

By email

11/09/17

Advice from the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to Ceredigion PSB

Dear Ceredigion Public Services Board and supporting officers,

Thank you for seeking my advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft well-being objectives. I understand you have agreed guiding principles and have called your well-being objectives 'aims', which currently are:

- Community Resilience:
 - Enable communities to become prosperous, sustainable and connected by supporting the transformation of economic prospects: Improve physical and digital infrastructure to support economic development, including suitable and affordable homes.
 - Create conditions for communities to support individuals from all backgrounds to live fulfilling and independent lives: Develop and sustain social networks, and cultural and linguistic opportunities in order to enhance well-being and maintain independence.
 - Create environmentally responsible and safe communities that can adapt and respond to the effects of climate change: Support communities to enhance their relationship with the natural environment and prepare for extreme weather events.
- Individual Resilience:
 - Enable every child to have the best start in life: Support parental preparedness through early intervention, overcome inequalities and promote holistic learning.
 - Enable people to grasp opportunities and meet challenges throughout their lives: Improve vocational and life skills, build confidence and enable people to respond positively to change.
 - Enable people to live active, happy and healthy lives: Support physical and mental health and improve well-being through promoting healthy behaviours.

My team have found talking to you regularly and meeting with some of you last week has given them an understanding of how you work together as a Public Services Board (PSB); the method you have taken to well-being planning and your intentions to deliver the objectives and take steps in a different way. As they will have discussed with you, I was keen that my advice would be useful to you and the context within which you work, so I hope you have also found these regular touch-points helpful and that they have given you some guidance along the way.

I also wanted my response to your well-being assessment to be 'feed-forward', rather than 'feedback', helping you to consider how to approach continuous assessment and well-being planning. I have recently published ['Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow'](#), which highlights key findings and recommendations for PSBs on the key areas of change needed to make better decisions for future generations. I am drawing on these reports in providing my advice to you.

As you know, in setting draft objectives and taking steps to meet them, PSBs must use the five ways of working to challenge business as usual and maximise their contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals. My advice is intended to help you consider how you might do this effectively and how you could demonstrate through your well-being plan that you have used the five ways of working to shape your steps.

Therefore, my advice is both about adopting different ways of working and specific to the draft objectives you have identified from your assessments to focus on, plus seeking to connect you with others who may be able to help. As my team have explained, the purpose of this advice is not to give you my opinion on your well-being objectives or your draft plan. These are determined and owned by you, as a collective PSB.

Adopting different ways of working to take steps to meet your draft objectives:

For each of your draft objectives and the steps you are setting, I would like to understand what this means for Ceredigion and how this is different to what you have done before. The draft plan you have given my team begins to explain this, but I would encourage you to be clear how each step is relevant to your communities. Achieving the ambitions of this Act is about the 'what' and the 'how' i.e. what are you doing to contribute to our shared vision of the seven national well-being goals, which acknowledge that sustainable development connects the environment in which we live, the economy in which we work, the society in which we enjoy and the cultures in which we share, to people and their quality of life? How you are applying the sustainable development principle to shape your actions for Ceredigion?

I can see that you have started to acknowledge in your draft plan how your objectives and steps 'meet' the five ways of working, but it is important that PSBs demonstrate clearly how the five ways of working have been used to challenge current thinking and form your plan. I would advise that you strengthen this and show your thinking more clearly, in the context of Ceredigion, rather than in general terms. I advise that you see the five ways of working as equally important and use the questions below to challenge yourselves to work differently. The ways of working are not cross-cutting themes, but behaviours to help you to maximise your contribution to the seven well-being goals.

Your support team have worked hard to help you achieve this impressive level of progress in drafting your objectives and steps but it's important that you acknowledge and demonstrate that setting objectives and steps is not business as usual. In the past, we have drawn out themes and priorities and written plans that show what we

are doing anyway. Even now, despite the evidence in the assessments showing a range of alarming trends, it seems PSBs are only engaging in safe and non-contentious territory. To adapt your ways of working requires a fundamentally different approach and you need to give yourselves the time and space to question whether current approaches to public service delivery are fit for the future and explore key pressures and tensions in delivery for each of your objectives.

The workshop I attended in February is the sort of discussion I think PSBs need to continue to have; using their whole meeting or creating specific sessions to think differently, challenge barriers through using the five ways of working and have an honest discussion about the tensions between policy issues and current practice within your organisations in relation to each objective.

I would advise that you will need to demonstrate how your PSB has considered the following in relation to each of your objectives:

- **Long-term:** What do you understand about the long-term trends, opportunities, risks and likely scenarios for this issue? What are they and have you explored their impact on your steps? Are there current gaps in your data or understanding? What fore-sighting or future trends information do you need to understand this issue better? What capacity, confidence and expertise do you need to fill gaps in knowledge? To inform the action you take, you will need to adequately map and consider the future trends for each of your objectives. My office is working with others to build capacity in this area and, as your support team are aware, Welsh Government have been adding to the 'Future Trends' report resources, which you should make most use of by accessing available through Objective Connect or by contacting David Thomas. [The Oxford Martin 'Now for the long-term'](#) report shows global and national future trends that we all need to react to in carrying out sustainable development.
- **Prevention:** In considering this issue, do you have an understanding of what you are trying to prevent? What are the root causes of the issue and when would be the best point to intervene? Are you clear on whether it is primary prevention i.e. seeking to prevent something before it has even occurred; secondary prevention i.e. preventing something from getting worse; or tertiary prevention i.e. softening the impact of something that has ongoing effects; that is needed? This is the difference between encouraging someone to wear a bicycle helmet (primary prevention of head-injury); putting someone in the recovery position if they have fallen from their bike (secondary prevention of the injury worsening) and counselling after the accident (tertiary prevention to help ongoing injuries from worsening).

Many PSBs haven't used their assessments to fully understand both the current situation and the scale and nature of the response required. Many of your draft objectives are preventative, but how services and resourcing will change in Ceredigion could be made more explicit. I appreciate you might not know the full picture yet, but I want to see all PSBs exploring how they break cycles and dig deeper into data to

see the implicit messages in the data to better understand the causes and effects of key issues and trends to inform your steps.

- **Collaboration:** It is important that the people who sit around the PSB table can bring the best range of insights, constructive challenge, data and solutions to the PSB. Have you got the right people around the table, at the right level to make decisions around this issue? Who else might you need to be collaborating with to better understand this? As recommended in my report on the Well-being Assessments, now is a timely opportunity to review the invited membership of the PSB and consider who are the 'unusual' suspects that you may need to work with to take steps to meet this objective?

In delivering the steps, how might your organisations collaborate? You will need to demonstrate how your PSB is considering the steps that need to be taken together and across organisational boundaries in order to effectively meet your objectives. This could include co-locating staff, breaking down traditional structures, arranging job-swaps and secondments and, importantly, pooling resources. I will want to see how you have considered these benefits and how the steps you will take move you towards achieving this collaboration.

- **Integration:** For each objective, how are you going to move away from just doing something that meets the objective, and instead, demonstrate that you are taking steps which maximise your contribution to each of the goals? Instead of looking at this issue in a traditional and general sense, have you looked at the definition for each of the goals to widen your understanding of well-being for this issue and the opportunities which might exist for meeting these goals through each of your objectives? How well do you understand the contribution your organisation makes at the moment to this objective? And do you understand how different is the contribution you will need to make going forward for this objective?

How can you plot what's going on elsewhere in your organisations, the strategies and plans at a regional or a national level, to connect with others on achieving this objective? Your draft plan includes links between the different individual organisation's well-being objectives, but have you yet acknowledged the barriers or tensions that have arisen and what steps can you (or others) take to remove them? Who else is needed around the PSB table to help you interconnect decision-making and improve well-being for this issue?

- **Involvement:** My feedback to your well-being assessment acknowledged the hard work and impressive range of people you involved and I know you have continued this over the last few months. I want to see a demonstrated continued focus on this for all PSBs. How are you taking steps to understand the lived experiences of people in your area and how is this shaping your actions? How are you actively seeking better ways of involving people in decision-making? How can you collaborate with members of the community in meeting these steps? As with the Social Care Wales Board, what options are there for involving people with lived experience on Boards and partnership groups?

This advice should be taken by all PSBs, but I appreciate every PSB has taken a different approach to drafting their well-being objectives. I know you work closely with Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire PSB and you have found this to be beneficial in sharing learning. I have said in all of my advice to PSBs so far that having an awareness of what's happening regionally, nationally and internationally can provide opportunities for collaboration. You will need to consider where working with others helps you maximize your contribution to the seven goals.

Your leadership at PSB should also be permeating into your organisations at all levels. As my report on the well-being assessments suggested, it is important that we move away from seeing PSBs as a local authority-led committee meeting, with PSBs building a mutual understanding and respect of each other's professions. The Chair of the PSB, how and where meetings are held and how the PSB is supported can all shift mindsets and allow for healthier challenge to 'business as usual'.

I am aware that you are considering what partnership delivery arrangements might be best to deliver these steps. Although it is good to hear that you have partnership structures in place, pulling on resources from all local organisations, it is vital that these representatives understand what they are contributing to the seven goals. I am hearing that this particularly applies to middle management, who are perhaps struggling to compromise current frameworks with the Act. I have a role to recognise and mitigate barriers, but so do you – as senior leaders, in challenging your managers to work differently and be 'safe to fail'. It seems that where support is committed by senior leaders at an early stage and is multi-agency, this enables better resourcing of the PSB and, inevitably, allows easier integration between organisations, departments and issues. In order to truly own this plan and ensure the steps you take are understood and undertaken by the member bodies of the PSB, you may want to consider closer working arrangements, a multi-agency virtual team with a senior leader or more formal secondments and co-location. There are several resources that may be of use, such as [Designing Multi-Agency Partnerships](#); [Leading Culture Change](#); and most PSBs are considering how they deliver, with Cwm Taf and Gwynedd / Mon PSBs doing some work in this area. Although partnership structures are important, you, as people in positions of leadership, are crucial in driving the changes needed.

Advice on how you might take steps to meet your draft objectives:

I can see you've drawn on the potential priorities identified in the well-being assessment to set draft objectives (your 'aims') and your initial ideas on steps you could take as a PSB. As I said in my feedback to the assessment, I think interpreting these in the context of Ceredigion would be helpful to explain why the objective is so important for you i.e. show your workings. For instance, you spoke to my team about the importance of resilience in a sparsely populated county, so what local evidence have you used (or will you use) to understand the specific areas of successful preventative interventions? What local services will be impacted if you redirect investment? For example, what will enabling people to create and grasp opportunities and meet challenges throughout their lives mean specifically for Ceredigion? Are there long term trends for particular communities that you believe will get worse if you don't take action? Which communities would benefit and how? What can you do differently that contributes to each of the seven goals? You have also told my team that the short term actions you've drafted will

inform longer term actions, but I have said throughout this advice that you must demonstrate you've considered the long term trends and I would advise you keep the vision of your draft objectives as a long term goal for Ceredigion.

I suggest you work together to make these things more explicit in your well-being planning or state why you don't have the answers yet and what you're going to do about it. I understand you will be continuing to work on this throughout the next year or so, and my advice is intended to give you ideas, information and contacts that might help.

- ***[Community Resilience: Enable communities to become prosperous, sustainable and connected by supporting the transformation of economic prospects: Improve physical and digital infrastructure to support economic development, including suitable and affordable homes.](#)***

The draft short, medium and long term steps you have identified so far are around the PSB removing the barriers that can hinder entrepreneurial community initiatives; utilising public sector assets and procurement for community benefit; and ensuring infrastructure aligns with community based approaches. Your well-being assessment stated that, although unemployment is low, a quarter of people are self-employed and career progression seems to be an issue in Ceredigion. In-work poverty was identified as a local issue and your engagement identified that people were concerned about their future income. Housing affordability, as with other areas in Wales, was also identified as a particular problem for some areas where rent is high, and you have identified that many young people leave Ceredigion for opportunities elsewhere - [a trend being seen across Wales](#).

It is encouraging to see that you have considered what action you can take as organisations to meet this objective and you should continue to do this in the context of the seven well-being goals. How can your procurement procedures maximise your contribution to the goal of a globally responsible Ceredigion? Can your organisations policies seek to help sustainable local businesses, cutting down on transporting goods, rather than focussing on cost alone? [Forum for the Future](#) have published reports on this and my office are working with [Value Wales](#) to pilot sustainable procurement in the context of the Act. How can you champion equality? How can your organisations seek to grow the Welsh language in the area? Alun Davies AM [announced funding for growing bilingual small businesses](#) recently to increase visibility of Welsh in our communities. In seeking to enable entrepreneurship and growth, how about introducing initiatives that stipulate people set up sustainable enterprises that maximise their contribution to the seven goals?

You should consider who else you might need to involve in meeting this draft objective, such as businesses, Aberystwyth University and Coleg Ceredigion. What social responsibilities have the private sector adopted in the area? How are businesses coming together to drive positive, long term change and does the PSB have any influence over this? What opportunities can be offered to budding community enterprises through the PSB collaborating with the private sector and education providers? What research has been undertaken about the local economy?

Your assessment rightly recognizes that the future of work is uncertain. Jobs that exist now were unheard of when I left school and it will be the same for our children. The [Future of Work report](#) predicts that 65 percent of the children who are now starting school will find themselves working jobs as adults that don't even exist yet. [And, according to McKinsey](#), technology could automate 45 percent of the tasks people are currently paid to do. How have you considered these long term trends in setting your steps and enabling people to adapt their skills for future earning?

As your assessment acknowledges, current employment in Ceredigion is mostly in agriculture, health and care, academia, hospitality and tourism; professions identified as least likely to be automated in future. As this is an advantage for you, what action can you take now, as public service providers, to encourage learning and jobs in the foundational economy, around local care, retail and food industries? How can you work with colleges and the university to equip students with skills for the future? A [recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) highlights the value of the social economy in creating jobs, strengthening skills and employability; and you have a base for this in Ceredigion already.

I would also advise you to appreciate the influence you can have over other organisations too. Having appropriate digital and physical infrastructure is clearly going to be important in the future and, overall, your survey respondents ranked having better access to mobile reception and to the internet as first and third in what would make them happier, regarding access to services. How can the PSB use their influence here to challenge the current situation? What opportunities are there around community transport and active travel? If this is a long-term aspiration for the PSB, how can you be working with housing associations, planning and others to ensure that communities are developed that are fit for the future? The infrastructure particularly impacts those most isolated in the area, such as older people and those in poverty. Although finding innovative solutions is not easy, I would advise you refer to the work of the [Older People's Commissioner](#) and the work of the [Wales Co-operative Centre on digital inclusion](#) to understand the lived experiences of people facing these barriers.

- ***[Community Resilience: Create conditions for communities to support individuals from all backgrounds to live fulfilling and independent lives: Develop and sustain social networks, and cultural and linguistic opportunities in order to enhance well-being and maintain independence.](#)***

The draft short, medium and long term steps you have identified are about understanding communities better and the diversity of the communities, developing hubs and normalizing contributing to community activities. Your assessment rightly recognizes the culture, heritage and community spirit of Ceredigion as an asset, with networks celebrating language and creativity. I praised your well-being assessment for involving people and communities, but also noted a lack of interpretation between different parts of Ceredigion. This objective provides an opportunity to address this and help you to understand the assets, opportunities and barriers of people helping themselves and improving their surroundings. Understanding people's lived experiences and setting the context of what it means to live in a particular community will not only help align services, but encourage you to consider

how you contribute to a more equal Ceredigion. The third sector also have useful knowledge on this and, in some areas, have been funded to act as community coordinators for older people – linking them with local activities and services in their area and helping them to stay active and well. [WCVA produced wider information](#) on how the third sector play a role in contributing to the seven well-being goals.

You have started to acknowledge the connections between all of your draft objectives and I would advise you to be clear in your well-being plan how you have considered the integration of your steps and services. For instance, this objective links to the above objective and to building individual resilience. Opening up land and buildings to the community could be a way of encouraging multiple benefits to be realised. Across the UK, austerity has meant that buildings, land and services have been transferred to community ownership and, in many cases, it has increased well-being for the people involved. The [Welsh Government National Assets Working Group](#) captured some Welsh examples that you might wish to explore, but there are many national organisations promoting better use of publicly owned land and assets, such as [Shared Assets](#), [Nurture Development](#) and [Locality](#), with the aim of encouraging communities to thrive.

In demonstrating how you are maximizing your contribution to the seven goals, you could draw on [The Arts Council for Wales' strategy, which](#) outlines some of the benefits involvement in creative activity can have on the health, cohesion and skills of the population. The [Cultural Commissioning Programme, funded by Arts Council England](#) seeks to help commissioners of public services understand how they can improve outcomes by integrating arts and cultural activities into a range of services, including mental health and wellbeing, older people and place-based commissioning. If you haven't done so already, involving local Welsh language organisations and the office of the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#) can help you to maximise your contribution to the goals as a PSB.

I have recommended that PSBs dig deeper into data to inform their well-being plans and I welcome your aim seeking to better understand your communities. I would advise each of your organisations to commit to the National Participation Standards and Participation Cymru can support your officers in gaining the skills vital for effective and meaningful involvement. Co-production Network Wales could help you to identify and engage community leaders. Contact the Director, Mark John-Williams for further advice. Most people will only get involved in something that directly impacts them, their family or the place where they spend time and, often, this can lead to much bigger outcomes - shown by the work that ['Nurture Development' do around Asset Based Community Development](#). The [Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales' 'Deep Place' study in Tredegar](#) gives evidence on how an understanding of place can have multiple benefits on well-being.

Have you also considered how people might want to get involved in the future? What sort of changes might you need to make to your organisational systems and policies to enable people to get more involved in communities and shape local services? Currently, research shows that children aged between five and 16 years spend an average of six and a half hours a day in front of a screen; [28% of young people use social media](#) as their primary news source; [43% of 'millennials' are driven to make financial donations through social channels](#); and [according to the 2017 ONS survey](#), 87% of all adults in Wales were recent internet users (meaning they had used the internet in the last three months). Although some people are currently offline, and there is clearly a need for a

tailored approach, there is a real opportunity to engage with people that is most convenient to them and is part of their daily life, not an additional chore.

"Monmouthshire Made Open (<https://monmouthshire.madeopen.co.uk/>>) is an example of an online platform that has anticipated how people might contribute to improving their area in the future, with opportunities to share ideas, ask the community, start a project and seek volunteers or resources. Matthew Gatehouse, working with Monmouthshire PSB, would be able to share their learning with you on establishing this website.

The idea of 'community hubs' is becoming more widespread and examples such as the [Bromley by Bow Centre in East London](#); [Leeds Neighbourhood Networks](#) and [Solva Care](#) demonstrate innovative initiatives that focus on the needs of the community first and integrate services to improve well-being. You will not be surprised to note that other Public Services Boards are also considering setting objectives around engagement, developing / sustaining strong social networks, fostering belonging and shaping services. In particular, you may wish to share ideas with Vale of Glamorgan; Carmarthenshire; Newport and Powys PSBs, who have supplied me with similar draft objectives.

- ***Community Resilience: Create environmentally responsible and safe communities that can adapt and respond to the effects of climate change: Support communities to enhance their relationship with the natural environment and prepare for extreme weather events.***

The draft short, medium and long term steps you have set out so far include creating a climate change risk assessment for Ceredigion to understand climate change on a local level and increase community engagement / understanding; promote community sustainability and responsibility; and protect and enhance the natural assets of Ceredigion. As a county with a variety of outstanding natural habitats, landscapes, agricultural land, beautiful beaches and coastline, your assessment rightly recognises that the environment is a major asset for you in Ceredigion. As you have stated, the rurality of Ceredigion is key to tourism, mitigating the effects of extreme weather and climate change, encouraging recreation and play. I would advise you to think about your own roles in protecting this environment for future generations, which will need to be clear in the steps you will take to meet this objective. This will include how you plan, design and locate future developments (as part of your Local Development Plan), buildings, infrastructure and other public and community spaces. [Zero Carbon Britain's recent 'Making it Happen'](#) report sets out what responsibilities we all have to future generations to acting on climate change now. Together, you also have a large amount of public sector estate and a say in how public buildings are designed and refurbished. Having a consideration of how 'green' these buildings are, both in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable construction, is a quick win for you as a PSB. The [Wildlife Trust in Wales report](#) into green infrastructure outlines how green infrastructure delivers a wide range of proven, tangible, and cost-effective economic, social and environmental benefits.

What can you do, as Chief Executive, Chair or Leader, now to mitigate the effects of our loss of environment and be more globally responsible? Although the public sector only accounts for a relatively small amount of Wales' emissions, you are uniquely placed to influence emissions far more widely in areas such as transport, energy, land use and procurement. The Welsh Government recently made a commitment for the public sector to be carbon

neutral by 2030 and have released a Call for Evidence to explore the most effective mechanisms for achieving this ambition and the appropriate strategic actions required. I wrote to you urging you to consider and contribute before the deadline of 13th September.

Parts of Ceredigion have been hit by extreme weather in 2012 and, memorably, storms caused significant damage to Aberystwyth and the surrounding areas in 2014. As much of Ceredigion is coastal, how have you considered the long term impact of rising sea levels on your communities? Current expected annual damage to residential properties in Wales is estimated to be £22 million. Extreme weather could also cause droughts in the summer, meaning a shortage of water, declining bio-diversity and a knock-on effect for agriculture – one of the pillars of economic well-being in your area. How are you using long-term scenarios to model what might happen to these communities if their streets, towns and parks are no longer there or struggling with reduced natural resources? What actions might you take now to contribute towards preventing these occurrences? One example of investment in flood defences is the Lower Swansea Vale, a £6.7m project which provides protection to 284 businesses and industrial premises employing more than 10,000 people.

As one of your draft actions is promote community responsibility, I think involving people in why this is such an important issue is critical if you are to affect change and [NESTA has a guide](#) to working with communities to tackle climate change. Projects such as '[Rainscape](#)' through Dwr Cymru suggest ways that we can all mitigate the effects of floods. An extreme example includes the [Isle of Eigg in Scotland](#), where the community are having a positive impact on their environment by taking charge and introducing renewable community energy schemes, building sustainable businesses and improving biodiversity. Understanding the untapped potential of different communities might involve redirecting resources together to enable staff to spend more time on the ground, engaging and understanding the communities in different parts of the region to make positive changes to how the community plans together and anticipates climate change risk. As much of the land is agricultural, what support might they also need to better prepare and protect their land from flooding? How can collaborating with them encourage responsible land use?

The Welsh Government recently published carbon emission levels subdivided by Local Authority. Improving air quality and sustaining your natural environment also requires the involvement of residents. How can you better listen to their motivations for using their cars, rather than active travel? How can you encourage sustainable tourism in Wales? The environmental assets of your area are fantastic, so how can you connect the beaches, Coastal Path, parks, sites of special interest and historical significance with active travel opportunities, public transport and, at the same time, benefit local business? This involves a place-based focus on planning and a wider focus on the environmental, social and cultural well-being of an area – rather than pure economic gain. I will be hosting an event in November, in partnership with Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales to: explore how the public service in Wales can involve people in collaborating and integrating their work, to take greater account of the long term carbon implications of their activities, and help prevent the effects of climate change becoming even worse. Most PSBs, including the Vale of Glamorgan, Conwy / Denbighshire, Blaenau Gwent, Powys PSBs have set similar draft objectives.

- ***Individual Resilience: Enable every child to have the best start in life: Support parental preparedness through early intervention, overcome inequalities and promote holistic learning.***

The draft steps you have identified include a scoping exercise on the benefits of co-locating front line services, providing a Ceredigion workplace model to build resilience and support in the early years (for staff initially across PSB member organisations) and ensuring universal services are well-resourced and used by all. Pregnancy and the early years of life are often seen as a 'health issue' but I would advise you to take immediate steps towards better integration of services, co-locating teams, pooling resources and working in a way that makes sense for that community. Involving people in how, why and where you integrate services is very important.

Enabling people to have a healthy start in life is not just down to you, but the families that children grow up in and the communities they live in, as well as the families they then start of their own. Public Health Wales' work on the [First 1000 days](#) is clear in the impact we can have on the start of a child's life. So, in considering what steps you might take, the [New Economics Foundation work](#) on investing in children might be helpful, which highlights the need to address both material well-being and external circumstances – such as housing, poverty, and schooling – as well as psychosocial well-being and inner resources. You have rightly recognised the importance of culture and belonging on a child's life; speaking Welsh and having a rich education is as important as a child's physical health for their future. Demonstrating how you have considered the different parts of well-being through the seven goals will help you to integrate better services that give a child the best start.

Prevention is clearly at the centre of this draft objective and this begins with your organisations understanding the long-term effects of the worst start in life. The costs of this are enormous, both to the individual's life and to public services. [Late intervention services for young people are estimated to cost England and Wales £17bn per year](#) (£6bn on child protection and safeguarding, £5.2bn on crime and anti-social behaviour, £3.7bn on youth economic inactivity, £680m on school absence and exclusion, £610m on child injuries and mental health problems, and £450m on youth substance misuse). Taking a whole life cycle approach, as you have done in your assessment is positive because giving children a healthy start in life and encouraging parents to make healthy choices might help you as a PSB to establish the root causes and take action. Equally, understanding the experiences of people who have been through trauma in their lives through involving children and families in shaping services can help in understanding people, and the issues they live with, holistically – rather than as 'a mental health patient' or a 'substance misuse service user'.

As public services, we often treat the symptoms of ACEs, such as mental illness, substance misuse and domestic abuse, rather than the root causes. I thought the life cycle approach you took to your well-being assessment was positive in showing the public services people need throughout their lives. But what can we do to impact that over the long-term and become more preventative? I expect to see this intelligence being explored and used over the coming year to inform your steps. For example, dealing with ACEs is as much about having an ACE aware public service and identifying where ACEs have happened, as making sure that services families access are integrated. In the steps you take, it is important to review initiatives that focus on mental health, substance

misuse, criminal justice, housing, services and others to ensure they are preventative, joined up and actively seeking to better situations for families and for future parents to stop the cycle continuing to the next generation.

I have been working with the Children's Commissioner, to produce a toolkit on taking a child's rights approach to maximising contribution to the seven national well-being goals. This toolkit is in development and testing, it will be available soon. The Commissioner's office would be happy to advise on engaging with children and young people and taking a child centred approach. Alyson Francis, Director of the ACE Support Hub, has also recently worked with my office to write to you outlining the work of the Hub and offering support to PSBs to translate knowledge and policy into practice. The ACE Support Hub could also act as a central place for PSBs to share practice, as almost all of the PSBs in Wales have discussed early years, children and ACEs in their draft objectives and steps. We are working with the [Good Practice Exchange Wales to run a webinar on understanding ACEs on the 7th November](#), which may be helpful to you in considering your steps for this objective.

- ***Individual Resilience: Enable people to grasp opportunities and meet challenges throughout their lives: Improve vocational and life skills, build confidence and enable people to respond positively to change.***

The draft steps you have set to date include developing a PSB training programme for life skills and resilience to staff; rolling out the programme for everyone and continuing to promote a cultural shift that empowers people to embrace change. Central to this objective is involvement of people in developing these programmes and collaborating with 'unusual suspects' to make them as impactful as possible. For example, working with higher education institutions could provide research and example interventions; the third sector have useful networks in culture, the arts and community based organisations.

This objective is connected to building community resilience and my advice around asset based community development also applies in this context. Recent reports have suggested that 'life skills' are as important in the workplace and to well-being as good grades. The [Prince's Trust recent Results for Life report](#) explored how teamwork, communication and confidence are as valuable to young people entering the workplace. The changing patterns of work over the long term should also be forcing us to consider how life skills could be more important in the future – which a [World Economic Forum blog](#) recently considered, asking 'what is the meaning of work?' Indeed, the [Future of Work report](#) suggests that creativity, connectivity, communication and problem-solving will be far more important than specific knowledge, with more project-based work in the future – rather than set employment.

You have identified this objective through the recognition in your assessment that at key points in life, things can be challenging, such as a young person progressing to adulthood or later in life for older people being able to access opportunities. Some rural parts of Japan and Canada have also experienced a decreasing young people's population, with many moving to the cities for more opportunities. [This World Economic Forum article](#) suggests that some of the answer may lie in bottom-up community initiatives that spark tourism for the area. Young people take a sense of pride and ownership in telling others about their heritage and in starting some scale business that benefit from flocks of tourists, which links to your first draft objective.

You have also identified a growing population of older people, with loneliness affecting males living alone, over the age of 50. How might you seek to tackle this over the long-term in the steps you are taking to improve people's involvement in community life? How can you use the collective resource of your 'staff on the ground' to help you identify social isolation? [Research by Ageing Well Wales](#) has shown that loneliness in older people is closely linked to poor mental and physical health, how can you maximise the benefits of increased involvement to improve the health of older people in your area? There are some good examples of projects that seek to bring people together to learn new skills, socialise and build their resilience in later life, like [Men's Sheds Cymru](#), happening across Wales that the PSB could encourage and support. Other PSBs, such as Carmarthenshire, Flintshire and Blaenau Gwent have similar draft objectives or priorities.

- ***Individual Resilience: Enable people to live active, happy and healthy lives: Support physical and mental health and improve well-being through promoting healthy behaviours.***

The draft short, medium and long term actions you have set out in your draft plan include establishing a directory of resources and a referral framework social and green prescribing; rolling out the model across Ceredigion and developing a prevention agenda for individuals, such as community gardens and active lifestyles. As with all well-being assessments, you found that certain aspects of health are worsening for people in Ceredigion. In particular, childhood obesity, increasing childhood mental health issues and the unhealthy lifestyle behaviours adopted in adulthood that can cause chronic disease and lead to a lack of independence for older people.

Taking the life stage approach to your assessment went some way to demonstrate that health is impacted by a number of social, economic, environmental, cultural and genetic issues. For example, a [2013 review carried out by the London School of Economics for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) found that children in lower-income families have worse cognitive, social-behavioural and health outcomes. Crucially, this study demonstrated that it was in part because they are poorer, not just because low income is correlated with other household and parental characteristics. How can the PSB collaborate with others to improve the economic well-being of families across the region to improve other aspects of well-being? I advise you to demonstrate that you are maximising your contribution to the seven well-being goals in everything you do, this will begin to challenge business as usual and help you move to a more preventative approach as a PSB. For instance, your assessment recognised that childhood obesity is on the rise and also states that for a rural county, there are surprisingly poor play facilities for children. How can the PSB take immediate action on this to enable children and young people to take physical exercise in built and natural environments?

Ceredigion also has more people experiencing mental health problems. Approximately 50% of people with enduring mental health problems display symptoms by the time they are 14 years old, and many at a much younger age. If the symptoms are there at such an early age – what can be done to prevent the problems at later life? If we know that on average, the NHS spend over £21 million on the prescription of anti-depressants, how can we act earlier? The [Children's Society Good Childhood Report 2017](#) found that children's happiness is at its lowest

since 2010 and this is being impacted by fear of crime. [Cardiff have trialled mental health lessons for children](#) and a new report from Respublica and Barnado's, '[Making young minds matter](#)', highlights early interventions (such as in-school counselling in Wales) that can have a positive impact on mental health. I would advise you to involve children and young people in understanding any issues with accessing the right care and support, designing different services and evaluating the effects of this approach. Only by understanding the lived experiences of people can we design services that are fit for current and future generations. The case studies [contained in this report by Locality](#) demonstrate the financial and social costs of not taking this holistic and preventative approach to people's lives.

Evidence suggests that enabling people to make healthy choices is linked to their economic status, their environment and how they connect with others. Collaborating with 'unusual suspects' and involving people in how you take steps to meet this objective will enable you to maximize your contribution to the seven well-being goals. For example, what is the role of culture in enabling children and adults to live healthier lives? How might people take part in cultural activities to help manage their health? Some of this is about encouraging behaviour change in your population, which many reports have found 'sticks' when people are involved in wider social and cultural activities together; for example, the [Nudjed 'Behaviour Change is a Team Sport'](#) report found getting people together increased exercise patterns. Their work has included successfully working with young mums in the South Wales Valleys to get them involved in more physical activity. Again, this is an opportunity to improve access to cultural activities and promote heritage, use of the Welsh language and encourage people to get together around a local cause. I would advise the PSB to find and involve these existing networks, build on these successes and encourage existing community activists. In this respect, you should consider what role your local Community Councils play in taking steps to help you.

Your assessment recognises the value of accessing green space on physical and mental health. It is estimated that the health benefits of living with a view of green space are worth up to £300 per person per year. The [Natural Resources Wales' 'Actif Woods'](#) project has shown the range of positive effects taking regular walks in the natural environment, in a group can have on health and well-being. With sessions in Aberystwyth and Cardigan and many natural environments that need protecting, how can initiatives like Actif Woods be expanded and work more with health services in the area to have multiple positive outcomes?

As such, models of social prescribing can have multiple benefits, such as taking part in exercise classes can reduce older people's social isolation, as well as helping to prevent falls. This [study, on social prescribing in Bristol](#), provides information on different models and gives some insight into the improvements in mental and general physical health. The recent BBC documentary, '[The doctor who gave up drugs](#)', showed several examples of how alternative approaches to prescribing pills can have a more holistic, long-lasting positive impact on someone's life – with people getting physically fitter and healthier mentally without the reliance on prescriptions. It is positive to see that this has started through the Ceredigion Natural Health Services and I would encourage the PSB to use the five ways of working to challenge the re-purposing of resources and support other such initiatives.

Other PSBs looking at social / green prescribing and improving health include Conwy / Denbighshire, Monmouthshire and Powys PSBs.

I hope you have found this advice helpful in moving forward towards publishing a well-being plan for formal consultation. Please get in touch with my team if you want further contact details for any of the organisations and reports mentioned in this letter.

I am also learning the best ways to advise, support and monitor how public bodies are seeking to apply the five ways of working and maximise their contribution to the seven well-being goals, so I would welcome any feedback from you, supporting officers and the Ceredigion PSB Scrutiny Committee on how I have chosen to approach this statutory duty and the advice I have given.

I look forward to receiving your draft well-being plan and please keep in touch with me and my team.

Kind regards,



Sophie Howe