

Study Visit to Wales



21 - 22 March 2019

Bevan Foundation



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the speakers and stakeholders in Wales who shared their time, energy and expertise with our Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland project participants and members of our project Advisory Group on their experience of improving wellbeing outcomes.

The delegates on the study visit learnt much from the policymakers, practitioners and politicians in Wales on the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the culture change required to deliver public services designed to improve citizens' wellbeing.

Finally, we would like to thank the Trust's project participants for their openness and willingness to take part in opportunities for policy learning, and for their commitment to share this with their colleagues in the wider Community Planning network in Northern Ireland.



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Introduction

The Carnegie UK Trust has been a leading advocate for wellbeing frameworks which allow governments to measure societal progress for citizens in a meaningful way since the establishment of the first Carnegie Roundtable on [Measuring What Matters in Scotland in 2010](#).

Through the Carnegie Roundtable on [Measuring Wellbeing in Northern Ireland](#), the Trust has made a contribution to embedding wellbeing and an outcomes-based approach at the Executive level in Northern Ireland. The current climate within central government in Northern Ireland, and recent reform at local government level, presents a significant opportunity to work with local stakeholders to bridge the gap in capacity and capability around wellbeing and outcomes between local and central government, which is being pursued through the Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland project.

The Trust's [Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland](#) project provides support for Community Planning Partnerships to implement a local wellbeing outcomes approach in the following local authority areas:

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council;
- Derry City and Strabane District Council; and
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

As part of the project, 10 delegates from these Partnerships, four members of the project Advisory Group and three representatives from the Carnegie UK Trust visited Wales on 21-22 March 2019. During the visit, delegates met a wide range of stakeholders in formal sessions as well as informal discussions over lunch and dinner. This paper provides an account of the key points to emerge during the visit.



Session 1: Wellbeing in a Welsh context

This session aimed to introduce the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), and to consider its impact on other organisations and outcomes on the ground.

Speakers

Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner
 Vanessa Young, Welsh NHS Confederation
 Neville Rookes, Welsh Local Government Association
 Valerie Billingham, Age Cymru
 Hefin David AM
 First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford AM

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner

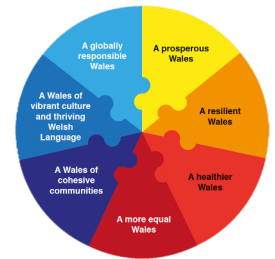
Sophie Howe opened her presentation with a quote from a UN spokesperson:

'We hope that what Wales is doing today the world will do tomorrow. Action, more than words, is the hope for our current and future generations'

She explained that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 had arisen from a 'national conversation', The Wales we Want. The Act was passed by the National Assembly in 2015 and that she became the first Commissioner in 2016. The Act covers most public bodies in Wales, from the Welsh Government, to local authorities, health boards, emergency services and environmental, sports and arts organisations. While the challenge for them varies depending on their role, the core principle is the same – decisions must be 'future proofed' to achieve a better and lasting quality of life for all.

There are seven wellbeing goals, which aim to increase:

- Prosperity
- Resilience
- Health
- Equality
- Cohesion
- Culture
- Global responsibility.



These are to be achieved by five distinctive ways of working:

1. **Long term:** balancing short term needs while safeguarding the ability to meet long term needs.
2. **Integration:** considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives impact on each goal.
3. **Involvement:** involving people with an interest in wellbeing goals and ensuring that they reflect the diversity of the area.
4. **Collaboration:** acting in collaboration with other people or organisations to help meet wellbeing objectives.
5. **Prevention:** preventing problems occurring or getting worse, to achieve wellbeing objectives.

Sophie explained that a definition of 'prevention' had recently been agreed with the Welsh Government, and that its draft budget for 2019/20 had been appraised against this understanding.

Sophie said that at local level, bodies are required to work together through Public Service Boards, which must undertake a wellbeing assessment and prepare a wellbeing plan. Sophie explained that progress is monitored against a set of national indicators.

Underlying this approach is the need to link ideas and innovation with policy, legislation and finance, and also must win people's hearts and minds.



She quoted Albert Einstein - *'we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them'*.

Sophie pointed out that although the legislation and guidance is relatively recent there is already some evidence of change happening on the ground. This was reflected in the way that Public Service Boards were working locally and in the influence her office had been able bring to bear on policy at a national level, such as her interventions on environmental permits and on the priorities of City Deals.

Sophie explained that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 does not always sit comfortably with existing policies, targets and other legislation. She gave the example of the proposed M4 relief road, and asked how that fits with the Welsh Government's plans to reduce carbon emissions, its financial sustainability and the Act. This case had also brought attention to the need to revise the tools used to appraise transport schemes and land use planning policy. In contrast, the commissioning of the new south Wales metro was based on Act's principles.

The independence of the Commissioner is underpinned by her right to launch a legal challenge via judicial review. She has not used the power yet but could do so in future.

Sophie noted that the Act required a huge cultural change in organisations. There were often 'frustrated champions' within organisations, who were given permission by the Act to challenge the system.

In response to questions, Sophie explained that the Act can act as a safety net against lowering of standards that might arise as a result of Brexit. She thought that the Act was unlikely to raise costs in the longer term if measured holistically, because of the emphasise on prevention. She considered that the relatively small size of Wales enabled a more innovative approach because networking was easier. On culture, there were examples of bodies introducing measures such as art galleries and art therapy in hospitals, and retaining land for use as orchards rather than selling it for development.

Partner perspectives: health Vanessa Young, Welsh NHS Confederation

Vanessa focussed on the impact the Act was having on the NHS in Wales. There are seven Local Health Boards, which work with 22 local authorities which provide social care. In addition there are two National Park authorities, three police forces and numerous other bodies. This is not an easy landscape to navigate.

As well as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Welsh NHS and local authorities are covered by a parallel piece of legislation – the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#). This establishes a duty to provide seamless care and ensure the carer voice is heard, and creates seven regional partnership boards which plan health and social care provision.

Vanessa described the concept of prudent healthcare which underpins recent policy and legislation. Prudent healthcare involves the public and professional acting as equal partners to co-produce health care; providing care



for those with the greatest health need first; to do only what is needed; to do no harm and to reduce inappropriate variation through evidence-based approaches.

The latest overarching policy statement – the National Plan for Health and Social Care – a Healthier Wales – states:

‘There will be a whole system approach to health and social care, in which services are only one element of supporting people to have better health and wellbeing throughout their whole lives. It will be a ‘wellness’ system, which aims to support and anticipate health needs, to prevent illness, and to reduce the impact of poor health’.

This provides a 10 year time frame to shift from hospital based care and treatment to a system based on health, wellbeing and prevention. This will only be achieved if the NHS acts in partnership with other public sector and voluntary bodies within the overarching framework of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Partner perspectives: local government Neville Rookes, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

Neville described the current structure of local government in Wales and the role of the Public Service Boards where local government, health and other bodies come together to share information, identify issues where cross organisation working is needed to tackle them and identify priorities for action.



• He explained that local government in Wales
• was committed to rapid progress with the Well-
• being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,
• and because it was not enacted until 2016, WLGA
• ran an ‘Early Adopter’ programme to maintain
• momentum. Six local authorities participated,
• which rose to 11 plus a national park authority,
• thanks to ‘peer to peer advocacy’.

• Each participant had to demonstrate their
• commitment both politically and amongst the
• senior management team. WLGA developed a
• diagnostic tool with which local authorities could
• self-assess their preparedness for the Act. WLGA
• had found that the five ways of working are key to
• success. They can be used to support any process
• of change – not just wellbeing.

• The experience of early adopters was invaluable
• when the Act was enacted, as local authorities
• could share their experiences with the other
• bodies covered by the Act. The existing local
• authority sustainable development co-ordinators
• network has also expanded to include other
• bodies, in effect becoming a practitioner network.

Partner perspectives: third sector Valerie Billingham, Age Cymru

• Valerie began by reminding delegates that Wales
• had the largest proportion of its population over
• retirement age in the UK. Ensuring social wellbeing
• of the population as a whole means ensuring
• older people have a good quality of life.

• Valerie outlined how a variety of Age Cymru
• projects were supporting older people, ranging
• from arts activities to ‘men’s sheds’ schemes.
• Although small in scale, she felt there was an
• important role for such schemes in improving
• individual and societal wellbeing.

• Age Cymru engages in a wide range of
• partnership arrangements, including the Welsh

Government's Third Sector Partnership Council. This is a long-standing arrangement that dates from the 1998 Government of Wales Act, which aims to make sure that the principles set out in the Third Sector Scheme are put into practice. It also provides an opportunity for the sector to raise issues of interest or concern. At local level, Age Cymru contributes to many Public Service Boards either directly or via local voluntary sector councils.

Political Perspectives

The delegation then attended lunch kindly hosted by Hefin David AM, and heard from the First Minister of Wales, Mark Drakeford.

Over lunch, delegates had the opportunity to network with stakeholders from a wide variety of Welsh organisations including from the Big Lottery Fund, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales and the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations, as well as with speakers from the formal sessions.

Hefin David, AM for Caerphilly and Mark Drakeford AM, First Minister of Wales

Hefin David welcomed delegates and visitors, and explained the critical importance of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to the Assembly's business.

He pointed to the new focus on the foundational economy as an example of how the Act was changing minds, policies and action. He also said that the Act was encouraging better collaboration between organisations.

Mark Drakeford welcomed the delegates and visitors and spoke about the importance of Wales maintaining links with Scotland and Northern

Ireland. The three countries had different forms of devolution but faced many similar challenges of poverty and inequality. In the absence of a Northern Ireland Executive in Stormont it was particularly important to maintain and build informal links between our countries.

In describing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Mark spoke of the need for us all to see ourselves as temporary custodians of our world with the responsibility of ensuring that we hand it on to future generations in as healthy and viable a state as possible. There will be many individual steps along the way. Only that morning he had been involved in the launch of the Welsh Government's plan for a Low Carbon Wales.

Mark said while all seven wellbeing goals were important, he saw increasing equality as one of the most important of all. Austerity made increasing equality very difficult, but he and his government were determined to close the gap in prosperity and wellbeing. He mentioned the importance of a new approach to the economy in doing so.

He said there would be difficult decisions ahead, where a balance would have to be struck between present needs and keeping future options open for the next generations. It was hard to think of any area of our lives where the intentions of the Act would not apply and the Welsh Government now has a duty to apply it to all its activities. We may have been the first to legislate in 2015 but we recognise that we are still at the start of our journey here in Wales and are open to learning from others.



Session 2: Partnership in perspective

This session aimed to explore the reality of partnership working in Wales, through the multiple structures established to promote collaboration and wellbeing.

Speakers:

Prof James Downe, Wales Centre for Public Policy
 Gareth Newell, Policy and Partnerships Manager, Cardiff Council
 Rt Hon Alun Michael, South Wales Policy and Crime Commissioner

Partnership in perspective Professor James Downe, Director of Research at the Wales Centre for Public Policy



James provided an overview of partnership working. He reminded delegates that partnership could mean many different things, with different terms in use such as participatory governance. He described how partnership could now be seen as a continuum,

from fully fragmented to co-operation, co-ordination, collaboration and integration.

Wales is currently at the collaboration stage, seeking to build consensus among stakeholders on a formal set of policies and actions. It is based on an inclusive approach involving different groups and sectors in the policy process with the aim of improving outcomes on 'wicked issues' where joined up working can deliver more change than working alone. He termed this 'collaborative advantage'.

- Existing research points to some vital ingredients for successful collaboration. Starting conditions are important, with mutual respect and power-sharing. An agreed vision and outcomes are essential, underpinned by good governance arrangements, protocols, structures and clarity of role. Informal factors, such as leadership, and understanding of winners and losers also matter.

- Partnership working has a long history in Wales. Since the first statement on collaboration in local government there have been seven further reviews that affect structures, culminating in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Wales should be good at collaboration - we are a small country with close links between the local and the national but our collaboration has tended to be about sharing knowledge rather than costs – talking shops rather than one-stop shops!

In 2016 the Wales Centre for Public Policy identified success factors for collaboration:

- project management and leadership
- active engagement
- involvement of staff and service users
- clear project aims
- ambitious but realistic and measurable outcomes and
- 'soft steering' by the Government providing funding information and expertise.

- Evidence shows that collaboration is only considered positively when it made sense for all partners. It does not necessarily save money, and it can be hard for some organisations to 'find willing partners to dance with'.

- We need to learn lessons from the past (for example failed attempts to share back office functions) and concentrate on proper planning and governance that results in change on the

ground. The big unanswered question for the Welsh Government is ‘can you make collaboration compulsory?’

Working together in Cardiff Gareth Newell, Cardiff Council

Gareth outlined the composition of Cardiff’s Public Service Board (PSB), as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The PSB is chaired by the Leader of the Council, with the Chair of the Health Board and Police and Crime Commissioner as Vice Chairs and it is supported by the PSB Delivery Board chaired by the Council’s Chief Executive.

The role of the PSB is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of its area by working to achieve the wellbeing goals in accordance with sustainable development principles. It must prepare and publish a plan setting out its objectives and the steps it will take to meet them. Cardiff’s Plan is at the draft stage with publication due shortly. ‘Cardiff – the liveable City’ has been developed following a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of city life. It includes a 100 indicators, quantitative and qualitative data and identifies future trends.

Cardiff’s plan is aligned with the priorities in partner organisations plans and other statutory plans. The authority realised it could deliver about half its manifesto pledges alone but that it needed to collaborate with others to solve the wicked issues. It therefore focusses on identified areas of ‘collaborative advantage’:

- Early Years and Families
- Child friendly city
- Tackling youth unemployment
- Air quality and active travel
- Community safety-night time economy, County lines and exploitation

- Into work services
- Homelessness and rough sleeping
- Assets – neighbourhood hubs.



Gareth went on to outline how PSB activity fitted in to the Council’s corporate and service plans and scrutiny arrangements, as well as the electoral cycle. The Council itself has seven overarching policy and service themes. They are improving outcomes for adults, improving outcomes for children, inclusive growth, community safety, education development, strategic asset management, resilient growth and its Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for monitoring progress with these and the PSB’s ‘areas of collaborative advantage’.

The lessons Cardiff had learned were that political leadership is key, that the Plan must be based on evidence, that aligning policy and delivery is essential but not always easy, that Cardiff’s PSB was built on the solid foundations of previous partnership working and that the timing, just before elections, meant that they were able to achieve cross-party support.

Rt Hon Alun Michael, South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner

Alun Michael shared his experiences as a youth and community worker, a JP, a City Councillor before becoming a local MP and then serving in a variety of ministerial roles including Deputy Home Secretary, Minister for Police and Secretary of State for Wales, becoming First Minister in 1999. He was elected as the first Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales in 2012 when he identified his key priorities as being co-operation and partnership, violence reduction, early intervention and prompt positive action to prevent and reduce harm.

He explained that the role of Police and Crime Commissioner is fundamentally different to that of a police authority, as the emphasis is not on crime but prevention. As such, the Police and Crime Commissioner cannot work alone. This is not new in policing!



The 2019 – 2023 South Wales Police and Crime Plan takes the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as its starting point. Alun outlined his commitment to planning for the long-term wellbeing of future generations and taking a joined up approach to preventing problems, involving people and together breaking intergenerational cycles of harm.

For policing the challenge of austerity is multi-layered and complex. This is why collaboration with other agencies is vital. Alun has a particular interest in the impact of adverse childhood experiences and the South Wales Police ‘Early Action Together’ programme is arousing international interest.

Delivery is a challenge with shrinking resources. The Police Grant from the Home Office has been cut by 31% in real terms and the number of police officers has gone down from 3,400 to 2,800 while demand continues to rise. That increase in demand often has little to do with crime per se but increasingly the police are seen as ‘the agency of first resort’ for many of society’s ills.

There is a particular challenge for South Wales police, as it has a much larger footprint than local authorities. It is therefore involved in multiple PSBs, and in addition is involved in two regional partnership boards.

When partnership works, it enables useful connections to be made and collaboration can help to solve problems.

Session 3: Are we making a difference?

This session aimed to explore how organisations in Wales are measuring outcomes.

Speakers:

Sue Leake, Welsh Government
 Dr Scott Orford, Cardiff University
 Tim Buckle, Wales Audit Office

Using national wellbeing data locally Sue Leake, Welsh Government

Sue Leake introduced the National Indicators used by the Welsh Government to measure progress. She noted that the requirements of an indicator is specified in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and that the Act also requires Welsh Ministers to set milestones against which progress can be measured. In considering which indicators should be selected, statisticians aimed to measure outcomes (rather than performance) over the longer term, have a limited number of coherent measures, and be those which resonated with the public. There was also the challenge of whether indicators should be subjective or objective. Of the indicators eventually selected, 46 are available at local authority level.

The Welsh Government publishes an [annual report](#) on progress, the latest being in September 2018, accompanied by a report on [children's wellbeing](#). As well as a full report, the data is presented in other formats including a Slideshare, data in StatsWales and Power BI, and an interactive tool.

The Welsh Government has in addition developed a range of research articles using regression analysis of National Survey for Wales data to analyse the key drivers behind various aspects of

Well-being of Wales														
National Indicators for Wales														
The seven well-being goals for Wales														
Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Goal 6	Goal 7								
A Prosperous Wales	A Resilient Wales	A Healthier Wales	A More Equal Wales	A Wales of Cohesive Communities	A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language	Globally Responsible Wales								
The way in which we are measuring progress														
National Well-being Indicators for Wales							1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
01	Percentage of live single births with a birth weight of under 2,500g													
02	Healthy life expectancy at birth including the gap between the least and most deprived													
03	Percentage of adults who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours													
04	Levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) pollution in the air													
05	Percentage of children who have fewer than two healthy lifestyle behaviours													
06	Measurement of development of young children													
07	Average capped 9 points score of pupils, including the gap between those who are eligible or are not eligible for free school meals													
08	Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework													
09	Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked (relative to UK average)													
10	Gross Disposable Household Income per head													
11	Percentage of businesses which are innovation-active													
12	Capacity (in MW) of renewable energy equipment installed													
13	Concentration of carbon and organic matter in soil													
14	The Ecological Footprint of Wales													
15	Amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person													

wellbeing. These have included analysis of the factors linked with mental wellbeing, loneliness, material deprivation, job satisfaction, feeling safe in their local area, speaking Welsh, involvement in local decision making and sense of community.

These reports help local authorities and Public Service Boards to understand that most variation in wellbeing is related to non-spatial factors, so that they can focus on the groups of people who most need support and intervention.

Sue then explained Welsh Ministers' approach to setting milestones, on which the Welsh Government is currently consulting stakeholders and the public. Once they have agreed the indicators against which milestones will be set, they will work with public bodies and experts to consider the approach for each specific milestone.

She said that National Indicators may need to be amended to reflect the milestones, and that they may also need to change to cover any gaps identified, to reflect new priorities, for example, the findings of the Fair Work Commission, or to address data issues.

Understanding Welsh Places Dr Scott Orford, Cardiff University / Understanding Welsh Places project

Scott Orford began by explaining that a significant number of people in Wales live in towns rather than in cities, yet smaller communities are overlooked by public policy. As a result, it is difficult to access data about towns to inform policy development and to evidence good practice.



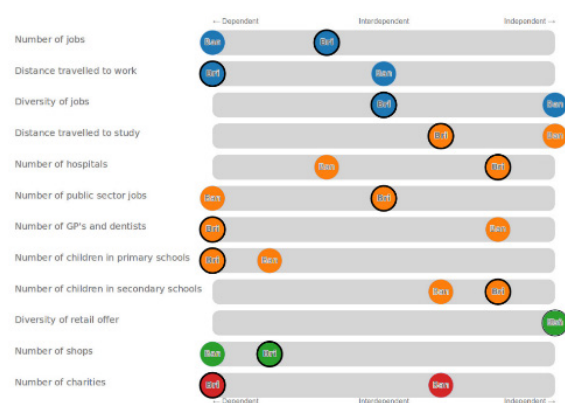
The Understanding Welsh Places project aims to provide intelligence about individual towns and communities to anyone interested in their future. It is funded by the Carnegie UK Trust and Welsh Government, with support from the Institute of Welsh Affairs.

The first step in the project is to create a website to present useful data at local level, in a quick and easy format which can be used by specialists and non-specialists alike. The website will present some data for a total of 308 places with populations of more than 1,000 people, with more information available for 193 places with populations of more than 2,000 people.

The intention is to release three tiers of data:

- Tier 1 - Official statistics that are complete, comparable and coherent.

- Tier 2 - Other useful quantitative data that, while likely to be complete, comparable and coherent, does not come from an 'official' source.
- Tier 3 - Qualitative intelligence, user-generated information and data that is not necessarily available for every place/town on the UWP website.



The first release of data will be Tier 1 information, with some Tier 2 output included where possible.

Scott explained that comparisons between places are popular. Rather than producing league tables, the project will generate a typology of places, based on characteristics such as housing tenure and health status.

The project will present data in user-friendly formats, including graphics, maps and charts, and will enable users to explore connections between different measures of wellbeing.

Scott then demonstrated how the Understanding Scottish Places website works, using examples from Dumfries.

There will be a soft launch of the website in summer 2019 with the official launch in autumn 2019. The project will work with partners to address data gaps and will develop examples of practical applications of the data to encourage use.

Auditing Change

Tim Buckle, Wales Audit Office

The Auditor General for Wales is required to examine public bodies covered by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, at least every five years. The bodies assessed on the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the Act in setting their wellbeing goals and taking steps to meet them. The Auditor General must present a report on his or her findings one year before elections to the National Assembly for Wales.

The requirement has raised a number of challenges, including developing methods to assess 'ways of working' which can be used across 44 very different bodies.

In feedback, stakeholders asked the Wales Audit Office (WAO) to approach their task in a different way, for example engaging with the public, focusing on behaviours rather than processes and working in partnership rather than measuring compliance.

The WAO has developed a somewhat different approach to auditing wellbeing as a result, focusing on how bodies work as well as what they do and aiming to provide support and early feedback to them. To do this the Auditor General has developed some 'examination principles' along with a suite of 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working.

Tim then outlined the 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working: taking a long-term view; focusing on prevention; taking an integrated approach; collaborating effectively; and involving people effectively.

For example, the indicators that would show that a body is fully applying the preventative way of working are:

1. The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled.
2. The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places.
3. The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs.
4. There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources.

Tim concluded by saying that auditing sustainable development and change is challenging. It raised issues of focus, boundaries, how to be holistic, keeping pace with 'what good looks like', and using different types and sources of evidence. The WAO is learning along with those it examines.

Dinner with Welsh stakeholders

The 21 March concluded with an informal dinner with Welsh stakeholders.

After a welcome from Aideen McGinley (Carnegie UK Trust), Vivienne Sugar (Bevan Foundation), Gilbert Lee (Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Community Partnership), Councillor John Boyle (Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council and Alderman Arnold Hatch (Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council), delegates enjoyed a lively informal exchange of views and experiences. Some old friendships were renewed, and many more friendships made.

Session 4: Embedding community engagement

Case study of Monmouthshire County Council

Paul Matthews, Chief Executive
 Matthew Gatehouse
 Owen Wilce
 Abigail Barton
 Richard Drinkwater

One Monmouthshire – Community Planning and Beyond

Monmouthshire County Council’s approach to community wellbeing is distinctive.

Context

Paul Matthews set out the context in which Monmouthshire County Council works. The county has a population of 100,000 people, who live in a mix of small towns and villages. It is in a strong strategic location, in easy commuting distance of Cardiff, Bristol and Birmingham. The county is mostly rural, with a long history as a border area and rich agriculture. It is classed as one of the most prosperous areas of Wales yet still faces challenges of poverty and inequality.

The authority provides education, social care, environmental and other services, with a budget of £1/4 billion a year and 3,500 FTE staff. It has 43 elected members, with a Conservative majority. Like all local authorities its budget is under pressure, but Monmouthshire has seen the largest reduction of all areas.

The vision of the authority is to create sustainable, resilient communities. In delivering this, its ambition is to foster independence by offering a ‘hand-up not a hand-out’. It has four core priorities:

- Children doing well
- Nobody left behind
- Enterprise
- Locally accessible services.

The authority has integrated its vision into everything it does. It regards its staff and people in the area as assets and regards its expenditure as investment in the community. It has therefore sought to turn the conventional relationship between the local authority and the wider community on its head, with the authority’s role being to activate the resources within the community rather than deliver services to a passive population.



The place we love



- Fierce, contested, proud, born of conflict, border territory
- Economic success story but with hidden pockets of deprivation
- Beautiful
- Voted to stay in Europe
- Very active civil society, blessed with social capital
- Active local media



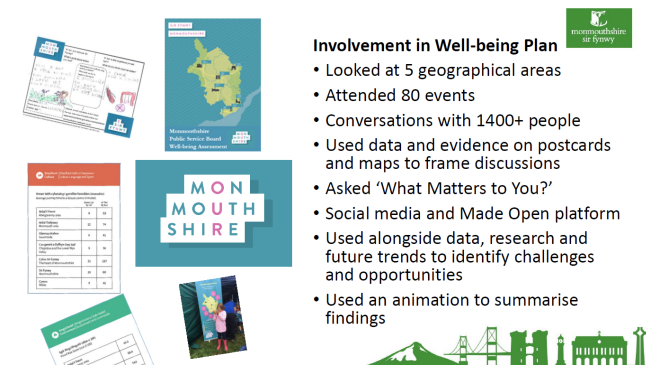
Wellbeing assessment

Matthew Gatehouse described how Monmouthshire Council has adopted a different approach to assessing wellbeing. Although they were aware of the standard data on the area, the authority felt that they gave only a partial picture. They wanted to find out what mattered to people, and therefore decided on a programme of active engagement with the community.

Over a period of 5-6 months they visited 80 different locations ranging from supermarket car parks to music festivals, swimming lessons and community centres as well as using social media. Facebook in particular was a key tool. The authority has used all kinds of other methods too, such as a cloud wall.

In total the authority engaged in 16,000 conversations over 5-6 months. They worked with their PSB partners also.

The engagement was designed to avoid picking up on 'surface' concerns such as pot holes or dog mess and instead identify deeper issues. The big concerns to emerge were house prices and public transport. The findings were summarised in an animation and fed back to local residents.



Involvement in Well-being Plan

- Looked at 5 geographical areas
- Attended 80 events
- Conversations with 1400+ people
- Used data and evidence on postcards and maps to frame discussions
- Asked 'What Matters to You?'
- Social media and Made Open platform
- Used alongside data, research and future trends to identify challenges and opportunities
- Used an animation to summarise findings

The engagement also revealed the very considerable social capital that exists in Monmouthshire. This indicated a major resource that the authority could draw upon. While the county has a social profile that is rather different to many areas, the authority feels that everywhere has some social capital. It found that often those with the most to give were people who were angry about something.

In engaging with people, the authority has used emotional terms, talking about 'love', kindness and passion – terms that the community understand. It has also emphasised the need for trust between the authority and residents.

Community Involvement

Owen Wilce and Abigail Barton explained the authority's approach to community involvement. The council decided to take engagement several steps further by involving people as 'volunteers'.

In total 1,757 people support the authority in some way. There is a wide range of roles, which can be seen via the council's volunteer digital platform.



Engaging people in this way is not without challenges. Volunteers will often be more honest than paid staff, and the authority has had to change its culture to support them. The authority now has a toolkit and trains every member of its paid staff in how to inspire others. They are now exploring how best to unlock local social capital further, feeling that they have merely scraped the surface of the potential contribution.



Key lessons are that what matters to people are their individual communities not 'Monmouthshire'; that training is really

important; and that there are gaps in leadership in some sectors. They are still considering how best to engage with people who are skills rich but time poor.

Future plans

The authority is continuing to engage extensively with the community, using a wide range of different techniques.

As a result, it is now looking at developing new priorities as it gains a deeper understanding of the community's concerns. These are likely to be:

- Decarbonisation
- Dementia
- Diabetes.

These are not traditional local authority concerns but are rather the major challenges facing people in the area.

The PSB is working together to address these problems, with distinctions between public, private and third sector reducing.

The bigger questions are what should public services be doing in 2025 – what would a reasonable person expect of a local authority at that date? Monmouthshire is working with residents to be clearer about what the future might hold and its role ahead.

Chepstow Community Hub Richard Drinkwater

Delegates then visited one of the authority’s flagship community hubs, experiencing at first hand Monmouthshire’s rural roads.

The Chepstow hub was previously the local library and was threatened with closure by the authority due to spending cuts. Following severe flooding in the area, it was clear that the library had a key role in the community.

The library became a hub, not only retaining its information and learning services but also providing access to a wide range of other services, including council services such as licensing and building control, as well as services provided by other organisations, such as Gwent Police and Citizen’s Advice. While many centres co-locate services, Chepstow hub offers access via a single enquiry with frontline staff.

The latest development in Monmouthshire Council’s community hubs is for the authority to take over the operation of local post offices facing closure. Plans to do so are well advanced in Usk, not far from Chepstow, and could be rolled out to other community hubs.

Delegates could see for themselves that the hub was well used by local people of all ages.

After a short tour of the premises and lunch, a busy 24 hours came to a close.



The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

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