

By email

29/08/17

## Advice from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to Wrexham PSB

Dear Wrexham Public Services Board and supporting officers,

Thank you for seeking my advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft well-being objectives, which currently are:

- Children and Young People are given a healthy start in life:
  - Children and young people have positive mental health and access to services and / or support when they need it;
  - Parents and children and young people are able to make healthy choices.
- All people have the opportunity to learn and develop throughout their lives:
  - Achievement levels for children and young people are improved;
  - Appropriate support is available to enable people to access learning opportunities.

My team have found talking to you regularly and meeting with some of you last week has given them an understanding of how you work together as a Public Services Board (PSB); the method you have taken to well-being planning and your intentions to deliver the objectives and take steps in a different way. As they will have discussed with you, I was keen that my advice would be useful to you and the context within which you work, so I hope you have also found these regular touch-points helpful and that they have given you some guidance along the way.

I also wanted my response to your well-being assessment to be 'feed-forward', rather than 'feedback', helping you to consider how to approach continuous assessment and well-being planning. I have recently published '[Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow](#)', which highlights key findings and recommendations for PSBs on the key areas of change needed to make better decisions for future generations. I am drawing on these reports in providing my advice to you.

As you know, in setting draft objectives and taking steps to meet them, PSBs must use the five ways of working to challenge business as usual and maximise their contribution to each of the seven national

well-being goals. My advice is intended to help you consider how you might do this effectively and how you could demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working to shape your steps.

Therefore, my advice to you is about adopting different ways of working and specifically on the themes you have identified from your assessments to focus on, plus seeking to connect you with others who may be able to help. As my team have explained, the purpose of this advice is not to give you my opinion on your well-being objectives. These are determined and owned by you, as a collective PSB.

### **Adopting different ways of working to take steps to meet your draft objectives:**

For each of your draft objectives and the steps you will be setting, I would like to understand what this means for Wrexham and how this is different to what you have done before. Achieving the ambitions of this Act is about the 'what' and the 'how' i.e. what are you doing to contribute to our shared vision of the seven national well-being goals, which acknowledge that sustainable development connects the environment in which we live, the economy in which we work, the society in which we enjoy and the cultures in which we share, to people and their quality of life? How you are applying the sustainable development principle to shape your actions for the Wrexham?

Setting objectives and steps is not business as usual. In the past, we have drawn out themes and priorities and written plans that show what we are doing anyway. Even now, despite the evidence in the assessments showing a range of alarming trends, it seems PSBs are only engaging in safe and non-contentious territory. To adapt your ways of working requires a fundamentally different approach and you need to give yourselves the time and space to question whether current approaches to public service delivery are fit for the future and explore key pressures and tensions in delivery for each of your objectives.

Practically, I would advise that for both of your draft objectives, you need to continue to use a PSB meeting or create sessions to look at the five ways of working below and have an honest discussion about the tensions between policy issues and current practice within your organisations in relation to each objective. This should then drive your discussions on how you can take new approaches together in the steps you will take to meet your objectives and maximise contribution to the seven national well-being goals.

**I would advise that you will need to demonstrate how your PSB has considered the following in relation to each of your objectives:**

- **Long-term:** What do you understand about the long-term trends, opportunities, risks and likely scenarios for this issue? Are there current gaps in your data or understanding? What foresighting or future trends information do you need to understand this issue better? What capacity, confidence and expertise do you need to fill gaps in knowledge? To inform the action you take, you will need to adequately map and consider the future trends for each of your objectives. My office is working with others to build capacity in this area and, as your support team are aware, Welsh Government have been adding to the 'Future Trends' report resources, which you should make most use of by accessing available through Objective Connect or by contacting David Thomas.
- **Prevention:** In considering this issue, do you have an understanding of what you are trying to prevent? What are the root causes of the issue and when would be the best point to intervene? Are you clear on whether it is primary prevention i.e. seeking to prevent something before it has even occurred; secondary prevention i.e. preventing something from getting worse; or tertiary prevention i.e. softening the impact of something that has ongoing effects; that is needed? This is the difference between encouraging someone to wear a bicycle helmet (primary prevention of head-injury); putting someone in the recovery position if they have fallen from their bike (secondary prevention of the injury worsening) and counselling after the accident (tertiary prevention to help ongoing injuries from worsening).

Many PSBs haven't used their assessments to fully understand both the current situation and the scale and nature of the response required. Although your assessment explored prevention in relation to early years and the environment, I want to see all PSBs exploring how they break cycles and dig deeper into data to see the implicit messages in the data to better understand the causes and effects of key issues and trends to inform your steps.

- **Collaboration:** It is important that the people who sit around the PSB table can bring the best range of insights, constructive challenge, data and solutions to the PSB. Have you got the right people around the table, at the right level to make decisions around this issue? Who else might you need to be collaborating with to better understand this? As recommended in my report on the Well-being Assessments, now is a timely opportunity to review the invited membership of the PSB and consider who are the 'unusual' suspects that you may need to work with to take steps to meet this objective?

In delivering the steps, how might your organisations collaborate? You will need to demonstrate how your PSB is considering the steps that need to be taken together and across organisational

boundaries in order to effectively meet your objectives. This could include co-locating staff, breaking down traditional structures, arranging job-swaps and secondments and, importantly, pooling resources. I will want to see how you have considered these benefits and how the steps you will take move you towards achieving this collaboration.

- **Integration:** For each objective, how are you going to move away from just doing something that meets the objective, and instead, demonstrate that you are taking steps which maximise your contribution to each of the goals? Instead of looking at this issue in a traditional and general sense, have you looked at the definition for each of the goals to widen your understanding of well-being for this issue and the opportunities which might exist for meeting these goals through each of your objectives? How well do you understand the contribution your organisation makes at the moment to this objective? And do you understand how different is the contribution you will need to make going forward for this objective?

How can you plot what's going on elsewhere in your organisations, the strategies and plans at a regional or a national level, to connect with others on achieving this objective? In doing this, what barriers or tensions have risen and what steps can you (or others) take to remove them? Who else is needed around the PSB table to help you interconnect decision-making and improve well-being for this issue?

- **Involvement:** How are you going to demonstrate the way you have involved communities in defining the challenges and opportunities in meeting this objective? How are you taking steps to understand the lived experiences of people in your area and how is this shaping your actions? How are you actively seeking better ways of involving people in decision-making? How can you collaborate with members of the community in meeting these steps? As with the Social Care Wales Board, what options are there for involving people with lived experience on Boards and partnership groups?

This advice should be taken by all PSBs, but I appreciate every PSB has taken a different approach to drafting their well-being objectives. Your support team have worked hard to help you determine your draft objectives from the initial 65 themes and subsequent 15 priorities from your well-being assessment. I was encouraged to hear that you consider the process to have been consultation-led, with the people of Wrexham giving you the clear mandate of pursuing these two draft objectives. I hear that this prioritisation exercise has given you an opportunity to understand each other's motives, to challenge each other and to disagree! But, I think these difficult conversations are to be encouraged at PSB level if we are going to achieve the transformational change we all want.

The five ways of working are intended to help you with challenging each other, questioning whether current services are fit for purpose in meeting your draft objectives and seeing the perspective of others. I would like to see that these challenging conversations continue as you set steps and a plan. I did notice that although the template produced to prioritise objectives uses the five ways of working, the scoring criteria applied places preventative impact at a lower level to integration and long-term. As you seek to develop and deliver steps to meet your objectives, I advise that you see the five ways of working as equally important and use the questions above to challenge yourselves to work differently. The ways of working are not cross-cutting themes, but behaviours to help you to maximise your contribution to the seven well-being goals.

I am glad to hear that the approach you've adopted in Wrexham is intended to build a mutual understanding and respect of each other's professions. As my report on the well-being assessments suggested, it is important that we move away from seeing PSBs as a local authority-led committee meeting and an opportunity to deliver services that are rooted in the reality of people's lives and that will benefit the well-being of future generations. The Chair of the PSB, how and where meetings are held and how the PSB is supported can all shift mindsets. Your leadership at PSB should be permeating into the your organisations at all levels and I'm seeing that, where support is committed by senior leaders at an early stage and is multi-agency, this enables better resourcing of the PSB and, inevitably, allows easier integration between organisations, departments and issues. In order to truly own this plan and ensure the steps you take are understood and undertaken by the member bodies of the PSB, you may want to consider closer working arrangements, a multi-agency virtual team with a senior leader or more formal secondments and co-location. I am aware that you are considering what organisational development the PSB might need. You might want to discuss this with other PSB areas, such as Torfaen, who are considering what organizational development approaches may help them. There are several resources available too, such as this [Scottish Insights report](#) and work by [Forum for the Future](#).

It's good to see that you have continued to engage with people as you develop your draft objectives and built on the good work through 'The Wrexham we Want'. As above, involving a range of different people from different walks of life can help to broaden our understanding of an issue and give us ideas of what to do. I hear you have worked really hard to organize different opportunities and levels of engagement and I would encourage you to continue to involve 'unusual suspects' to gain a much richer picture of the effective steps you can take to meet your draft objectives. This will require you, people in positions of leadership, to play your part and be brave in driving the changes needed. I hope you continue to lead an intelligence-based approach to finding different solutions to how things have been previously done.

***Advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft objectives:***

In developing your two draft objectives from the fifteen initial priorities, you looked at the relation of the priorities to three themes of climate change, equality and cohesion. Perhaps building on this work, specifically for the two draft objectives identified, using the definitions of the seven well-being goals, would help you to explore how you can maximize your contribution to each of the goals. At the moment, why you have drawn out certain things is not explained in the 'cross-cutting' themes document used in the prioritization process. If you haven't done so already, I suggest you make this more explicit in your well-being plan e.g. in giving children and young people a healthy start in life, why would ensuring environmental conditions are in place for them to flourish matter? How might this be a preventative action? What long-term impacts are you trying to mitigate? Using the five ways of working to explain this might help to clarify the steps you choose to take.

### [Children and young people are given a healthy start in life:](#)

- [Children and young people have positive mental health and access to services and / or support when they need it;](#)
- [Parents and children and young people are able to make healthy choices.](#)

For each of your draft objectives and the steps you seek to take, I would advise you to be clear about what this means for Wrexham in your well-being planning. What local evidence have you used (or will you use) to understand the specific areas of successful preventative interventions in Wrexham? What local services will be impacted if you redirect investment to the first 1000 days of a child's life? How might taking an adverse childhood experience (ACE) informed approach play out in reality for your organisations?

Prevention is clearly at the centre of this draft objective and this begins with your organisations understanding the long-term effects of the worst start in life. The costs of this are enormous, both to the individual's life and to public services. [Late intervention services for young people are estimated to cost England and Wales £17bn per year](#) (£6bn on child protection and safeguarding, £5.2bn on crime and anti-social behaviour, £3.7bn on youth economic inactivity, £680m on school absence and exclusion, £610m on child injuries and mental health problems, and £450m on youth substance misuse). Taking a whole life cycle approach to this objective is positive because giving children a healthy start in life and encouraging parents to make healthy choices might help you as a PSB to establish the root causes and take action. Equally, understanding the experiences of people who have been through trauma in their lives through involving children and families in shaping services can help in understanding people, and the issues they live with, holistically – rather than as 'a mental health patient' or a 'substance misuse service user'.

Pregnancy and the early years of life are often seen as a 'health issue' but I would advise you to take immediate steps towards better integration of services, co-locating teams, pooling resources and working in a way that makes sense for that community. I would advise you to use the knowledge gathered by Public Health Wales on the 'First 1000 days' of a child's life and the benefits that can be realised from investing in the early years to determine what steps you can take now to improve the well-being of our future generations. Public Health Wales have established a national 'Health and Sustainability Hub' to co-ordinate their own work around the Act and, through your PSB representative, you might find it useful to link with the national team for further evidence and knowledge.

Enabling people to have a healthy start in life is not just down to you, but the families that children grow up in and the communities they live in, as well as the families they then start of their own. So, in considering what steps you might take, the New Economics Foundation work on investing in children might be helpful, which highlights the need to address both material wellbeing and external circumstances – such as housing, poverty, and schooling – as well as psychosocial well-being and inner resources.

I have been working closely with the Children's Commissioner, to produce a toolkit on taking a child's rights approach to maximising contribution to the seven national well-being goals. This toolkit is in development and testing and will be available soon. The Commissioner's office would be happy to advise on engaging with children and young people and taking a child centred approach. Alyson Francis, Director of the ACE Support Hub, has also recently worked with my office to write to you outlining the work of the Hub and offering support to PSBs to translate knowledge and policy into practice. The ACE Support Hub could also act as a central place for PSBs to share practice, as almost all of the PSBs in Wales have discussed early years, children and ACEs in their draft objectives and steps. We are working with the [Good Practice Exchange Wales to run a webinar on understanding ACEs on the 7th November](#), which may be helpful to you in considering your steps for this objective.

As public services, we often treat the symptoms of ACEs, such as mental illness, substance misuse and domestic abuse, rather than the root causes. As you have identified in your well-being assessment, rates of poor mental health and suicide are high in Wrexham. Access to mental health services was something identified by all groups you spoke to and the links to substance misuse, crime and housing needs, are clearly identified throughout your assessment. The Senedd Yr Ifanc were most unhappy with the mental health services and counselling they'd received, access to services was highlighted in different ways by residents in Wrexham and young people identified a need for more support for those young people dealing with self-harm. Much of your engagement during the assessment was around what people think of public services. At the time, I called for greater analysis of what this means, whether there were particular themes for certain localities, what gaps in understanding you had and what would be done as a result. I expect to see this intelligence being explored and used over the coming year to inform your

steps. Dealing with ACEs is as much about having an ACE aware public service and identifying where ACEs have happened, as making sure that services families access are integrated. In the steps you take, it is important to review initiatives that focus on mental health, substance misuse, criminal justice, housing, services and others to ensure they are preventative, joined up and actively seeking to better situations for families and for future parents to stop the cycle continuing to the next generation.

Approximately 50% of people with enduring mental health problems display symptoms by the time they are 14 years old, and many at a much younger age. If the symptoms are there at such an early age – what can be done to prevent the problems at later life? If we know that on average, the NHS spend over £21 million on the prescription of anti-depressants, how can we act earlier? A new report from Respublica and Barnado's, '[Making young minds matter](#)', highlights early interventions (such as in-school counselling in Wales) that can have a positive impact on mental health. I would advise you to involve children and young people in understanding any issues with accessing the right care and support, designing different services and evaluating the effects of this approach. Only by understanding the lived experiences of people can we design services that are fit for current and future generations. The case studies [contained in this report by Locality](#) demonstrate the financial and social costs of not taking this holistic and preventative approach.

The well-being assessment identified that there are health inequalities in your population and the long-term trends for Wrexham, as with much of Wales, suggest levels of health are set to worsen. Evidence suggests that enabling people to make healthy choices is linked to their economic status, their environment and how they connect with others. Collaborating with 'unusual suspects' and involving people in how you take steps to meet this objective will enable you to maximize your contribution to the seven well-being goals. For example, what is the role of culture in enabling children and adults to live healthier lives? How might people take part in cultural activities to help manage their health? [The Arts Council for Wales' strategy](#) outlines some of the benefits involvement in creative activity can have on the population and the [Cultural Commissioning Programme, funded by Arts Council England](#) seeks to help commissioners of public services understand how they can improve outcomes by integrating arts and cultural activities into a range of services, including mental health and wellbeing, older people and place-based commissioning.

Access to the natural environment and the country parks in Wrexham is important for enabling people to be physically active. The [Natural Resources Wales' 'Actif Woods'](#) project has shown the range of positive effects taking regular walks in the natural environment, in a group can have on health and well-being. The area has seven country parks and two nature reserves that need protecting, how can initiatives like Actif Woods be expanded and work with health services in the area to have multiple positive outcomes? As such, models of social prescribing can have multiple benefits, such as taking part in exercise classes can reduce older people's social isolation, as well as helping to prevent falls. This

[study, on social prescribing in Bristol](#), provides information on different models and gives some insight into the improvements in mental and general physical health. The recent BBC documentary, '[The doctor who gave up drugs](#)', showed several examples of how alternative approaches to prescribing pills can have a more holistic, long-lasting positive impact on someone's life – with people getting physically fitter and healthier mentally without the reliance on prescriptions.

Most people will only get involved in something that directly impacts them, their family or the place where they spend time. I praised your well-being assessment for involving people and communities, building on this intelligence will help you to understand the assets, opportunities and barriers of people helping themselves and improving their surroundings. The [Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales' 'Deep Place' study in Tredegar](#) gives evidence on how an understanding of place can have multiple benefits. Often, people becoming involved in something they care about leads to much bigger outcomes – as is shown by the work that '[Nurture Development](#)' do around [Asset Based Community Development](#).

Some of this is about encouraging behaviour change in your population, which many reports have found 'sticks' when people are involved in wider social and cultural activities together; for example, the [Nudjed 'Behaviour Change is a Team Sport'](#) report found getting people together increased exercise patterns. Their work has included successfully working with young mums in the South Wales Valleys to get them involved in more physical activity. Again, this is an opportunity to improve access to cultural activities and promote heritage, use of the Welsh language and encourage people to get together around a local cause. I would advise the PSB to find and involve these existing networks, build on these successes and encourage existing community activists. In this respect, you should consider what role your local Community Councils play in taking steps to help you.

Many PSBs have shared draft objectives or priorities with my team relating to children having a good start in life and health outcomes. You may want to contact other PSB areas considering similar draft objectives, such as Bridgend, Monmouthshire, Ynys Mon and Gwynedd; and Carmarthenshire.

**All people have the opportunity to learn and develop throughout their lives:**

- **Achievement levels for children and young people are improved;**
- **Appropriate support is available to enable people to access learning opportunities.**

As your well-being assessment identifies, improving opportunities to learn, achieve and develop could have positive impacts on other aspects of people's lives in Wrexham. Our current approach to developing skills will not deliver the knowledge base that a prosperous Wales will need for future generations. In the future, people will need different skill-sets to adapt within their jobs and, it is likely there will be fewer jobs, so a different kind of economy where people can thrive will be necessary.

You have identified that there are pockets of deprivation in the county and a significant gap between attainment of those receiving free school meals in school and those who do not. Whilst providing opportunities for people to learn and develop is no bad thing, enabling people to take full advantage of these opportunities is most important. Therefore, I would advise that you need to dig deeper into the data here and understand the full causes of achievement levels not improving at pace before setting steps to how you might meet this draft objective. Ask yourselves, what would really make a difference to the learning and development of people in Wrexham throughout their lives? What other things are having an impact of people's life chances that you, as public services, can prevent?

A study in Newcastle should be of interest to you in this respect. [Social Finance](#) are a not-for-profit organisation who specialise in in-depth analysis and looking at social return on investment, and were commissioned by Newcastle City Council to do some deeper digging for them to help them address the problem with NEETs (those Not in Education, Employment and Training). Whilst traditional focus looks at GCSE attainment, what this analysis shows in reality is that academic achievement is not the most significant factor at all, instead showing that 67% of 17-19 year olds who were NEET had come from the 25% of 17-19 year olds who had multiple contacts with social services during their childhood. The research showed that those who had had as little as six interactions with social services spent almost three times longer out of education or training.

How might people engage with learning opportunities in the future? The current model of attending a classroom environment is unlikely to continue, with online learning becoming increasingly popular and research showing that children aged between five and 16 years spend an average of six and a half hours a day in front of a screen and [28% of young people use social](#) media as their primary news source. What sort of changes might you need to make to your organisational systems and policies to enable better remote learning and development?

I would also advise you to look at the influence you can have as public sector providers in these areas across the seven national well-being goals. For example, what learning or employment opportunities can you offer, such as collaborative apprenticeship schemes, to local people far removed from the job market? How can you encourage learning and jobs in the foundational economy, around local care, retail and food industries? A [recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) highlights the value of the social economy in creating jobs, strengthening skills and employability.

Equally, this draft objective requires collaboration with a number of partners that may not be involved in the work of your PSB currently. I am aware that Glyndwr University are taking a lead role for this objective and I would encourage collaboration with other high education institutions and close working with Coleg Cambria – as well as seeking to work with private businesses in the area. Thinking long-term, what skills might our students need now to equip them for the future? I can see that the achievement of

an advanced diploma for students in Wrexham undertaking the Welsh BaccaLaureate is over 7% higher this year. The qualification provides opportunities for volunteering and gaining life skills, how can this be adapted to link with community initiatives? The [Future of Work report](#) suggests that creativity, connectivity, communication and problem-solving will be far more important than specific knowledge, with more project-based work in the future – rather than set employment. Furthermore, the report predicts that 65 percent of the children who are now starting school will find themselves working jobs as adults that don't even exist yet. [And, according to McKinsey](#), technology could automate 45 percent of the tasks people are currently paid to do. What social responsibilities have the private sector adopted in the area? Can these be directed towards more deprived communities? How are businesses coming together to drive positive, long-term change?

I commented on your well-being assessment that greater regional links could be made to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. For this objective, regional links and links across the border is vital and I will be looking for acknowledgement of this in your well-being plan. How is the work of this Board integrated with the work of the PSB? The Board must produce a regional skills and employment plan; I would advise you to encourage that the value of this Board is not just placed on economic growth but on developing patterns of employment and work that are fit for the future, investing in the most deprived communities of the region to encourage skills in technology, creativity and problem-solving to break inter-generational patterns of poverty. Your well-being assessment also notes that around a quarter of workers commute outside of Wrexham, as well as highlighting a complex pattern of in and out commuting, as a border county. This provides opportunities to collaborate with different partners to enable people to access different opportunities outside of county.

For such a complex issue, integration across the seven well-being goals is particularly important in how you take steps to meet this draft objective and might help you to think of alternative approaches to growing skills and the economy. For instance, [the recent Wildlife Trust Wales report](#) on green infrastructure examined the links between green infrastructure and economic growth, emphasising that it attracts inward investment, creates tourism opportunities and increases visitor spend. The Wales Coastal Path, for example, attracted nearly three million visitors and was worth an estimated £16m to the Welsh economy between 2011 and 2012. Furthermore, the health benefits of living with a view of green space are worth up to £300 per person per year. Your well-being assessment identified that tourism is growing for the area and the environmental assets provide an opportunity to grow tourism and retain young people's skills in the area. [This World Economic Forum article](#) suggests that community initiatives that spark tourism for the area provide a sense of pride and ownership for the young people, as they tell others about their heritage and start small scale businesses that benefit from tourism.

How might you provide opportunities for skills development and learning while building on the cultural assets of the area? Often, getting people involved in learning a new skill takes the form of a cultural

activity and with many opportunities in the area, through further and higher education institutions and the new Oriel Wrecsam project, how can you work together to invest in this? Similarly, some areas of the county enjoy high levels of Welsh speakers, a skill to be celebrated and grown across Wales. What opportunities are there for you to collaborate with others in growing and encouraging the use of the language, developing skills and learning for future generations? The Welsh Language Commissioner's team and national bodies, such as the National Museum for Wales, Arts Council for Wales and National Library could provide you with some ideas of how you might take steps to do this.

Other PSBs considering similar draft objectives around growing skills, enabling people to access opportunities and reach their potential are Ceredigion, Newport and Powys.

**I hope you have found this advice helpful in moving forward towards publishing a well-being plan for formal consultation. Please get in touch with my team if you want further contact details for any of the organisations and reports mentioned in this letter.**

I am also learning the best ways to advise, support and monitor how public bodies are seeking to apply the five ways of working and maximise their contribution to the seven well-being goals, so I would welcome any feedback from you, supporting officers and the Wrexham PSB Scrutiny Committee on how I have chosen to approach this statutory duty and the advice I have given.

I look forward to receiving your draft well-being plan and please keep in touch with me and my team.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe