

Wrexham Public Services Board: Well-being assessment

Feedback and advice from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales,
28th March 2022

1: Summary

- A strong, integrated well-being assessment.
- Well presented with an extensive range of data and information used.
- Honest reflection on strengths and limitations.
- Draws upon rich qualitative and quantitative sources to analyse levels of well-being.
- Evidence of good collaboration between PSB partners and wider stakeholders in the region.
- Clearly highlights the key issues affecting well-being in Wrexham which provides a focus for developing the well-being plan.
- Section 3 (below) highlights areas that if further developed would help strengthen the assessment overall. These relate to: involvement, equality, future trends, the Welsh language, data comparison, next steps and maximising contribution to Wales' well-being goals. Desirable areas are also included for your consideration.

2: Evidence of good practice in the well-being assessment

Process and methodology

You have taken a 'mixed-methods and analytical approach', which included: primary research, secondary research, descriptive and diagnostic analysis. This also involved support from an independent analyst, an innovative approach piloted in partnership with other North Wales PSBs.

It's positive to hear you have worked alongside colleagues developing North Wales' Population Needs Assessment, and other key strategic assessments have informed your draft assessment, such as North Wales Police's Strategic Assessment and Wrexham's Play Sufficiency Assessment.

Collaboration is a strong feature of your work. In particular, you highlight the value of working more closely with Flintshire PSB, developing your understanding of systems leadership and how to apply this to your work as PSBs. Working together, you're leading the 'Community Resilience' theme, as identified by the region's response to Covid-19. From this you have identified four key themes and have focused practical efforts on social prescribing and developing a 'children's university', while your respective well-being assessments are being developed.

We welcome the role of the North Wales Research and Insight Partnership in the region as a strong component to help support the use of evidence and insight to understand the challenges and opportunities, and co-produce approaches to improve well-being. As you highlight, this aligns well with the region becoming one of the clusters to receive support from the Co-production Network for Wales for the next five years to help develop and apply the principles of co-production.

It's evident an extensive range of data and information has been used to inform the assessment, and we welcome the list of references included. A strength of the assessment is that evidence is drawn from local, national and international sources to understand how local trends fit the bigger, global picture.

A strong feature throughout is integration, where you have explored the interconnections and root causes for local well-being in Wrexham. This is within both the dimension of well-being chapters and the specific 'Interconnections' chapter itself.

We welcome the honest reflection on the first well-being assessment (2017), particularly under the 'Where we've come from' chapter. This includes recognising it was *"largely an academic exercise"*, *"very large in size"*, *"primarily led by the local authority"* and that you *"didn't spend as much time as we would have liked analysing the data and ensuring that the assessment meaningfully informed the production of Wrexham's well-being plan."* You highlight that while your objectives still resonate, your priorities and action may well differ as you progress to the next stage of well-being planning. And it's good to hear your intent for an approach that will be both *"iterative and innovative"*.

It's positive to see the approaches to involvement that have been undertaken, including your use of innovative approaches. For example, your approach to 'citizen analysis' which seeks to use intersectional sampling to expand whose voices are heard, and supporting citizens to work with data about the climate emergency and North Wales. It will be interesting to see how this progresses as attention shifts to development of your well-being plan, and beyond that, the next round of well-being assessments. Similarly, we welcome your work to engage with 'seldom heard voices' to bring insight into the assessment.

Appendix C provides a helpful overview of the 'Our Wrexham, Our Future' consultation, developed in conjunction with the Co-production Network for Wales, Senedd y Ifanc, and PSB partners. It's great to see the engagement activity undertaken.

There is honest reflection on the data available, and the 'limitations' are set out clearly in Appendix H. For example, you highlight much of the evidence available currently pre-dates the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit, and further insight will be needed as and when it becomes available. Positively, appendix H goes a step further to highlight opportunities for the PSB, such as co-producing community narratives, building on your citizen's analysis pilot, using the Llaisau Bach methodology to develop young researchers and supplementing the community narratives with individual narratives to better understand how the social determinants of health look and feel like for individuals.

We note you have referenced the National Indicators in the assessment and will use the indicators as one of the ways to measure and evidence your progress.

Content

The structure of the assessment is clear and follows a logical structure. We note it has been developed with a similar structure to Flintshire's well-being assessment, to help facilitate ongoing and future joint working. The summary helpfully includes the key messages on each of the dimensions of well-being.

Both the pandemic and Brexit are considered within the draft assessment. For example, under the economy sub-chapter, the assessment draws upon wider sources to note the unequal impact of the pandemic on household income and employment, citing that *"the impact on children is getting greater. More than one in five families with children have had to cut back."*

Including the views of citizens against each of the dimensions of well-being, alongside the key headlines, is helpful and works well. For example, in relation to culture, it includes the statement:

“More support for the Welsh language. Improved opportunity to learn Welsh in the community, opportunities to use it in social settings and the workplaces and use it in street signage.”

We welcome the work the PSB has done using evidence to draw out key themes. As outlined in the assessment, Wrexham and Flintshire PSBs are leading on the ‘community resilience’ strategic theme and you have focused your practical efforts on social prescribing and developing a children’s university.

With regard to the social determinants of health, it is good to see reference to the five domains to improve well-being highlighted by the Marmot Review (2020). The assessment identifies these as the root causes to your communities’ well-being outcomes as well as your intent to address these things together with your communities to set a path to improving well-being in a holistic way.

It is reassuring to see reference to NRW’s North-East Wales Area Statement which you say also reflects the qualitative findings from the young people’s TEDx event, the ‘Our Wrexham, Our Future’ consultation, and the citizens’ analysis. It is also good to see reference to the State of Natural Resources Report for Wales (2020), including the three areas for transformative change: food, energy and transport. We also welcome the assessment’s focus on ‘farming and sustainable land management’ and ‘food systems’.

The quotes included in the environment section, taken from the TEDxGwE event in 2021, work well adding views and quotes from people in amongst the overarching narrative. For example: *“We need to change our way of thinking. We can all make changes but the biggest thing we can change is our mindset.”* It’s also great to see the song written by children and young people from across North Wales about climate change (at the TEDxGwE event) included.

Similarly, the use of quotes from the Wrexham2025 Forum and the ‘Our Wrexham, Our Future’ consultation work well with some powerful examples included. For example:

- *“I am a refugee from Venezuela, and I’ve been living in Wrexham for 2 years...People here are understanding about other cultures, you feel free to express your traditions and customs... I love that people here in Wrexham are working hard to welcome immigrants. We feel embraced.”*
- *“I got quite depressed last Christmas, and I decided to get out there and start seeing more of Wrexham County. And I have to say: those walks around Wrexham saved my life. It was just amazing to get to Marford Quarry, Minera, Alyn Waters...all these places I’m extremely grateful for.”*
- *“What I’ve seen during COVID, from then to now, is all these little enterprises opening up – the shops that have been empty are opening up with cafés and community hubs like Yellow & Blue. That’s what I’m proud of – seeing Wrexham rise up from the ashes, and becoming culturally rich, because we’re a mix of nationalities.”*

The information included in the ‘Tangible cultural assets and community well-being’ section of the ‘Culture’ chapter provides a very helpful overview of some of Wrexham’s key cultural assets, including football, the world heritage site, music festivals and national trust properties.

The ‘Wrexham as a village of 100 people’ concept is a helpful way to illustrate in very clear terms the people and population of Wrexham. For example, using the concept shows that 27 people speak Welsh, 15 adults feel lonely and 29 adults are physically inactive in Wrexham.

3: Areas that could be further developed

Important areas for consideration

Building on the extensive work already undertaken for your well-being assessment, below are areas we consider to be important for your consideration. If developed further, they would help strengthen the assessment overall.

Involvement

From the information presented, it's evident the PSB is working positively to embed two-way engagement to better understand the challenges and opportunities (locally and regionally), and co-produce approaches to address them.

This has been assisted by the North Wales Public Services Board collective being one of the 'projects' to receive support from the Co-production Network for Wales for the next five years through the National Lottery Community Fund. Alongside the 'Our Wrexham, Our Future' consultation and #Wrexham2025 forum, two strong examples of recent work shared within the assessment are 'seldom heard voices' and 'citizen analysis'.

On 'seldom heard voices', it's great to see your recognition that there are still some voices that are seldom heard and you're working with the North East Wales Community Resilience Team to capture community voices through their day-to-day activities with people and groups, which has fed into this assessment. On 'citizen analysis', you highlight the challenges associated with much of the population remaining unheard and disengaged. Choosing the climate emergency as a topic area, you're testing an approach using intersectional sampling to expand whose voices are heard and supporting citizens to work with data. Further information is included within appendix A, which includes three learning goals you had for the pilot.

Building on this, it would be beneficial if the draft assessment could include some further reflection on the engagement activities you have carried out. For example, what do you feel has worked well so far? Have there been any particular challenges? In relation to the 'seldom heard voices' work, whose voices have been captured (so far), and whose voices are not yet being heard?

While some of this work is still in its development phase, it would also be helpful to understand what the next steps for your work on involvement are. And we are keen to be kept up to date with how your work in this area progresses.

With regard to individual narratives, we welcome the use and inclusion of quotes and views from the 'Our Wrexham, Our Future' consultation in the draft assessment. Building on this, we encourage you to incorporate further qualitative insight from residents into the design and development of the well-being plan. Incorporating views and lived experiences of residents can be a powerful way of enabling residents in Wrexham to tell their story more fully and would help ensure a strong well-being plan.

Equality

Inequality is one of three key areas of focus you have highlighted in the draft assessment (alongside the social determinants of health and Adverse Childhood Experiences) and is addressed throughout the assessment. For example, we welcome your acknowledgement that *"households in Wales with a disabled person in the family, for example, are far more likely to be living in relative income poverty*

(28 per cent) than those without (20 per cent). And those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are also at a higher risk of being in relative income poverty.”

Under ‘society’, the draft assessment highlights unpaid care is disproportionately undertaken by women and may become more important if adaptations to current services cannot be provided, from which subsequent social and economic problems might arise. And linked to your work on involvement, we also note the positive work to draw upon the views of ‘seldom heard voices’, and that some demographic analysis has been undertaken to identify populations of marginalised groups (e.g. gender and ethnic minorities).

Building on this, we recommend ensuring all [‘protected characteristics’](#) outlined in the Equality Act are considered within the assessment and consideration is given to how intersectionality affects people in the area. For example, what is it like to be young and migrant in Wrexham?

With regard to the pandemic, it’s reassuring to see the draft assessment recognise how it has exacerbated inequalities and identify the future of work, climate change and demographic change as three areas that will have the most profound inequalities in a future Wales. This is consistent with the findings within our joint report with Public Health Wales: [‘Inequality in a future Wales’](#).

For reference, the next stage of this work is being undertaken in collaboration with FLiNT (Futures Literature Through Narrative). Authors will work with communities most likely to be affected by climate change to ensure their voices are heard, and then shape policy solutions that work for both people (inequalities) and planet (climate change). This work also aims to help develop capability and capacity building for everyone, and the key findings and methodology of the work will be shared with PSBs in due course.

Future trends

It is reassuring to see the draft assessment refer to the four key megatrends and public service drivers within the Future Trends Report (2021) alongside the four stages to embedding long-term strategic thinking in the planning and strategy process (identified by the UK Government Office for Science).

Alongside this, further information is also included on longer-term data in the draft assessment. For example, under ‘society’ it highlights the projected ageing population and likely increase in demand for health and social care will come at a time where there could be fewer people of working age to fund these services. Links are also made to other trends, such as the adoption of new technologies in work to facilitate longer working lives and the increased need for housing that can adapt to people’s changing needs as they age.

The citizens’ analysis pilot presented in the environment chapter is a great example of the work you have carried out to consider how different people and population groups living in your communities may be differently affected by a key future trend - in this instance, climate change. One of the ten key messages from citizens was *“Decision-makers not deciding for tomorrow, next week, or next year (apart from emergencies and urgent things of course) but making strategic decisions for the next 10, 25, 50, 100, 500 years’ time”*.

Collaborative working focussed on the ‘long-term’ is challenging but futures techniques are effective tools for engaging with others and prompting constructive discussion in a way that can help develop plans that deliver meaningful change. As the assessment states, the first stage (gathering intelligence

about the future) is the information gathered and presented within your well-being assessment, where the other three stages can be explored further within the well-being planning phase.

With this in mind, it would be helpful to better understand how the PSB intends to continue to consider and embed future trends information into its next steps, including the development of the well-being plan and setting of objectives and steps. Any further information you're able to share in the draft assessment here could be in conjunction with our suggestion (below) for the inclusion of a 'Next Steps' section.

In their feedback to PSBs, NRW are offering to run Three Horizons workshop to help support the incorporation of future trends into the well-being planning process. We are encouraging PSBs to take up this offer and we understand you have expressed interest in holding this with your PSB.

Welsh Language

The draft assessment acknowledges the Welsh language as an important part of Wales' cultural well-being and recognises wider links to well-being "*Welsh speakers are more likely to participate in arts and sports events*". As of 2021, the assessment highlights 26.7% of the population in Wrexham speak Welsh.

Building on the information set out, it would be helpful if some comparative figures could be included in relation to Welsh speakers in other areas of North Wales and Wales nationally. We also encourage you to include some analysis of what this data might mean for your area (now and in the longer-term), in conjunction with the national vision of '[Cymraeg 2050](#)' to increase both the use of Welsh and number of Welsh speakers.

In moving to setting objectives and steps within your well-being plan, clear links should be made to your local authority's promotional strategy and its Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP).

Regional and national comparisons of data

The 'Wrexham as a Village of 100 People' illustration provides an accessible and helpful overview of key issues effecting residents in the area.

While the illustration works well, are there any opportunities to include and refer to some wider comparisons of the data for the benefit of the reader? For example, how does the rate of unemployment, children living in poverty and adults feeling lonely compare with the rest of Wales? This could be within the illustration itself, or highlighted separately, and would help provide further context for the reader.

We also encourage you to ensure the local level data and analysis provided throughout the draft assessment is consistently benchmarked against regional and national figures (where possible to do so). For example, the assessment notes that 26.7% of Wrexham's population speak Welsh, but there is limited additional context provided in relation to rates in other areas of North Wales and Wales nationally.

In our meeting on 15th March 2022, we discussed the need to set out the communities that comprise the area, as referred to in the statutory guidance. We acknowledge your point that to better understand your communities, your intention is to build community profiles with them as part of your next steps, as opposed to using arbitrary boundaries. We also took on board your point that much of the community level data is out of date (2011 Census data). For clarity, it would be helpful to include these points within the final assessment.

Next steps

Prior to the references and appendices sections, the draft assessment concludes with the 'Connecting the dots' chapter. This highlights three main areas of focus (inequalities; social determinants of health; and Adverse Childhood Experiences) and states this will also help the PSB bridge the well-being assessment and well-being planning stages.

Building on this, it would be helpful if the draft assessment included a 'Next steps' section. This could provide a high-level overview of the PSB's next steps as attention shifts from publication of the assessment to the development of your well-being plan, and any further information on how the PSB intends to progress the three key areas of focus and some of the initiatives within the assessment, e.g. 'seldom heard voices' and 'citizen analysis'. It could also include information on how residents and readers can get involved and be kept up to date with developments.

Maximising the PSB's contribution to Wales' well-being goals

Understanding the full definition of Wales' well-being goals can help ensure the assessment is considering the wide range of topics and themes of well-being within your area.

The table below sets out areas that could be explored further within the assessment, and/or taken into consideration for the well-being plan.

It is appreciated that it may not be possible for all the information below to be fully considered / incorporated in your assessment. Instead, you may wish to choose some areas to compliment the extensive work you have already undertaken:

Skills for the future	To compliment the work already undertaken, we encourage you to consider the findings in our recent report here on the skills needed to transition to a low carbon economy. It finds that across Wales there are significant skills gaps in green industries which must be addressed.
North Wales Regional Economic Framework	The North Wales Regional Economic Framework is a useful resource, particularly in discussion of skills and key employment sectors.
The foundational economy and fair and local supply chains	Our bitesize resource on procurement provides a helpful summary on the Commissioner's vision for procurement, identifying the key issues highlighted by public bodies during the research and Section 20 Review, as well the recommendations outlined in our ' Procuring well-being in Wales ' report.
Circular economy and consumption	To strengthen this area, the assessment could further explore what Wales's strategy for a circular economy means for your area, e.g. helping communities share items, food waste, electric fleet etc. PSBs should be seeking ways to understand how a circular economy approach can help them meet a number of well-being priorities.
Brexit	The draft assessment does acknowledge that the UK's withdrawal from the EU is likely to impact many aspects of well-being, such as challenges to the local economy as businesses navigate new trade regulations. In drafting the final report, and in development of the well-being plan, we recommend the PSB considers the key findings in this research from WCPP . The draft assessment could also consider the likely impact on agriculture, through implications of the Sustainable Farming Scheme .

Tourism	An important area that could be explored further, which links to your work with business, the environment and cultural/natural heritage. Tourism provides a useful theme from which to discuss the integration of well-being dimensions, such as culture and economy.
Llwybr Newydd: Wales's Transport Strategy	Building on the data and information included in the 'transport' section, links could also be made to the three headline priorities and sustainable transport hierarchy within Llwybr Newydd (the Wales Transport Strategy 2021).

Other areas for consideration (desirable)

These are areas you might wish to amend / update to strengthen the assessment overall:

- **Collaboration:** a strength of the assessment is how it outlines the collaboration in the region. Any additional information that could be included on how this works in practice would be helpful for other PSBs in Wales, as cross-sector collaboration is a challenging but often effective means of delivering social change.
- **Sources:** There are some instances within the draft assessment where broad narratives are outlined without presenting the detail or citing sources. For example, in the society chapter, the assessment states that the population shift is *"being driven by... reducing fertility rates and increasing life expectancies... developments in the way people live, work, travel, are reflected in trends towards an aging population"*. It would be helpful for the reader if text like this could be cited, where possible to do so.
- **Local data:** Occasionally there are examples where the strong narrative is supported by national data, without reference to local data and information. For example, in relation to volunteering, the draft assessment highlights 74% of people volunteered formally and informally across Wales in 2019-20. It would be helpful here if the past and present local figures could also be provided. Similarly, there is good overarching narrative on 'urban and rural green infrastructure' which could be supported by local figures relating to proximity to green space within Wrexham.
- **Community areas:** in the assessment, findings are typically discussed at a local authority level. Where there are opportunities to do so, it may be beneficial to identify and benchmark some smaller areas against each other to identify how well-being trends may differ. For example, in rural vs more urban areas, Welsh speakers or relative affluence.
- **Citizen's Analysis Pilot:** The 10 key messages from your citizen's analysis pilot do not appear to have been incorporated (overall) into the summary points of the environment chapter. It would be helpful if an overarching headline could be incorporated into the summary. It would also be helpful if further information on the pilot could be presented on the proposed next steps.
- **TEDxGwE:** This fantastic event was aimed at bringing partners and community leaders from across the North Wales region together to listen to children and young people present their own TED talks about climate change (compered by Iolo Williams). It's currently set out as an appendix, but it could be included as a case study within the main body of the text, amplifying the voice of children and young people.
- **Appendix G:** the image of the existing well-being objectives is pixelated and unclear, as presented. We recommend replacing with a higher quality image.

4: Resources to help inform your next steps

Below are resources that can help inform your next steps, as you move from well-being assessment to well-being plan:

- Chapter 4 of the Future Generations Report: [‘Setting Good Well-being Objectives’](#)
- The [‘Future Generations Framework for Projects’](#)
- [Case studies](#) of how the Act is being implemented on the ground in Wales
- Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales: [Resources](#)