes into account the real Living Wage and the Welsh Government's policy on Ethical Employment in Supply Chains to public bodies. The Commissioner responded that ethical procurement is covered within the journey documents. The reality is that whilst the code for ethical supply chain is good it needs to be built in the context of the Future Generations Act, otherwise in reality, there is a disjointed approach to policy and services in which people respond in an ad hoc way to latest government policy and guidance.

A question was asked relating to how the Commissioner balances the role of supporting and criticising public bodies particularly in their approach to child poverty given the generational cycle of poverty. The Commissioner responded that in terms of poverty, if we did the right thing for the current generation it would have a positive impact for future generations thereby breaking that inter-generational cycle. The conflict lies in breaking down the economic model and lifetime siloed behaviours; this takes time, however, if we focus on definitions that will take us a long way.

A question was asked relating to how the voices of those people experiencing poverty are heard within the development of well being plans. The Commissioner responded that involvement is one pillar of the five ways of working and whilst there are pockets of good practice there is no coherent approach and we are a long way from perfect. Some public bodies are suspicious that public perception will be raised to a level they cannot deliver whilst for others capacity is a challenge. However, some good examples include the youth parliament, Carmarthenshire's 'mini councillors', targeted focus groups etc. The Commissioner's Office will be producing further guidance on involvement.

A question was asked relating to whether food poverty is contained within the journey documents as this touches on skills, employments, access, housing etc. The recent food inquiry was cited as a good example of the way in which the voices of young people were strongly heard. The Commissioner responded that food poverty is featured throughout the journey checkers for example within cohesive communities. The Commissioner welcomed members views on the journey documents which are intended to act as a practical menu of options on what public bodies can do. The journey documents are intended to be specific and to frame the Commissioner's monitoring and assessment.

A final question was asked relating to whether fuel poverty was included within the journey checkers and whether the Commissioner's office would be responding to the upcoming consultation. The Commissioner responded that the Commissioner's Office has produced a Framework which can be used to inform cross party groups and consultations, given the wide ranging brief of the legislation. Her office will also be producing a ten point plan in response to the climate emergency and will be focusing in particular on budgetary decisions.

3. Summing up and close

Rachel thanked the Commissioner for her attendance and recognised the value in hearing from the Commissioner directly. Rachel also reminded members of the scheduling of the independent members debate, highlighted the upcoming release of the child poverty statistics and suggested members share the statistics in order to amplify the key messages.

At the inception of the group it was decided that there would be a focus on both domestic and international poverty and as such the next meeting will hopefully be a joint meeting with the international cross party group. The date of the next meeting will be decided via a poll amongst members but is anticipated to be in September 2019.