



Comisiynydd
Cenedlaethau'r
Dyfodol
Cymru

**Future
Generations**
Commissioner
for Wales

The Future Generations Report 2020: Executive Summaries



Let's create the future together

A More Equal Wales



“A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances).”

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) (Act 2015)

Equality is everyone’s issue. Despite progress in some areas, such as increases in employment, a narrowing of educational attainment gaps for some, and an increase in levels of political participation, we still see levels of inequality that are frankly unacceptable in the 21st century.

There is clearly a lot still to do in Wales to ensure everyone is free from discrimination and can enjoy their basic human rights.

This chapter of the Report focuses on how key challenges affect certain groups (those listed in the Equality Act 2010) but also recognises intersectionality which is understanding the way in which characteristics such as gender, race or disability can interact and increase disadvantage in specific situations.



Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should consider how it can respond to future trends (such as increasing automation, our ageing population and climate change) in ways that reduce inequalities rather than perpetuating them.

Welsh Government should...

Take bold steps to tackle the inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales - including through a Race Equality Strategy.

Implement the recommendations of the Gender Equality Review with a particular focus on the implications of future trends as well as current challenges.

Ensure that it uses every lever available to reduce inequalities and end poverty in Wales, maximising opportunities across all of the well-being goals.

Ensure that the new school curriculum in Wales adequately equips children to become ethical informed citizens of a diverse Wales; especially in the context of the apparent growth in hate crime exacerbated by Brexit.

Ensure that it is using levers such as the Public Sector Equality Duty; socio-economic duty and the Social Partnerships (Wales) Bill, in ways that align to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - particularly setting, delivering and reporting on well-being objectives.

Set challenging targets for public sector recruitment, ensuring people with diverse characteristics are visibly represented in government at all levels. This approach should recognise the importance of lived experience of disadvantage as a valid recruitment criteria. A Real Life Fast Track should be introduced as part of government recruitment. (See Chapter 2 recommendation on the 'Real Life Fast Fast Track'.



Advice on setting well-being objectives for all public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government)

Please refer to the chapter on Setting Good Well-being Objectives, but in setting their objectives specifically in relation to this goal, all public bodies and boards covered by the Act should:

- Ensure that objectives consider opportunities to tackle poverty and inequalities in the context of all of the well-being goals - not solely focusing on economic and social opportunities.
- Consider more collaborative and integrated approaches to tackling poverty and equalities across services, focusing on groups that face particular disadvantages.

In setting their **steps**, public bodies and boards covered by the Well-being of Future Generations Act (including Welsh Government) should focus in the following areas and should:

- Tackle poverty and socio-economic disadvantages.
- Ensure equal access to decent jobs - recognising everyone's value.
- Give people equal opportunities to participate in decision-making to enable equal outcomes.
- Enable people to develop the skills and knowledge to be fulfilled.
- Understand the causes and effects of health inequalities.

“I speak not for myself but for those without voice... those who have fought for their rights... their right to live in peace, their right to be treated with dignity, their right to equality of opportunity, their right to be educated.”

Malala Yousafzai



Where are we now? My assessment of progress in achieving A More Equal Wales:

There is more work needed for public bodies to apply an equality lens to their well-being objectives and to align them with their equality objectives.

Inequality in terms of socio-economic status as well as race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief (often described as those with protected characteristics) intersects across every one of our national well-being goals. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the biggest driver of poverty is the educational attainment of children when they leave full time education, so it is therefore positive that many well-being objectives relate to equality in terms of educational opportunities and reducing gaps in educational attainment. For example, 'Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment for both vocational and non-vocational qualifications to provide equality of opportunity'.

Patterns of poverty have not changed significantly over generations, and poverty therefore remains a key challenge for future generations.

According to a [recent publication from the Bevan Foundation](#), there are some encouraging signs that poverty does not seem to be getting worse – in fact the overall poverty rate in Wales has reduced from 24% to 23%, with similar reductions to the child poverty rate (29% to 28%) and working-age adult poverty rate (23% to 22%). However, this is set against a backdrop of a stubborn pattern of poverty that hasn't significantly changed over generations and too many children are trapped in intergenerational cycles of lifelong adversity and disadvantage.

It is positive that Government are enacting the socio-economic duty, but many of the other levers to end poverty are not in place and it needs to align with the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Welsh Government is operating in a challenging international context, with the uncertain economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic on top of uncertainty about the extent to which Brexit will affect Wales and our poorest communities. Whilst Government is clearly committed to tackling poverty, action needs to be taken to apply the lens of poverty in relation to all of the well-being goals if we are serious about ending poverty and creating a better Wales for future generations.

Public bodies should consider the equality impact of future trends particularly in relation to the changing nature of work and our ageing population.

Research suggests automation is likely to affect some groups and characteristics more than others resulting in further disadvantage to already economically-deprived places, communities and groups. There is a significant risk that the lack of up-skilling opportunities will disproportionately affect the groups who are already disadvantaged today. For example, the World Economic Forum estimates that by 2026, 57% of the jobs that will have been displaced by technology would have been undertaken by women. Many public bodies have well-being objectives around tackling loneliness and isolation in our older population but relatively few public bodies are addressing what this might mean in terms of jobs and skills in their area.



That is, how they will derive positive benefits from the potential for older people to work for longer, either formally or informally through volunteering, and the transfer of skills and experience. We need to enable people to stay in employment for longer, to support ageing well and to have a positive effect on the economy.

Public bodies should also consider the equality impact of future trends in identifying and mitigating the effects of climate change.

The impact of climate change is also likely to be felt unequally both in terms of its effects and in terms of actions to prevent and mitigate it. Policy solutions to tackle climate change also risk widening inequality if not considered carefully. For example, an approach to decreasing carbon emissions from transport focused on incentivising the purchase of electric vehicles, could further disadvantage those in socio-economic disadvantage who cannot afford to own a vehicle.

Employment in Wales has risen in recent years, but there are still unacceptable inequalities for many groups of people.

In Wales today, there has been an increase in the proportion of women employed in high-paid occupations, and the gender pay-gap has narrowed. Despite this, insecure employment has increased for those aged 16–24, the gender pay-gap for full-time employees remains, non-disabled people in Wales are twice as likely as disabled people to be employed, and employees from ethnic minority groups in Wales earn 7.5% less per hour (on average) than white British employees in Wales.

Work is no longer a guaranteed route out of poverty.

Evidence suggests that in-work poverty is increasing and that it also disproportionately affects certain groups, therefore exacerbating existing inequalities. According to Bevan Foundation analysis, most people living in poverty in Wales live in households where at least one adult is in work: 64% of working age adults and 67% of children who live in poverty live in such households. Too many jobs in Wales pay low wages and provide little security, not leaving people with enough money to build a decent life for themselves and their families. There are examples of public bodies taking action to create fairer working conditions, from Welsh Government running a reverse mentoring scheme in which more junior members of staff with protected characteristics are matched to senior civil servants to mentor them, to Swansea Bay Health Board having LGBT+ and Black Asian and minority ethnic networks to raise understanding, improve staff support and boost patient care.

There are signs that political and civic participation are increasing, but we have a way to go to ensure organisations are putting into practice the ‘involvement’ way of working set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Through my work monitoring and assessing public bodies, I’ve found that some bodies are discussing ‘involvement’ and ‘equality’ but not necessarily beyond broad statements. For example, the step: “We will enable a greater number, and a wider diversity, of people to enjoy, take part and work in the publicly funded arts” which does not reflect the steps this organisation needs to take to broaden the equality and diversity of involvement, decision-makers and community role models.



Whilst it is positive that there are some good examples of involvement such as ‘Measuring the Mountain’ (an initiative funded by Welsh Government to develop a Citizen’s Jury to explore ‘What really matters in social care to individuals in Wales?’) and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board taking a ‘you said, we did’ approach through communicating the results of involvement to the people they have involved in decision making, it is clear that public bodies need to do more, especially in terms of targeted approaches to working with specific groups who face disadvantage.

Wales is showing commitment to listening to young people through lowering the voting age to include 16 and 17-year olds.

The involvement of young people in decision-making is particularly important to represent the interests of future generations and the reduction of the voting age in Wales in a new Act is a cause for celebration. Public bodies should make the most of opportunities to engage with young people in their decision making and show how young people’s voices are influencing decisions to improve Wales.

Despite some progress, further work is needed to ensure our decision makers share the characteristics of the people they are making decisions for.

For example ethnic minority groups are under-represented in public appointments and the judiciary and few disabled people are in positions of power in Wales. We need a concerted national effort to ensure decision makers are more diverse, taking account of all of the protected characteristics, and mechanisms are in place to ensure any citizen who would like to get involved with improving a service or plan are given the opportunity to do so.

Violence Against Women remains a significant and persistent challenge despite an increased focus and introduction of specific legislation.

Domestic abuse and violence against women and girls remains a significant challenge in Wales, not only because of the impact it has on victims’ physical and mental health and on demand for public services in the short term, but also because of the longer term impact on the intergenerational transmission of childhood adversities. Whilst there is clear policy commitment and intent from Welsh Government, including a pledge from the First Minister to make Wales the safest place for women, analysis by Audit Wales on implementation of the Act demonstrates that there is more work to do.

According to the Global Gender Gap Report, [Iceland](#) is the most gender-equal country in the world for the 11th time in a row, having closed almost 88% of its overall gender gap.

Karlie Kloss is a female role model who encourages young women to pursue careers in technology fields through her Kode with Klossy programme, and Professor Sue Black OBE founded #techmums which equips women with the digital skills they need to navigate the workplace of the future.

Wilderness on Wheels is an organisation in [Colorado](#) that helps children and adults with disabilities have experiences like everyone else does, including outdoor activities. It helps people of all abilities get access to nature and outdoor activities, including camping, hiking, and fishing.



In 2015, Prime Minister [Justin Trudeau](#) formed the first gender-balanced cabinet in [Canada's](#) history and put the country at fifth place in the world in terms of percentage of women in ministerial positions. When reporters asked Trudeau about why gender parity was important to him, he retorted: "Because it's 2015."

[Black Thrive](#) is an organisation that aims to end the stigma associated with mental health and address mental health inequalities experienced by [Lambeth's](#) Black communities.

Below are the areas I recommend that all public bodies, including Welsh Government, should focus on:

- Tackling poverty and socio-economic disadvantages.
- Ensuring equal access to decent jobs - recognising everyone's value.
- Giving people equal opportunities to participate in decision-making to enable equal outcomes.
- Enabling people to develop the skills and knowledge to be fulfilled
- Understanding the causes and effects of health inequalities.

For my full evidence, assessment, key findings and advice please see the section on A More Equal Wales in Chapter 3: Progress against the well-being goals of the Future Generations Report.

