

Barriers to the Successful Implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Written Evidence from the Pembrokeshire Together for Change Programme

26 November 2020

1. The Pembrokeshire Together for Change Programme is the Third Sector (Solva Care, PAVS and PLANED) led initiative funded by the National Lottery Community Fund's COVID-19 Legacy Fund to retain and sustain the positive changes resulting from the pandemic. The Programme started in March 2020 and seeks – through partnership working – to aid recovery and build community resilience in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (hereafter referred to as the Act). We have included in this response, some of the actions that we have successfully undertaken to progress the delivery of the Act.
2. We are in broad agreement with the conclusions of the Future Generations Commissioner in her review of progress in the implementation of the Act as set out in the Future Generations Report 2020 in that, whilst some progress has been made, much remains to be done. We are answering the 6 matters of enquiry in the consultation from the position that the successful implementation of the Act lies in building and strengthening communities and the community groups that support them. We use the term 'communities' mainly in a geographical sense in our response.
3. We have addressed each of the elements of the consultation in turn as below:
4. **(1) Awareness and understanding of the Act and its implications.**
 - (a) We have held many meetings with grassroots community groups and networks during the pandemic to discuss their experiences, plans and needs for the future in order to support the wellbeing of their populations however, we found no explicit reference made to the Act. That is not to say that their responses did not reflect the aspirations, or at least aspects of it. The use of the Act as a framework for planning was highlighted mostly by third-sector intermediary organisations.

- (b) Much has been done to publicise the groundbreaking nature of the Act, but this does not seem to have impinged on the consciousness of the public and local community action groups.
- (c) Our consultations with community groups and sector leaders have started with open-ended discussions on the delivery of sustainable social and green models of wellbeing. The first step in the solutions identified has been the need for a joint vision and strategy, and the Programme Team has embedded the Act in their drafting. The resulting documents will be discussed by the Public Services Board and the Pembrokeshire Community Recovery Coordination Group, and by associated sub-groups created to take forward a broad agenda on the determinants of wellbeing.
- (d) The outbreak of COVID-19 presents a good opportunity to address the Act in existing and future strategies. Communities have reacted swiftly and effectively to support people's needs, and it is widely recognised by the public sector that a true partnership with local groups is essential to build a better future. We have shown in Pembrokeshire how these positive developments can be harnessed and built on to deliver the Act.

5. (2) The resources available to public bodies to implement the Act, and how effectively they have been deployed

- (a) The resources available to public bodies, which themselves consist of too many tiers, have been made available through short-term, centrally administered grants. The grant decision-making bodies have lacked community representation, and the funds have not always reached front-line community groups or strengthened adequately the third-sector intermediary bodies that work so effectively with them. Projects are often duplicative, although given different names. Furthermore, they are not always evaluated and therefore the learning from them cannot be shared. This situation must be rectified.
- (b) A rethink is needed on how to direct funds to deliver the Act. More of the funding should impact on local practice. Our own experience also suggests that resources should be allocated to supporting third- and public-sector delivery so that it is joined up and coordinated. The Together for Change Programme is independent and has successfully brokered genuine partnership working by the sectors. By achieving this, we have facilitated the agreement of a vision whilst providing evidence for planning and a way forward in action for supporting and sustaining community-led endeavours.

6. (3) Support provided to public bodies by the Future Generations Commissioner

The Commissioner is visible nationally but cannot – given her limited resources – provide all the support needed by public bodies. Given our experience, such support should in any case be based on local needs, and be timely and locally available. It is hoped, however, that the way of working on which success depends moves from a project basis to being mainstreamed, and embedded in organisations and partnerships.

7. (4) The leadership role of the Welsh Government

- (a) We do not see the Act having the same status or priority as other acts, for example the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act is not highlighted or monitored closely enough by Government. This needs addressing if there is a serious intent to deliver.
- (b) The Act is a policy that integrates the different policy streams of Government, and it would be helpful to have a Minister in charge of delivering it.
- (c) Great variation exists in the engagement of Town and Community Councils, which could – and should – have a greater role in local democratic processes and actions to progress the delivery of the Act. This has created a democratic deficit in some parishes, which needs addressing by Government – possibly through incentives.
- (d) There needs to be a greater shift in resources to prevention – a need that has been identified repeatedly but has still not been adequately met.

8. (5) Any other barriers to successful implementation of the Act (e.g. Brexit, COVID, etc.)

- (a) In terms of barriers, in Pembrokeshire we have shown that COVID-19 has a ‘silver lining’ that is pushing to the fore the need for the sectors to work together in a co-productive way, and one that is inclusive and cognisant of the needs of local communities.
- (b) Barriers to the implementation of the Act do exist, but we have seen those barriers starting to break down in Pembrokeshire. There is never a good time for change, and especially not when organisations are under unprecedented pressure, but progress and change are no longer options.
- (c) Public-sector organisations must develop a more trusting relationship with communities, seek to better understand their needs and make co-production an integral part of the way in which they work. This requires a culture change at all levels, led transparently and demonstrably by organisational leaders. On the other hand, the public needs to view the public sector in a different light, and to move away from a transactional relationship with services to one of resourcefulness, independence and cohesion.

- (d) Government needs to openly and regularly champion volunteering, including from the workplace. It could helpfully celebrate community action too, and not leave such matters mostly in the hands of WCVA and other third-sector umbrella organisations. Government should signal priority issues for action in an integrated way: priorities that have been highlighted by COVID-19 as either not working well in organisations or as exacerbating the many inequalities that are endemic in our society – particularly, for example, in relation to digital know-how, employment, length of food chains, affordable and adapted housing, and availability of transport.
- (e) National policy and a push are needed on local asset transfers to help strengthen communities, and also on local procurement to help local economies.

9. (6) How to ensure that the Act is implemented successfully in the future

Throughout our responses above, we have suggested actions to ensure the successful implementation of the Act. Our solutions point to a collective responsibility but with some clear suggestions for Government to take forward. In summary, these relate to strengthening local democratic processes, demonstrating a commitment to the delivery of the Act, and reviewing structures and funding mechanisms to ensure that funding makes a difference at ground level.

- 10. We hope that this feedback has been helpful in informing the deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee. We are available to present the detail of the above evidence if required.

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