

12 February 2025

Equality and Social Justice Committee,
Welsh Parliament,
Cardiff,
CF99 1SN
By email

Dear Jenny Rathbone MS,

Re: Social cohesion consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your committee's consultation on social cohesion.

As you may know, Carnegie UK is a 111-year-old independent policy foundation based in Dunfermline, Scotland with a mission to improve the wellbeing of the people of the UK and Ireland. Our focus is on collective wellbeing, which means everyone having what they need to live well now and in the future. We work to tackle threats to wellbeing and to grow support for a wellbeing approach to decision making across the whole spectrum of public policy.

Carnegie UK produces the [Life in the UK Index](#) – the largest independent research study examining the collective wellbeing of the people of the UK, with detailed nation-by-nation reports for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and [Wales](#) on environmental and democratic themes.

In late 2024 Carnegie UK published Life in the UK: Wales index findings. The index findings tell us that the collective wellbeing of people in Wales is stagnant since 2023, much like the rest of the UK. This stasis in living standards is being driven by persistent and entrenched inequality across the four domains of social, economic, environmental and democratic wellbeing, all of which can contribute to social cohesion. **Our research found no improvement in wellbeing across any of our headline measures for the people of Wales in 2024.**

The index findings highlight the specific groups of people, geographical areas, and issues impacting society in Wales which the Committee could build on. The

Carnegie United Kingdom Trust

Chair
David Emerson CBEChief Executive
Sarah Davidson

following four factors stand out as particularly significant in predicting lower or higher collective wellbeing for people living in Wales:

- **Household income** is strongly associated with overall collective wellbeing in Wales, particularly for lower earners. People with higher annual household incomes of £52,000 and above have a collective wellbeing score of 66, ten points higher than people earning up to £26,000 (56).
- People living with a **disability** in Wales have an average collective wellbeing score of 54, which is ten points lower than for people without a disability (64).
- **People aged 16 to 34** have a collective wellbeing score of 59. This is seven points lower than the collective wellbeing score of people aged 55 and over (66).
- **Rural versus urban living** - People living in urban areas in Wales have a collective wellbeing score of 60, six points lower than people in rural areas (66).

Based on this evidence, Carnegie UK recommends that the Committee considers the following issues and interventions urgently needed to support social cohesion and overcome tensions:

1. Repairing democracy – the missing mission:

Since 2021, the health of democracy in Wales and across the UK has been on a continuous decline. The 2024 Life in the UK: Wales index evidence highlights why this must be addressed as a matter of urgency. 2024 is a significant year for democracy and delivery. A new UK Government, Welsh First Minister, and the marking of 25 years of the establishment of the National Assembly of Wales offer a moment in time to make headway in terms of increasing awareness of the systems, structures and processes of participatory and deliberative engagement. **To achieve this, the Welsh Government must go further in delivering the statutory ways of working, which includes the involvement of citizens.**

2. Empowering public bodies to successfully implement the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

A significant amount of support is needed to equip people working in public bodies with the skills to think long term. Too often, legislation placing new duties on the public sector is passed without providing any support for the training, development and longer-term cultural change required to properly implement it. In a year where various implementation plans and strategies have been completed and published, the Welsh Government should not overlook the importance of ensuring public sector workers have the skills and knowledge to embed a preventative approach in practice.



We urge both the London and Cardiff governments to use the 25th anniversary of devolution as an opportunity to rebuild public confidence by increasing meaningful public participation in decision-making in Wales which in turn would help with social cohesion across the nation.

We at Carnegie UK commend the Welsh Government for its commitment to improving wellbeing but from the findings in our report, we would also warn that long-term, cross-government action will be required to improve people's lives and address inequality.

We are pleased to enclose a copy of the report to feed into the consultation with further details of the demographic breakdowns and recommendations.

Carnegie UK would be pleased to offer our support as you develop this strategy in the months and years ahead. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Pinkney

Head of Research and Insight
Susan.pinkney@carnegieuk.org