

By email

15th September 2021

Dear Russell,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Committee's priority areas during the next Senedd term. Several of my recommendations and commentaries below are relevant to other Senedd Committees, but I wanted to flag them to you too because efforts should be made across Committees to integrate respective areas of work. Better integration of policy areas will ensure collective scrutiny, the ability to identify implementation gaps and offer solutions across the Senedd's work. You can find my letters to other Committees [here](#).

I would also like to suggest to you and to other Committees a cross-cutting area, which can be looked at jointly and in collaboration by some, or ideally all, Senedd Committees: Skills for a Green Recovery. Providing people with education and the opportunity to develop the right set of skills for their future is widely accepted as a significant determinant of life outcomes including their health, socio-economic position and life expectancy. A prosperous, equal, green recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 means delivering good quality livelihoods to all, whilst supporting rapid decarbonisation and improving biodiversity. There are opportunities within Wales to encourage an economic model that is based on the foundational, everyday economy. For instance, the social care sector is classed as foundational, low-carbon and improves equality, social and cultural well-being. But a prosperous, green and equal recovery is reliant on having the right skills and training for our population. This is an area my own team has recently explored, and you can find our latest publication [here](#).

In May 2020, I published the first ever [Future Generations Report](#), which considered the progress made by public bodies in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It also set out the actions and recommendations public bodies should adopt as they further implement the legislation. I have highlighted for the Committee below the most relevant findings of the report for your consideration (see Annex 1 for relevant recommendations). I would encourage all Committee Members to consider the report and in particular the Sections on [A Healthier Wales](#) and [A More Equal Wales](#).

I would also suggest you consider the [upcoming second iteration of the Future Trends Report](#), which will be published later this year by Welsh Government. Annex 2 below provides you with some of the relevant future trends which could impact the Committee's remit.

I would also advise all Committees to consider how their chosen priority areas align with the objectives and steps within the published [Programme for government](#).

My team and I would be happy to meet with Committee Members or clerks to discuss this further, if you think that would be useful.

Health and Social Care

Health is one of the [policy areas of focus](#) that I have selected for my office following an extensive involvement exercise, as it has the potential to address multiple challenges that our current and future generations are facing and contribute to a number of the well-being goals set out in the Act.

Good health is one of the main building blocks of wellness and opportunity. Enabling people to live the highest quality of life they can includes supporting them to have a lifestyle that maintains good physical and mental health, through creating places and environments that support healthy lifestyles and ensuring there are effective services to support people when they need care.

As a society, our health and wellness are not improving - some statistics suggest that they are, in fact, getting worse. Some of this may be due to our ageing population, which to some extent is inevitable, but this is also impacted by socio-economic deprivation, indicating a failure of public policy in addressing the important wider determinants of health. The enactment of the socio-economic duty by Welsh Government is a positive step in addressing some of these wider determinants, but there is more work to be done and this needs to be supported by bold and integrated action in other policy areas if it is to make a difference and bring us closer to a healthier and a more equal Wales.

The high proportion of our population in ill health has been brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic, with older and less healthy people being the most at risk. Future work to improve health outcomes at all ages needs to be prioritised for the benefit of our population, as well as ensuring we are better prepared for global crises, such as pandemics.

The findings that emerged through the Future Generations Report and my subsequent work include:

- We are not investing in the best balance of services to keep people well and to enable them to live healthy and fulfilled lives.
- The prevention agenda is not progressing at the scale and pace needed and is not often focused on the wider determinants of health.
- Further work is needed to consider the wider determinants of health and move to a system-wide shift to prevention
- Mental health is a pressing concern for future generations, with poor mental health increasing across our society.
- Our lifestyles mean that levels of physical activity are declining, which is having a serious impact on our health.
- The 'Healthy and Active Fund' is a good example of a collaborative approach to improving physical activity at the national level, but further work is needed to integrate all of the opportunities for physical activity into action at the local level.
- The places we live, work and play in need to support our physical and mental health.
- The social care sector is recognised as a sector which requires significant attention in terms of meeting the Welsh definition of decent or fair work.

- Currently, 56% of the social care workforce in Wales earn below the Real Living Wage. Investing in the care industry would increase gender equality both within the care workforce and the wider population.

Based on my existing advice and work, I would encourage the Committee to consider focusing their work on health and social care around the following themes:

- **A national wellness system - ensuring services support people to understand behaviours and choices that benefit future health.**
- **Supporting people to act with compassion, to facilitate understanding of mental well-being.**
- **Increasing the benefits of physical activity for everyone.**
- **Enabling places to support the health and well-being of people and communities.**
- **Our ageing population.**
- **Equality of health outcomes: understanding the causes and effects of health inequalities**
- **A care-led recovery, increasing gender equality, creating economic stimulus and a shift towards prevention.**

More detail and advice in relation to equality can be found in the Sections on [A More Equal Wales](#), [A Healthier Wales](#), [Planning](#), in the Future Generations Report; my recent analysis of Skills, [Skills through Crisis: Upskilling and \(Re\)Training for a Green Recovery in Wales](#); and my paper, '[A Fit For the Future Programme for Government](#)'. In September, I will also be publishing a report on future trends specifically related to inequalities, which will be of interest to the Committee. While this work has not been publicised yet, I have included some of the findings from that report below.

Health bodies and the Act

I also thought you may be interested in my findings related specifically to the implementation of the Act within health bodies in Wales. Information can be found in [Chapter 2 of the Future Generations Report](#) and the report I published following my first round of Monitoring and Assessing the extent to which public bodies are meeting their well-being objectives, [Progress towards the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) (pp-34-36). In November 2020, I also wrote a [letter to the Public Accounts Committee](#) outlining the barriers to the implementation of the Act, which includes the barriers for health bodies. Several health bodies provided evidence to the Committee and their [conclusions and recommendations](#) may be of interest to you.

My findings include:

- Welsh Government processes and targets are a challenge and barrier.
- Health bodies should consider setting broader well-being objectives and ensure that the steps they are taking to meet their objectives are clear.
- Lack of use of the Welsh Government definition of prevention.
- Ability to look long-term - Whilst I welcome the fact that some health bodies have 10-year or 20-year strategies in place, the IMTP process only requires a 3-year plan.

I would encourage the Committee to carefully consider these findings and use them to inform their priorities and work in relation to local government in the next Senedd term.

You may also be interested in some of the case studies of good practice that I have been collecting, which are available [here](#). Particularly, you may wish to look at:

- [Arts and Culture in well-being](#);
- [Making connections to improve environmental sustainability at Ysbyty Gwynedd](#);
- [Cardiff and Vale enhancing biodiversity](#).

Once again, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to feed into their priorities for the next Senedd terms. Should you wish to discuss any of the above points in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact my team at ContactUs@futuregenerations.wales.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Annexe 1

Relevant Recommendations from the Future Generations Report 2020

A Healthier Wales

Key Recommendation

Welsh Government should develop a national wellness system to improve the nation's health and wellness and reduce demand on services.

Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should:

- Use the wider determinants of health to enable a whole-system approach to improving health and wellness.
- Change funding arrangements across sectors and services to encourage collaboration to keep people well and reduce demand - using increased investment in preventative activities as a first step.
- Change performance management arrangements with public bodies to encourage collaboration to keep people well and reduce demand.
- Explore new approaches to investment in prevention, including whether funds raised from new taxes (such as the potential social care levy) could be used for investment in prevention.
- Appoint a Minister for Prevention, with responsibility for taking a whole-government, coherent and evidence-based approach to investment in prevention.

Process Recommendations

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should stop:

- Making decisions about priorities for investment without demonstrating how they have considered the wider determinants of health.
- An approach to performance management of the NHS which prioritises short-term service delivery at the expense of longer-term change.
- A piecemeal approach to investment in prevention.
- The current approach to the budget process which does not set clear direction and targets for investment in prevention.
- Economic modelling about the use of funds raised from new taxes that does not take account of opportunities for prevention.

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should start:

- Setting a clearer direction for shifting investment to prevention based on the definition of prevention.
- Channelling funding for prevention through Public Services Boards to reflect the wider determinants of health.
- Actively exploring options for finance that allows government and other bodies to develop and scale up preventative activities - learning from other places.

- Funding innovation and transformational programmes to enable change over longer timeframes.
- Assessing the performance of health board chairs and senior leaders in terms of progress towards well-being objectives.

A More Equal Wales

Key Recommendation

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.

Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should:

- 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 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.
- Take bold steps to tackle the inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales - including through a Race Equality Strategy.
- 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').
- 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 uses every lever available to reduce inequalities and end poverty in Wales, maximising opportunities across all of the well-being goals.

Process Recommendations

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should stop:

- Focusing efforts to tackle poverty and reduce inequality largely in the space of economic and social interventions, missing opportunities to take a more holistic approach that contributes to all of the well-being goals.
- Approaches to apprenticeships, mentoring, work shadowing and paid internship/work placement programmes which do not seek to tackle under-representation of certain groups.

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should start:

- Using future trends research and futures techniques to plan how to reduce poverty and inequalities for future generations.

- Using the definition of prevention to ensure that the overall approach to ending poverty and reducing inequality shifts to preventative approaches, as well as supporting people experiencing disadvantage.
- Better aligning key levers to tackle poverty and inequalities to the requirements of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Requiring all recipients of government funding to provide equality, diversity and unconscious bias training to its senior and public facing workforce.
- Seeking to reduce inequalities by involving people in the 'story behind the data' and collaborating with others.
- Addressing the recommendations contained in Audit Wales' report: 'Progress in Implementing the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' Act.

You may also find the recommendations in relation to leadership and cultural change in Welsh Government and Public Bodies of interest. You can find these recommendations [here](#) and [here](#).

Annexe 2

Future Trends to Watch

Current Trends:

- People are increasingly likely to live with multiple conditions, and in 2015-16 [one in three people admitted to NHS hospitals had five or more health conditions](#) (up from one in ten in 2006-07).
- Over the last decade [health inequalities have widened](#) overall, and the amount of time people spend in poor health has increased.
- The prevalence of mental health problems among children and young people is [on the rise](#).
- The proportion of women who provide unpaid care increases steadily with age, peaking in women's 50s and early 60s when [more than a quarter of women \(26%\) provide unpaid care](#).
- The number of people living alone and without family members is increasing. People aged 65 and over now make up 45% of single person households.
- Healthy life expectancy and mortality outcomes [continue to be worse](#) for those living in more deprived areas, but for Wales, there isn't evidence that gap is increasing.
- [Increasing levels of obesity](#) in the UK adult population.
- [Rapid increase](#) in the prevalence of dementia worldwide.
- Healthy life expectancy for UK women has [decreased](#).
- [Loneliness is higher](#) for women, 16-24 year olds, those with a limiting long-term illness or disability or living in a deprived or rural area.
- [Global spread of significant and new emerging infections](#).

Future Predictions:

- Mortality rates for all cancers combined are [projected to fall by 15%](#) in the UK between 2014 and 2035, to 280 deaths per 100,000 people by 2035.
- The Alzheimer's Society work projects that the number of older people with dementia in the UK will increase [by 80%, from almost 885,000 in 2019 to around 1.6 million in 2040](#).
- As populations age, total noncommunicable diseases deaths are [projected to rise to 52 million in 2030](#).