

# Delivering for future generations: the story so far

## Summary of engagement with young people

January 2021

As part of the inquiry into the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Public Accounts Committee sought the views of young people, given the nature of the Act and its relevance to future generations.

### 1. Engagement

In October 2020, the Chair wrote to over 70 educational institutions and youth groups to ask for their support to engage young people in the inquiry. Given the importance of the Act to young people, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and Wales' recovery from it, the Committee made every effort to hear from young people themselves. The Committee understood that due to the scale of the challenges faced by the education sector throughout the pandemic, that schools and youth groups might not have the capacity to engage.

The committee wanted to hear about young people's:

- awareness of the Act;
- experiences of how the Act has been implemented;
- views about what the barriers to implementing the Act are; and
- how it can be better implemented in future.

Resources were prepared to enable schools and youth groups to deliver an activity with their groups, gather young people's views and submit those views. These included:

[An activity resource pack](#); and

[A power Point presentation](#).

## 1.1. Promotion

The engagement resource was promoted extensively through a variety of channels, including the Senedd's website and social media platforms. Engaging content, such as a [blog](#) and [promotional video](#), catered for a variety of audiences. Focused social media advertisements enabled targeting of specific groups.

## 1.2. Respondents

A total of **14 young people**, aged 16 to 18, took part in the engagement. Participants came from two education providers: politics students from Crosskeys Campus, Coleg Gwent and Swansea 5 from Inspire Training.

## 2. Findings

Participants were asked to discuss and record what each of the 7 well-being goals meant to them and what barriers they believed will need to be overcome to achieve those goals.

2 of the 14 participants had heard of the Act and the Future Generations Commissioner, 12 had not.

### 2.1. A prosperous Wales

Participants felt that a prosperous Wales develops social mobility, good mental health services and a sustainable environment and economy.

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Social mobility was depicted by participants as the opportunity to escape poverty through learning new skills; the ability to earn a fair wage and access to affordable housing, in towns and cities which no longer have '*rough areas*'.

"A prosperous Wales would have a stronger private sector. People need to be in good well-paying employment".

Participants identified good mental health as a marker of a prosperous Wales. Access to mental health services, a healthy balanced diet and school qualifications not based upon exams were put forward as ways to support a prosperous Wales.

"A healthy population is important for the prosperity of the country",

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Participants saw a sustainable environment and economy as very important to a prosperous Wales. Sustainable forms of energy were seen as essential for the environment and the economy.

“Industries with a firmer hand to push forward a greener environment, there’s a chance to enhance skills and offer jobs”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a prosperous Wales would be a lack of environmental action and political strength, and brain drain.

In relation to environmental action, participants agreed that a lack of education and motivation could be barriers to remedying the environmental problems. The Welsh Baccalaureate was also deemed not to be the correct avenue to “address global issues”.

Participants also felt that businesses should take more environmental responsibility:

“There’s too much emphasis on the consumer to make changes for the environment when it usually costs more and is more time consuming when large businesses / factories etc. are still mass producing plastic or other damaging products”.

Political strength was also seen by participants as a potential barrier to achieving a prosperous Wales. A more ethnically diverse Welsh government was suggested as a remedy to this barrier. Some saw Wales as “small on a world stage” with the Welsh government not having enough powers to fully deliver a prosperous Wales:

“The UK government is suggesting that devolution was a mistake; they may remove powers within the next five years. Independence is rising in Wales but is still very low. The UK government is clawing back powers from Wales”.

Finally, participants suggested that a brain drain, whereby people from Wales seek professional opportunities in other countries, would be a barrier to achieving a prosperous Wales:

“If you want money go to England, we need good brains and able people”.

## 2.2. A resilient Wales

Participants felt that a resilient Wales prepares for the future with a strong economy.

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Participants agreed that being prepared for the future was indicative of a resilient Wales, including preparedness for disasters and climate change. Participants felt that a strong economy was important for a resilient Wales and highlighted the possibilities of a green economy to produce 100% renewable energy.

“When the coal mines were closed down, the rate of poverty increased. We lost our traditional industries. We need a strong economy”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a resilient Wales would be political strength and societal attitudes.

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Participants argued that the UK government holds too much power and is too involved in decisions made in Wales. Moreover, the short-term appointments of politicians and governments was highlighted as a barrier in taking forward long-term issues. Despondent attitudes within society was seen as a barrier not only to change but to political challenge:

“It’s the fault of the governing party if ultimately things aren’t right – so change the party for fresh ideas. It’s a dominant party, always using the same strategies, becoming complacent – they need to be challenged”.

## 2.3. A healthier Wales

Participants felt that a healthier Wales focuses on prevention as much as cure, prioritises mental health services and trains skilled practitioners.

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Participants agreed that lowering the price of healthy foods would help focus on prevention as much as cure to create a healthier Wales.

“Access to healthy and nutritious meals – emphasised support to lower income families. Basic needs must be met! ( Maslow’s hierarchy of needs)”.

Access to mental health services was identified as an element of a healthier Wales, including mental health support in schools and education about eating disorders.

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“In a healthier Wales, support for mental health is easily accessible – A mental health specific GP surgery, purely for mental health, where you register like you would for a GP, should be available to everyone”.

Participants recognised that training practitioners and keeping professionals within Wales was an element of a healthier Wales.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a healthier Wales would be lifestyle choices, education and hospital closures.

Participants considered that people need to make better lifestyle choices and that reluctance to do so was a barrier to a healthier Wales. Participants felt that the cost of eating healthily and joining a gym exacerbated the issue.

“Unhealthy food is cheaper and gym membership can be expensive. It can also be expensive to travel to gyms”.

Discussions highlighted the closures of hospitals and accidents and emergency departments as a barrier, along with not enough focus on non-core subjects in schools.

“There’s too much focus on core subjects in school, more time is needed for arts, sports, cooking, life skills etc”.

## 2.4. A more equal Wales

Participants felt that a more equal Wales addresses poverty and discrimination, and has an accessible education system.

Participants agreed that a more equal Wales would have addressed poverty, fair distribution of resources and transport infrastructure.

“A lot of Wales is poor, more opportunities are needed and offered to those living in poverty, We need more of a balance – rich v poor”.

“Race, class and poverty need to not matter in terms of progression”.

Participants also highlighted that discrimination and racism played no part in a more equal Wales, and that diversity was important:

“More equal representation in parliament. We need more ethnic minorities!”

Finally, participants felt strongly that a more equal Wales would provide an accessible and affordable education system to everyone. Tuition fees and the opportunities offered by state compared to private education, was seen as matters hindering a more equal Wales..

“Tuition fees – get rid of them and make education more affordable. Reintroduce grants. Similar to a parent’s wage e.g. tax. Should be based on income”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a more equal Wales would be society’s attitude and the social divide.

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Participants stressed that the media played a role in creating barriers to a more equal Wales through discrimination and by perpetuating class stereotypes. Participants felt that public perception, from those “not educated on modern matters of a forever changing society”, would be a significant barrier.

Participants saw a widening social divide as a significant barrier to a more equal Wales. This was illustrated with examples from the education sector:

“Standards and facilities within schools and colleges vary greatly resulting in poor and insufficient education with fewer opportunities in state schools”.

“There’s a postcode bias on state schools”.

## 2.5. A Wales of more cohesive communities

Participants felt that a Wales of more cohesive communities enjoys good housing and facilities, with strong local democracy.

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Participants felt that there would be safe, adequate housing within communities with strict rules to ensure landlords provided fit for purpose housing. It was agreed that housing should be affordable and that people could work from home where possible.

“No one should be homeless”.

It was agreed that communities would have thriving community centres and transport links to ensure a more cohesive community and that support to learn conversational Welsh would be available.

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“Everyone has the opportunity to learn Welsh. If they force it people won’t enjoy it. Maybe just conversational Welsh should be taught effectively”.

Finally, participants deemed local democracy as an important element of a Wales of cohesive communities. The idea that local people have a say in what gets built, events, services provided and local budget decisions was a strong theme.

“Communities should thrive on their own, looking after their local area. Communities need more going on to create bonds”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a more cohesive Wales would be nonprogressive town centres and poor employment opportunities.

Participants agreed that nonprogressive towns centres would be a barrier to more cohesive communities. A lack of funding and choice of shop, along with poor spaces for face to face contact were seen as the primary barriers faced.

“Parking charges in town centres, we need to rethink them totally because of internet shopping”.

Poor employment opportunities was also seen as a barrier to more cohesive communities, with a lack of work-life balance and the need to travel further for well-paying jobs being the examples given.

“Young people will have to travel to the city for high paying jobs, meaning moving away from their local communities due to poor transport and job opportunities”.

## 2.6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Participants felt that a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language combines culture and education, and is fully bilingual.

Participants felt that a thriving Wales would deliver a curriculum that taught young Welsh people about their history and culture.

In relation to the compulsory teaching of the Welsh language, many agreed that it should remain compulsory but taught for enjoyment and “not for the grades”.

“Compulsory Welsh language courses should not have so much pressure – they teach it and make it so stressful. Such as poetry. Make it more fun and conversational. And offer separate accreditations for different levels”.

Participants agreed that a bilingual society is positive for communities and is an important element of a thriving Wales.

“We should have full or majority bilingualism”.

“Culture is vital – language is part of our culture so should be celebrated but not forced upon us”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language would be attitude, poor uptake in adult Welsh language courses and a lack of creativity in schools.

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Participants agreed that a significant barrier would be a dismissive attitude towards the Welsh language and our place within the world.

“We need to adopt a new attitude. Maybe because the language has been thrust upon us”.

“People feel that we have no impact on the world stage or not aware of it”.

It was agreed that uptake in adult Welsh language courses, possibly due to lack of time or opportunity, would be a barrier

“There are not many opportunities to learn Welsh when you finish school”.

Finally, participants agreed that not seeing creative skills and subjects as equally important to other subjects as a barrier in achieving a culturally vibrant Wales:

“Schools are too target driven. There’s no time for Eisteddfods or extra-curricular activities”.

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## 2.7. A globally responsible Wales

Participants felt that a globally responsible Wales sources goods responsibly and is a progressive country on the world stage.

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Participants felt that sourcing responsibly, ensuring that we do not have a negative impact on people and the environment, is essential for a globally responsible Wales.

“There should be a ban on products made in sweat shops and clothes should be affordable but responsibly sourced”.

Being a progressive country on the world stage was deemed to be possible and important in relation to a globally responsible Wales.

“In relation to climate change we could be carbon neutral. We are only a small country but we can inspire nations and countries e.g. charging for plastic bags”.

Participants suggested that the barriers faced in achieving a globally responsible Wales would be attitude and a lack of legislative power.

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Participants agreed that major changes are needed in attitudes towards waste, sustainable living and renewable energy if Wales is to become globally responsible.

“People complain about wind farms. Wales should be covered in them, by using our coastline and countryside”.

Finally, a lack of legislative power to make decisions over water and renewable energy production for example were seen as a barrier to a globally responsible Wales.

“Taking climate policy into our own hands gives us more control, but we do not have enough powers, we are not independent”.