

By email

04/10/2017

Advice from the Future Generations Commissioner to Neath Port Talbot PSB

Dear Neath Port Talbot 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. My team have found regular conversations with your supporting officers, attending workshops of the PSB and the opportunity of attending your Public Services Board (PSB) meeting very helpful in giving them an understanding of how you work together as a 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.

Over the last fourteen weeks, you have been developing the following draft objectives and themes, which I am using as the basis for this advice:

- (Protect/safeguard) Children in their early years, especially children at risk of adverse childhood experiences.
- (Create) Safe, confident and resilient communities, (with a particular focus on vulnerable people).
- (Encourage) Ageing well.
- (Promote) Well-being through the workplace.
- With a cross-cutting priority of: Recognising and promoting the role of green infrastructure to support the economic, social and cultural well-being of the people of Neath Port Talbot.

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 to maximise their contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals. My advice is in two parts – firstly, to help you consider how you might do this effectively. Secondly, based on your themes and draft objectives it provides prompts, resources and contacts to help you demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working and seven well-being goals to shape your steps. 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.

I would encourage you to read this in conjunction with my response to your well-being assessment. I was keen that it was a 'feed-forward', rather than 'feedback', helping you to consider how to approach continuous assessment and well-being planning. As you know, I have recently published ['Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow'](#), which highlights key findings and recommendations for all PSBs and public bodies on the key areas of change needed to make better decisions for future generations. Both of these resources are also intended as advice to you.

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

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. 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? The goals 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, so what are you going to do differently together? And, how you are applying the sustainable development principle to shape your actions for Neath Port Talbot?

To adapt your ways of working in this way requires a fundamentally different approach. Academi Wales' [Sustainable Futures Architecture](#) articulates succinctly how leadership behaviours need to change. You could use this framework to help explore your board's own behaviours and how you can change. As such, you need to give yourselves the time and space as a PSB 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 am advising that PSBs take a dedicated meeting or create sessions for each of your draft objectives to be discussed.

I know you have been holding workshops to bring people together around developing steps to meet your draft objectives. Similar future sessions need to use the five ways of working as a method of challenging the approaches that have gone before and the seven well-being goals as a framework for looking at how you can have an impact in many different forms of well-being. These sessions, and those of the PSB, have to be focused on action. Meetings need to be more than a polite discussion if you are going to take a different approach, with partners being clear on the actions they have responsibility for, the approach you will take together and the steps you will take to meet your objectives and maximise contribution to the seven national well-being goals. I would like to understand what each draft objective and step you are setting means for Neath Port Talbot and how this is a different way of working to what you have done before.

***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? What are they and have you explored their impact on your steps? Are there current gaps in



your data or understanding? What fore-sighting 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 through Objective Connect or by contacting David Thomas. [The Oxford Martin 'Now for the long-term'](#) report shows global and national future trends that we all need to react to in carrying out sustainable development.

- **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 and where 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. I appreciate you might not know the full picture yet, but 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:** I am also pleased to hear that you are considering the different relationships between national, regional and local structures and considering where the most effective interventions may need to happen in order to address the issues you have identified in your assessment of well-being. I acknowledge that this process is complicated but 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 an 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 your objectives?

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? I am pleased to hear that in your discussions you have started to consider the interconnections between your emerging objectives to help inform your decisions about the most effective steps and would urge you to continue to do this deliberately and explicitly. 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 and lead with others on achieving this objective? As a PSB, have you yet acknowledged the barriers or tensions that have arisen 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:** Your well-being assessment involved a wide range of people. I want to see a demonstrated focus now from PSBs of going beyond the usual consultation and ad-hoc engagement. At present, it's not clear how residents are involved in the development of your well-being objectives and steps. How are you seeking 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?

Your support officers have worked hard to help you achieve this level of progress in assessing well-being for the area, synthesising this evidence into high-level themes and drafting your emerging objectives and steps, but I must emphasise that it is your leadership that is required to adopt a new way of working. I know you have used the goals to help form your objectives, but they are also there to help you to explore the tensions and opportunities of working together to achieve a better public service for Wales.

As leaders, I am sure that you are part of many partnership structures, meetings and initiatives, but the PSB is meant to be the opportunity for integration and collaboration at a senior and influential level. To create ownership and collaborative action at PSB, you need to build understanding and respect for each other's professions and debate your motivations. I have made the recommendation in 'Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow' that we move away from seeing PSBs as a local authority-led committee meeting –

as a place of action, not a place of interesting presentations. The PSB should be about a new way of working, not driven by any one organisation's culture. The Chair of the PSB, how and where meetings are held and how the PSB is supported can all shift mindsets and allow for healthier challenge to 'business as usual'.

This leadership and partnership working permeates at every level of your member organisations. Consistency in representation and how you take messages back from PSB to your own organisations is critical to building relationships and creating action. Communicating why the work of the PSB matters to your own senior management teams and using the well-being plan to challenge current practices within your own departments is crucial to creating the culture change you have highlighted in your discussions with my team. I have a role to recognise and mitigate barriers, but so do you – as senior leaders, in challenging your managers to work differently and be 'safe to fail'.

Alongside this, you will also need to demonstrate how each of your organisations are taking all reasonable steps in the exercising of their functions to meet the PSB's objectives. I appreciate that during the first phases of implementation of the Act this may be challenging as the objectives of individual public bodies have been set. So, whilst I am sympathetic to the needs of PSBs and public bodies to have time to work towards alignment I will want to see that the work of the PSB is not seen as something separate to the priorities of its member bodies. I am encouraged that you have acknowledged this and recognise that you need to understand existing partnership and organisational arrangements to make some changes. Other PSBs seeking to create organisational change through their objectives include Torfaen, who are looking at organisational development in the context of the Act, Pembrokeshire, Caerphilly and Cardiff - you may wish to engage directly with them to share ideas and learning.

It follows that co-ordinating this work needs to be recognised by all of you as members of the PSB. I am interested in how different PSBs are supported and it appears that when support is multi-agency, resourced and committed to by different partners, collaboration and integration across departments and structures becomes easier. As with other areas, you now have a regional officer to co-ordinate this work, which is positive but some PSBs are already adopting closer working arrangements, a multi-agency virtual team with a senior leader or more formal secondments and co-location. There are several resources that may be of use, such as [Designing Multi-Agency Partnerships](#); [Leading Culture Change](#) and [Stepping up: a framework for public sector leadership on sustainability](#). This will require you, people in positions of leadership, to play your part and be brave in driving the changes needed.

This advice should be taken by all PSBs, but I appreciate every PSB has taken a different approach to drafting their well-being objectives and will be going about delivering their well-being plan in the context that is right for them. The second section my advice seeks to help you demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working and seven well-being goals to shape your steps.

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

From the regular conversations you have had with my team, I know your supporting officers have worked hard over the summer to draw on your assessment findings, prioritise issues through engaging with you and engaging with others to gather professional knowledge to draft your objectives and steps. This section of my advice is intended to give you ideas, information and contacts that might help to demonstrate how you have considered the steps you will take in the context of Neath Port Talbot.

I would encourage you to build on developing inter-connections between the themes and objectives in agreeing and delivering your steps to meet these objectives. It is important that you consider how your objectives both individually and as a collective set, maximise their contribution to all the well-being goals and not just make links to a smaller number of well-being goals where there is a clear and direct connection. For example, I can't currently see reference to improving economic well-being in Neath Port Talbot. How will Britain's exit from the EU impact on programmes of funding? What opportunities are there with the Swansea Bay City Deal to improve the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of the region? For each of your objectives, you will need to set them in the context of Neath Port Talbot, rather than general terms. By exploring connections to all the well-being goals, you will not only gain a more holistic picture of the issue you are trying to resolve but you also can maximise the range of resources and opportunities you can draw on to help you find solutions.

- *Children in their early years, especially children at risk of adverse childhood experiences.*

You have rightly identified in your assessment that children who experience stressful and difficult childhoods are more likely to have poor well-being later in life. Most PSBs have drafted objectives linked to this topic and I would like to understand, in taking steps to meet their objective, what's going to change at all levels to make this happen? How will services aimed at prospective parents and families change in Neath Port Talbot to provide children with the best start in life? What local evidence will you use to understand the successful service models and the preventative interventions that work? How might focusing on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) as a PSB play out in reality for your organisations and services? Who might you need to involve to understand this better? Who needs to be around the table to make it happen?

Have you considered the long-term trends of this objective? The complex socio-economic situations in many communities in Wales would suggest that families are not receiving the right support at the right time, and cycles are continuing to the next generation. The costs of the worst start in life 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). Prevention is at the core of this objective and I would advise that your organisations recognise it is part of all of their responsibilities to prevent poor outcomes. Of course, this objective is about prevention and breaking the cycle, which not only relates to children yet to be born but those families already in need and young people likely to become parents. I am also encouraging PSBs to think about what this draft objective means in the context of the seven well-being goals. The Public Health Wales' [First 1000](#)



[days](#) work shows how investing in a child's life from the very beginning can have benefits to all areas of their well-being.

I know you have started to progress a 'Children's Community' pilot in the ward area of Sandfields West. If this is to be one of your steps to meeting this draft objective, you must show your workings as part of your well-being plan. Currently, the draft actions you have set out to begin the pilot are business as usual, they do not fundamentally challenge the way that things are already done. Here, you need to use your influence and collaboration with one another to make change happen. As I have said above, this means taking action - not just talking about current provision.

Taking a place-based approach can be beneficial in focusing efforts and funding opportunities on a geographical place. It's important, therefore, that this is a wider focus than just children and ACEs, as you will inevitably impact these if you focus on understanding the area, its assets and its limitations as the people who live there do. This approach should be more about the integration of services and providing preventative support to families and young people. What evidence have you used to determine a pilot approach in this area? As I said in my feedback to your well-being assessment, a better explanation of the diversity of your communities is needed – particularly as you go about developing steps on a place-based method. How have the people of Sandfields West been involved in developing this approach? Do they see themselves as a distinct community or is it a false electoral boundary? How have, or will, the assets of the area been explored beyond what public services exist and more about the heart and soul of the community? The [Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales' 'Deep Place' study in Tredegar](#) gives evidence on how an understanding of place can have multiple benefits on well-being and the Royal Town Planning Institute's report on '[Poverty, Place and Inequality](#)', includes several recommendations around why place-based approaches are key to tackling inequality between and within communities.

Steps to meet this objective have to be much wider than what early years, education or health services can do. Your well-being assessment highlights that child poverty affects almost a third of children in Neath Port Talbot. A [2013 review carried out by the London School of Economics for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) found that children in lower-income families have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes. Crucially, this study demonstrated that it was in part because they are poorer, not just because low income is correlated with other household and parental characteristics. How can the PSB collaborate with others to improve the economic well-being of families across the region? If we know that by the time children in some areas reach reception class in school, the circumstances of where they live already affects well-being, then we need to be intervening at a much earlier stage in responding to these trends.

As such, it is time that we stopped seeing pregnancy and early years purely as a 'health' issue, and explore the opportunities that exist in challenging current service delivery with this objective as a focus and the seven national well-being goals as a guide. Children live within families, that live within communities and they access many services. As you have acknowledged, many factors exist outside the health of a family that impact on giving children the best start in life. The [New Economics Foundation 'Backing the Future' report](#) highlights how we have

a role in addressing both material well-being and external circumstances – such as housing, poverty, and schooling – as well as psychosocial well-being and inner resources.

Poverty, abuse, discrimination and other forms of disadvantage can have long-lasting effects on children and young people's well-being and can severely impact their prospects of securing a prosperous, healthy, safe and socially active future. Childhood is a key window of opportunity and the positive interventions Wales puts in place now to protect and provide for children will help to secure a more prosperous, healthy and cohesive future for Wales. I have been working with the Children's Commissioner to advise that public bodies and PSBs should give a greater focus to children's rights and well-being in their ongoing assessment work and well-being planning. A focus on children's rights can help PSBs in consultation, decision-making and programme-planning. This would include developing a children's rights policy focus, enabling children to learn about their rights and empowering them to play an active role in their communities. To support this work, a toolkit is being tested and will be available before the end of the year. The Children's Commissioner's office would be happy to advise on engaging with children and young people and taking a child-rights approach to securing well-being for future generations.

The work on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) provides us with the evidence to show how children's long-term well-being is affected by events of situations in their childhood. Taking a preventative approach means shifting resources to deal with root causes. Although having workforces that are ACE-aware, able to spot warning signs and provide some support is important; this goes beyond that to making sure that services people access are integrated, to break the cycle. As a PSB focusing on early years, you need 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.

As public services, we often treat the symptoms of ACEs, such as mental illness, substance misuse and domestic abuse, rather than the root causes. Taking a preventative approach means shifting resources to deal with root issues. You have an opportunity to take this wider approach in your pilot 'Children's Community'. Alyson Francis, Director of the ACE Support Hub, has recently worked with my office to write to you outlining that ACEs are not another thing to do, but an opportunity to reconsider how we deliver services together that make sense for the families receiving them. The ACE Support Hub could also act as a central place for PSBs to share practice, as most PSBs have identified draft objectives connected to early years, giving children a good start in life and preventing ACEs. My team listened to the feedback of your support officers and have worked with the Good Practice Exchange Wales to create a [webinar on understanding ACEs](#) on the 7th November, which may be helpful to you in considering your steps for this objective. Alyson Francis and I will both be on the panel and questions can be provided to us live.

Understanding the lived experiences of people who have been through trauma in their lives also gives a fresh perspective on shaping preventative services. Currently, our services are often not set up in a way that make sense for people to help themselves. We deal with people in neat 'service-user' categories, such as 'domestic abuse victim', 'anti-social behaviour perpetrator', 'substance misuser', 'problem tenant', which often create



barriers for people to have equality of opportunity or outcome. This approach means we fail to join up the dots, to integrate and to spot signs of a worsening situation. We often can't see how our services are unequal in the way they are set up and, how people most in need can't access them in the way they need to.

The five ways of working are intended to challenge how we currently do things and provide a different lens as a whole public service for dealing with problems. Involving people is central to challenging the system because only by understanding the lived experiences of people can we design services that are fit for current and future generations. This example ['Why poor people don't plan long-term'](#) provides an insight into the barriers people face in overcoming inequality and the case studies [contained in this report by Locality](#) demonstrate the financial and social costs of not taking this holistic and preventative approach to people's lives. Seeing things from other people's perspectives, from all walks of life, will help you to contribute to a more equal Neath Port Talbot. I'd like to see you reflecting on this in developing steps to meet this objective and piloting your work in Sandfields West.

Most PSBs have identified draft objectives connected to early years, giving children a good start in life and preventing ACEs including Cwm Taf, Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Conwy / Denbighshire.

- ***Safe, confident and resilient communities, (with a particular focus on vulnerable people).***

Your well-being assessment highlighted that people feel that there is a sense of community spirit in Neath Port Talbot and strongly associated their well-being with friends, family and a good community. As I said in my feedback to your well-being assessment, interpreting the spatial differences between different communities in Neath Port Talbot is important in understanding where public services can be of most use. I know you are also considering the impact of regional working – through the Valleys Taskforce; the Swansea and Cardiff City Regions; and regional footprints, such as the Regional Partnership Board. It is important to remember that you can influence each other and what goes on locally, as well as look outwards and influence what else is happening regionally and nationally. For example, in addressing this objective, how will you be tasking the Social Services and Well-being Regional Partnership Board in taking steps to meet it? As a collective, what conversations are you having with Swansea and Cardiff City Deal Partnerships to discuss the potential benefits for Neath Port Talbot?

Although this objective very much interconnects with your other three draft objectives, I feel it is most important that you dig deeper into the data here and understand what you are trying to affect. Vulnerability can mean many different things, and I know my team have already advised that you should be seeking to plan from an asset based approach as much as possible that seeks to reduce vulnerability through your draft objectives and steps.

As I said in my response to your assessment, how much have you looked at the strength of the community sector in supporting social well-being, the nature of social networks, the social fabric of towns and villages? How can the vibrancy of culture around the arts, language, social networks, cultural activities, local food and drink, agricultural shows, information networks and volunteering help to connect communities? In order to do this, you must involve people in taking steps to meet this objective. Listen to what people have told you about their

communities and collaborate to find solutions using the seven well-being goals. I would advise each of your organisations to commit to the National Participation Standards and [Participation Cymru](#) can support your officers in gaining the skills vital for effective and meaningful involvement. [Co-production Network Wales](#) could help you to identify and engage community leaders.

As leaders of local agencies, you have a key role to play in promoting and supporting community cohesiveness, given your role in community leadership and support, and role in community capacity building through, for example, facilitating networking and coordination, and providing training for community groups and employees. The research documented in '[What Works in Community Cohesion](#)' provides a useful reference for PSBs on the different dimensions of community cohesion. Ask yourselves if current provision is appropriate to manage increasing vulnerability? Are these issues currently managed adequately and in what areas might they need more collective or preventative action? What impact does perceptions of safety have on people's ability to access services or play an active role in their communities? How do levels of volunteering differ across the county? How involved are volunteers in the work of the PSB?

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 your communities. Some people access many services and better integrating these provisions would help them to help themselves. The idea of 'community hubs' is becoming more widespread and examples such as the [Bromley by Bow Centre in East London](#); [Leeds Neighbourhood Networks](#) and [Solva Care](#) demonstrate innovative initiatives that focus on the needs of the community first and integrate services to improve well-being. The third sector also have useful knowledge on-linking people with local activities and services in their area and helping them to stay active and well. [WCVA produced wider information](#) on how the third sector play a role in contributing to the seven well-being goals.

Most people will only get involved in something that directly impacts them, their family or the place where they spend time and, often, this can lead to much bigger outcomes - shown by the work that '[Nurture Development](#)' [do around Asset Based Community Development](#). Have you also considered how you might connect with people in the future? What sort of changes might you need to make to your organisational systems and policies to enable people to get more involved in communities and shape local services? Currently, research shows that children aged between five and 16 years spend an average of six and a half hours a day in front of a screen; [28% of young people use social media](#) as their primary news source; [43% of 'millennials' are driven to make financial donations through social channels](#). Although some people are currently offline, and there is clearly a need for a tailored approach, there is a real opportunity to engage with people that is most convenient to them and is part of their daily life, not an additional chore. "[Monmouthshire Made Open](#)" is an example of an online platform that has anticipated how people might contribute to improving their area in the future, with opportunities to share ideas, ask the community, start a project and seek volunteers or resources. Matthew Gatehouse, working with Monmouthshire PSB, would be able to share their learning with you on establishing this website.

Vulnerability can mean several things; both picked up in your first and third draft objectives. For instance, your assessment shows how mental health has connections to substance misuse, housing issues, children's outcomes in life and many other aspects of well-being. 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? Cardiff [have trialled mental health lessons for children](#) and 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.

A number of PSBs are drafting objectives to develop strong social networks, introduce behaviour change, develop community connectedness and safety including the Vale of Glamorgan; Newport; Powys; Cwm Taf; and Monmouthshire.

- *Ageing well.*

I know you have started to consider how you can collaborate better as organisations to meet increasing demand from an older population, set to continue into the future. I am encouraged to also see recognition that older people are an asset – contributing to the economy, providing unpaid care, skills and volunteering. The work of the [Older People's Commissioner](#) is particularly helpful in exploring the steps you could take to meet this objective and includes her recent guidance to PSBs. Now that you have draft objectives and are considering your response, I would advise that you dig deeper into the data and, as with your other objectives, task other partnerships working in this area to integrate their work with the PSB. Think differently about how you work together on all of your objectives. Currently, your response to this objective is also business as usual – I want to see PSBs in a 'safe to fail' space, getting out there and trying new things rather than talking about existing initiatives in Council committee rooms. I was impressed to hear that some of you had taken a strategic lead for objectives, even when they were not immediately in your expertise and that this was bringing a fresh perspective to the response analysis. I'd encourage that this continues and you remove artificial organisational and professional knowledge barriers to collaborate for innovative solutions.

As such, how are you considering your own roles in responding to the challenges of demographic change? I am keen to see PSBs looking at preventative and asset-based approaches to their draft objectives. Currently, social services and health are barely dealing with the current demand and, unfortunately, many are looking at traditional models of resourcing 'crisis' intervention to deal with this. This is where the five ways of working should be challenging your thinking and I will be interested in seeing how you influence and task the Social Services and Well-being Regional Partnership Board in delivering your response to your objectives. [This report by the Young Foundation](#) provides inspiration on 'Innovating better ways of living late in life', challenging the

traditional siloes we are working in. Creating flexible and age friendly communities and environments can prevent people from needing social care, from becoming isolated, from suffering ill-health or having an accident at home.

Research [by Ageing Well Wales](#) suggests that loneliness in older people is both about how connected people are to their communities physically and about feeling purposeful in society, affecting their mental and physical health. Although technology is not going to provide all of the answers to isolation, think about the long-term impact it could have on our population. The older people of tomorrow are the younger people of today, who have far more technological skills at their fingertips. In our sharing economy, could there be solutions around carpooling or community transport connected to social media? How can technology help older people to feel safe at home? Plus, there are already examples of drones delivering medical supplies, video calling instead of GP appointments and virtual classrooms happening now. The '[Hypervillage](#)' concept developed by FutureScape imagines villages connected by their assets, [encouraging people in rural communities to capitalise on technology](#). How have you thought about the long-term possibilities of employing technological solutions for this issue?

You have a role in planning, housing and transportation of creating places that are adaptable and able to change for at least the next two generations. Wales has an opportunity to develop housing that better meets demographic change, adopting technology to allow people to live independently for longer. The [Welsh Government has launched a £20 million innovative housing fund](#). Over the next two years, the fund will support both the supply of affordable housing and the improvement of the quality of housing that is delivered. PSBs should be seeking to influence how this fund is utilised and understand the impact it has on Wales to inform their long-term steps on housing. Programmes like the [World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities](#) initiative have encouraged and recognised those cities that have made themselves more age-friendly adapting buildings, transport and planning rules, which enable older people to stay healthy and connected to things that matter to them for longer; [Laguna woods](#), the first city exclusively for older people in the US and the Marjala suburbs in Finland are examples of design suited to multiple abilities. As well as responsibilities around planning and designing infrastructure, there are numerous innovative global projects encouraging co-housing, supported housing and homeshares. [Students are living rent free in nursing homes](#) in exchange for socialising and providing basic care to the older residents; Australia and New Zealand have introduced '[HomeShare](#)' schemes, and, as part of their national government's demography strategy, [Germany](#) has introduced intergenerational housing for older people and young families in need. In Singapore, young people are given a \$50,000 grant if they move within 1km of their aged grandparents. These are all innovations that are proving to have an impact and, with the number of older people increasing at a fast pace, what is the consequence of doing nothing?

This demonstrates the intrinsic link between your community environment and your well-being. As the Ageing Well in Wales research states, isolation is as much about being physically alone as feeling a part of something. Some research suggests that [just 5% of those over 65 years old](#) have any form of structured contact with younger people. [Intergenerational projects are shown to have benefits](#) for young and old, with both older and younger people taking on the role of mentor. How can you collaborate to create more opportunities for people to come together? How can increased involvement improve the health of older people in your area? The recent report

['Health and Wellbeing in Rural Areas'](#) produced by Public Health England and the Local Government Association highlights issues of rurality in England, but also includes several useful case studies, such as the Fish Well Improvement project in Norfolk, that aims to improve health and well-being in these local areas. [Solva Community Council](#) in Pembrokeshire are an interesting example of how volunteers and older residents have benefited from a scheme to reduce isolation and improve well-being. In some parts of Wales, the third sector are acting as community connectors (funded through the Intermediate Care Fund) to help vulnerable people of all ages access things in their community and prevent the need for statutory services. There are many good examples of projects that seek to bring people together to learn new skills, socialise and build their resilience in later life, like [Men's Sheds Cymru](#), happening across Wales that the PSB could encourage and support.

Continuing to learn through life has been proven to have benefits for people's mental and physical well-being, as well as social well-being. There is a real opportunity here for you to consider how you maximise your contribution to the well-being goals. How can you encourage activities that promote art, culture, learning the Welsh language, caring for natural habitats, creating community food growing initiatives, for instance, that help with people's well-being? Looking to the long term, how can these activities prevent some of the preventable ill-health people are suffering that compromises their independence? Again, collaborating with the national public bodies subject to the Act could be of help here; please let my team know if you would like to connect with relevant individuals in these organisations.

Other PSBs with similar objectives include Conwy / Denbighshire, Monmouthshire, Cardiff, Ynys Mon and Gwynedd and Newport.

- [Well-being through the workplace.](#)

I have advised every PSB that the change begins with them and their own organisations; so I am encouraged to see that you are considering how you can have an impact on the well-being of your employees. As public services, you employ a significant chunk of the population of Neath Port Talbot and many of your workers will have families living in the area also. I advise that you start with the seven areas of change in the Act to think about what impact you can have: corporate planning, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, assets, performance management and risk are the core organisational activities where applying the five ways of working would ensure the sustainable development principle frames how you work. I would also advise you to appreciate the influence you can have over other organisations too. In general, I would advise that as public service leaders, you consider what actions you can take or influence to meet this objective and maximise your contribution to each of the seven well-being goals. You will need to be clear about how you have reflected on the full definitions of each of the well-being goals.

There are many different ways of taking steps to meet this objective and examples across the world of innovative approaches. It not only makes financial sense (the conservative cost of work-related ill health in Wales is £500m per year) but improves well-being for the residents of Neath Port Talbot. The [Sunday Times compile an annual list of the 100 best companies](#) to work for; with the ability to filter by which ones are top for 'well-being' and



countries like [Sweden](#) have been ahead of Britain in how they ensure their staff are well and working to their best abilities. Closer to home, the collaboration between Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and Cardiff University, '[Healthy Working Wales](#)', is full of resources and guides to helping you collaborate in creating a well workforce. 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.

Evidence suggests that enabling people to make healthy choices is linked to their economic status, their environment and how they connect with others. You have identified from your engagement activity that people view social activities as being important to well-being. Change often '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. How does this relate to your other objectives and high-level themes? Can activities to address community resilience and isolation and loneliness help people to live healthier lives?

How can improving the natural environment also help manage their health? As I'm sure you've recognised there are opportunities for you to work with organisations such as the National Trust and Wildlife Trusts to develop a county-wide approach. The [Natural Resources Wales' 'Actif Woods'](#) project is an example of getting people outside, protecting their environment and enjoying the positive effects on health and well-being. How can you involve other 'unusual suspects' in exploring the steps to meet this objective? How can the third sector feel empowered to help? 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.

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 build their confidence and capacity? [The Arts Council for Wales' strategy](#), outlines some of the benefits involvement in creative activity can have on the health, cohesion and skills of the population. 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 well-being, older people and place-based commissioning. Collaborating with the national public bodies subject to the Act, such as Sport Wales, Arts Council for Wales, National Museums of Wales and National Library of Wales, may be able to help you see how your steps to meet this objective could maximise contribution to each of the goals. Understanding how increasing the use of the Welsh language in your communities can also improve feelings of belonging, cohesion and reduce isolation. The Welsh Language Commissioner's team have been working with us on the best way to support PSBs contribute to '[Cymraeg 2050](#)'.



Other PSBs seeking to improve health, improve prevention include Blaenau Gwent; Ceredigion; Ynys Mon and Gwynedd.

- *Recognising and promoting the role of green infrastructure to support the economic, social and cultural well-being of the people of Neath Port Talbot.*

The green and blue infrastructure in Neath Port Talbot is highly valued and with rivers, green spaces, forests and parks, it is a great asset to you. I am pleased to hear that your initial response template acknowledged the multiple benefits of having a good quality natural environment, the important economic role it has through the development of tourism and sustainable energy infrastructure, but also the positive impact it has on physical and mental health, as well as mitigating the effects of extreme weather and climate change. There are many opportunities to be realised in celebrating the natural environment of Neath Port Talbot, but also risks in the form of extreme weather, loss of habitat and biodiversity.

As my team have already advised, the change demanded by the Well-being of Future Generations Act starts with you and your own ways of working. As with all of your objectives, I would strongly advise you to consider how your own policies and workplaces contribute to delivering your plan. I am encouraged that you are considering well-being in the workplace, as large employers for the people of Neath Port Talbot. With higher education represented on your Board and Town and Community Councils, how can you involve students, members of the community and business owners in your well-being policies? How can this connect to green infrastructure and the natural environment?

I would advise you to think about your own roles in protecting this environment for future generations, which will need to be clear in the steps you will take to meet this objective. Think about the seven corporate functions outlined in the Act; for example, you have a large amount of public estate. How can you plan, design and locate future developments (as part of your Local Development Plan) in a way that contributes to a more globally responsible Wales and a resilient Wales? You should explore what tangible actions you can take, such as how you refurbish buildings, improve infrastructure and locate public spaces, which can have a positive impact on well-being. [The Closing the Circle](#) report on the circular economy and the Welsh Environment is a useful report by Constructing Excellence in Wales. It demonstrates a potential economic opportunity of an additional £1 billion per annum by 2035 through the practical application of circular economy principles and give practical examples in where the public sector can look to minimise waste and resources in future projects. This is an increase of 12.5 per cent in the turnover of the Welsh built environment sector and generates 7,300 jobs (gross). You can also take inspiration from some of the projects mentioned in the recent [Constructing Excellence Awards](#), such as the Active Classroom. Having a consideration of how 'green' these buildings are, both in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction, is a quick win for you as a PSB.

What can you do, as Chief Executive, Chair or Leader, now to mitigate the effects of our loss of environment and be more globally responsible? Air quality is of particular concern for your county, largely due to the steelworks

and to traffic levels. It is pleasing to hear that levels have improved in recent years, but you must think about the long-term impacts of this on future generations. Although the public sector only accounts for a relatively small amount of Wales' emissions, you are uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely in areas such as transport, energy, land use and procurement. [The Welsh Government recently published](#) carbon emission levels subdivided by Local Authority and also released a [Call for Evidence](#) to explore the most effective mechanisms for achieving a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. I will be hosting an event on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, in partnership with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to: explore how the public services in Wales can involve people in collaborating and integrating their work, to take greater account of the long-term carbon implications of their activities, and help prevent the effects of climate change becoming even worse.

The UK has pledged to have zero emissions by 2050 and every Welsh Government has pledged for more green jobs. But despite Wales being a place of great potential in providing natural energy, only 10% of Wales' electricity in 2013 was provided through renewable energy. Last year, the National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee produced '[A Smarter Energy Future for Wales](#)', with 19 recommendations for how Wales could transform its approach to energy. More recently, Smart Energy GB have produced a report on '[A Smart Energy Future for Rural Areas](#)', giving examples and case studies of rural areas across the UK who are making that transition. You may find this [seminar](#) from the National Assembly for Wales' Research Service and the Learned Society for Wales, provides insights from the leading energy experts in Wales and their thoughts on the future of renewable energy in Wales. [The Policy Forum for Wales](#) keynote seminar takes place on the 7<sup>th</sup> December this year, with a focus on priorities for energy policy, growing the sector in Wales and increasing investment in renewables.

This is an opportunity to maximise your contribution to the seven well-being goals and create interconnections between your objectives. The [Wildlife Trust in Wales report into green infrastructure](#) outlines how green infrastructure delivers a wide range of proven, tangible, and cost-effective economic, social and environmental benefits. The [Design Commission for Wales](#) also has case studies and resources on design that focuses on users, maximises energy efficiency and has been shown to significantly improve patient recovery in health. In each of these areas my office can connect you to these people and organisations who may be able to assist you as you develop your work.

Many of the people in Neath Port Talbot rely on their environment for income, food, water, and recreation. In the future, the effects of climate change are likely to cause droughts in the summer, meaning a shortage of water, declining bio-diversity and a knock-on effect for agriculture. How are you considering the potential economic effect of a changing climate? If you are seeking to use your natural resources for economic benefit, how have you considered the long-term impact of extreme weather events on these resources? How can you use scenarios to imagine what preventative action you could take to protect agriculture, water supplies and transportation in the event of extreme weather? [Zero Carbon Britain's recent 'Making it Happen'](#) report sets out what responsibilities we all have to future generations to acting on climate change now.

I ask that you demonstrate consideration of the long-term impacts of extreme weather events that will pose particular risks for your area. I urge you to consider the impact of climate change on Blaenau Gwent, as an area with nine community areas at risk of flooding. Flooding affected homes and businesses last year in a number of counties and extreme flooding impacted Port Talbot, Neath and Baglan six years ago. Well-being assessments show how flooding affects people's health and well-being long after the event, with the most vulnerable in society adversely impacted. Expected annual damage [to residential properties is estimated to be £22 million](#), so, understanding how different weather events impact on different geographical and demographic communities is crucial to prevention.

Involving people in the running of their community can also have a positive effect on helping to make the local environment more resilient. [NESTA has a guide](#) to working with communities to tackle climate change, including the 'Big Green Challenge', where participants changed their lifestyles to reduce their carbon footprint. Projects such as ['Rainscape' through Dwr Cymru](#) suggest ways that we can all mitigate the effects of floods, and an extreme example includes the [Isle of Eigg in Scotland](#), where the community are having a positive impact on their environment by introducing renewable community energy schemes, building sustainable businesses and improving biodiversity. This clearly begins with helping people to gain the confidence and knowledge of accessing their local environment. Linked to your earlier objectives, getting people involved around a place and a common cause can be extremely powerful. The [Natural Resources Wales' 'Actif Woods'](#) project is an example of getting people outside, protecting their environment and enjoying the positive effects on health and well-being and, as above, 'social prescribing' is becoming more commonplace in treating health conditions. How can you involve other 'unusual suspects' in exploring the steps to meet this objective?

For instance, you have identified how urbanisation and industry is harming the natural habitats of the county. Collaborating with businesses in how you take steps to meet this objective will be important to protect and enhance the land and halt declining biodiversity. For each of these steps, use the definitions of the well-being goals to think about how you can do something different and achieve maximum impact, plus integrate across many of your draft steps. For example, how can you enable corporate volunteering opportunities that seek to enhance the resilience of the natural environment? What volunteering schemes could help to create a more globally responsible Neath Port Talbot? How can people encourage equality through their volunteering and cohesion within some of your communities? [Business in the Community](#) has a range of practical ways for businesses to work together and take action to help tackle some of the key environmental and social issues facing society.

It is positive that the natural environment is being used for tourism also, with over 2 million visitors last year to the county. I am interested in how you can encourage sustainable tourism in Wales, perhaps by working more regionally to connect fantastic environmental assets, such as woodlands, parks, sites of special interest with active travel opportunities, public transport and, at the same time, benefit local business? This involves a place-based focus on planning and a wider focus on the environmental, social and cultural well-being of an area – rather than pure economic gain. Connected to the poor air quality in some parts of the county, how can you better listen

to people's motivations for using their cars rather than other forms of transport? Some PSBs are introducing electric charging points and electric pool cars into their organisations to encourage this modal shift. Consider what practical action you can take now to benefit future generations.

There are many PSBs seeking to protect their environment and undertake further work to understand the risks for their communities, including Blaenau Gwent; Caerphilly; the Vale of Glamorgan; Powys; Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

**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 Neath Port Talbot 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