

Annual Report 2019-20

Foreword

Public Services Boards' reporting year runs from July to June. February to June 2020 has seen exceptional events which have overtaken us regionally, nationally and globally, and have put an enormous burden on our communities, public services, economy and the health and well-being of our residents.

We are living through unprecedented times, beginning with the flooding events which decimated many of our Valleys communities, shortly followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the enormous impact this has had, and continues to have. With urgent action and response needed by our public services, Cwm Taf Public Services Board agreed that the 2019-20 Annual Report would provide a brief summary of its work and progress over the year, particularly in the first six months, but will reserve setting out our planned next steps for a later report, to allow opportunity and space for reflection on the impact the last few months have had on our communities, and what needs to change to deal with the 'new normal'.

In Cwm Taf, we see this very much as chance to look at the Well-Being of Future Generations Act with renewed vigour, and look forward to prospect of working with our communities to harness the resilience and strengths demonstrated by them in recent times.

Reflecting on the year

It's been two years since we published the Cwm Taf Well-being Plan setting out our vision and priorities for Cwm Taf - the things you said would make a positive difference to your lives; having thriving communities, healthy people, a strong economy and a Cwm Taf where no one felt lonely or isolated.

The second year has been about continuing and building on the successes of our first year, as well as incorporating and using what we have learned. We are still taking an assets-based approach, meaning that we look at what works well in Cwm Taf, what people are proud of and what we can do to strengthen and further develop these.

We spent time putting structures and processes in place in 2018-19 to deliver improvements, but this year the focus has been much more on challenging ourselves on two questions:

- How are we making a positive difference in our communities?
- Are our mechanisms for delivery right, and are they working?

In addition to working to deliver the four Objectives set out in the Well-being Plan, we have also undertaken a 'Live Lab' with the Office of Future Generations Commissioner around tackling and mitigating the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and explored how we can collaborate and integrate with other partnerships working in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM), particularly the Regional Partnership Board and Bridgend PSB. This is also re-affirming our commitment to a strong preventative agenda. Some of the highlights about what we've done, and how we've done it, can be found in the pages to follow – and we welcome your feedback on this.

Highlights of achievements against our Objectives

Thriving Communities

We said we would: *'Promote safe, confident, strong and thriving communities improving the well-being of residents and visitors and building on our community assets'*.

To achieve this, we have:

- Launched and supported the two initial Hubs: [Calon Las](#) in Gurnos, and [Hwb Glynrhedynog](#) in Ferndale. Calon Las is undergoing further development work to include a coffee shop.
- Rolled out the model, coordinated by a regional strategic group, to expand the network. Local teams are now leading the on the delivery for each zone with the PSB retaining oversight.
- Neighbourhood Networks continue to thrive, and act as a way of the community being involved in the Hub and how they develop. The community coordinator roles carried out by Susan Jones and Louise Clement help to build and strengthen existing networks and improve access to services, and promote the hubs within the area. This work has enabled us to work towards some of the 'Simple Changes' identified by the Future Generations Commissioner, such as enabling local people to improve unloved space; enabling local people to come together in communities to meet and build social networks and maximising our work with community anchor organisations.

Healthy People

We said we would: *'Help people live long and happy lives and overcome any challenges'*.

To achieve this, we have:

- Made progress in developing 'vulnerability profile' in Cwm Taf so that we can identify and help vulnerable families before they reach crisis point. This has been supported by commissioning two bodies; 'SAIL' to carry out some analysis work for us and 'Insight' to investigate the benefits and feelings amongst a range of stakeholders about sharing data to identify pregnant women, children and young families who are vulnerable to poor outcomes.
- Setting up a new service for vulnerable women facing the risk of repeated, unplanned pregnancies. This service will provide outreach sexual health workers in identified areas to break down the barriers to engagement and offer women sexual health advice in their own communities

Strong Economy

We said we would: *'Stimulate and boost the aspirations and skills of our people to meet public and private sector career opportunities'*.

To achieve this we have:

- Launched the 'Employability Pledge' in February 2020. This commits the PSB and member organisations to develop and share best practice when it comes to improving routes into employment, opportunities for development within our workforces, volunteering and work experience. Elements of the Pledge have enabled us to take steps towards collectively becoming Living Wage employers and maximising the potential for apprenticeships in our organisations, both of which are 'Simple Changes'.
- Started to work with schools and colleges to find out what interests our young people. Linked to the ACEs agenda, we've also been working to raise aspirations and held a 'Have a Go' day with Merthyr Tydfil College and Year 8 pupils from Pen Y Dre High who had a chance to try out different interactive equipment from across a range of sectors, whilst also exploring the College and seeing what it has to offer. Pilot work is underway with a second year Travel and Tourism student at University of South Wales to develop a 10 week work-based-learning work programme with the local authority and local businesses. If successful, this will be rolled out wider.
- Successfully applied to the Foundational Economy Challenge Fund to help bring vacant commercial properties back into use around Merthyr. In 2020/21 we will continue to look at the foundational, or local, economy as an additional method of community development.

Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

We said: *"We will work in new ways to channel the undoubted strengths of our communities, including volunteering to tackle more effectively the loneliness and isolation which often exists within many of them"*

To achieve this, we have:

- Continued to use what was learnt in the review undertaken in 2019/20 to work together to tackle challenges and identify and promote the critical success factors that might work locally, particularly around social prescribing, befriending and developing community assets.
- Social prescribing is one of the key areas that we are working as Cwm Taf Morgannwg and the partnerships that operate in the area. A shared understanding and knowledge of provision is being mapped by a regional working group which will also set strategy.
- Used money from the RPB to employ a 'loneliness and isolation development officer'. Since October 2019, Ryan Bevan has been working to support and develop local groups working on this agenda.
- Supporting befriending services in a more sustainable way so that services people need and use are not at risk. A befriending network had a preliminary meeting in January, and recommended that the region have Preventative Strategy to address needs, not just now to help prepare for the future.
- We were asked to lead a workshop on the way in which we are working to tackle loneliness and social isolation through wellbeing strategies and joined up services at the Welsh Centre for Public Policy's event on the topic. This event has had to be postponed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Other Key Areas of work for the PSB in 2019-20

LIVE LAB

With the help and support of the Office of Future Generations, we spent time over the first six months of this year, delving into the area of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). We focused on the systems that all public services have in place to tackle ACEs, and shone a light on some of the systemic issues and challenges that public services face when dealing with complex issues, such as ACEs. This was a difficult and emotive process, and it highlighted some of the barriers we face when dealing with complex cases on a multi-agency level. Some of these issues included the lack of family and community involvement in tackling the wider effects of ACEs; agencies feeling that they needed to 'save' families, rather than enable them; key services often focus on measuring things which do not have the greatest impact on families, and therefore positive change does not occur. One of the key factors identified was that to mitigate the impact of ACEs, safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments need to be provided.

With these findings in mind, we began to look at the involvement of communities in identifying and defining for themselves what are safe, stable and nurturing environments and relationships. This led to a task and finish group recommending that we trial this community development approach in an identified community, where service providers and community and family members decide on actions equally and together to move forward. There were also recommendations for the public services to trial in relation to changing the culture of organisations in some of our key services. This work has halted in the past three months due to COVID-19, but the commitment to drive this forward remains central for the PSB.

Regional Working

We have been increasingly working on a regional footprint, from shared areas of working on topics like 'social prescribing' to having a working group exploring working options for the Boards to formally come together, resulting in the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Joint Strategic Partnership Conference held in January 2020. Members from both Bridgend and Cwm Taf PSB, and Cwm Taf Morgannwg RPB came together to discuss future working arrangements and opportunities to integrate and collaborate. The Boards know that the 'big issues' need the biggest commitment to change, best use of collective resources and minimal risk of duplication of efforts.

Since then, there's been ongoing discussions about implementing changes, reviewing how the delivery mechanisms for all Boards can be integrated and exploring opportunities to work together, setting a strategy regionally that can be implemented and designed around meeting local needs

Increasingly, we acknowledge that we don't know the answer or hold the solution to these problems and it is only by working with our communities that we can understand and address the challenges we all face, and this has never been more important.

Trying a range of approaches

The communities that make up Cwm Taf are very different, and we are learning that there is no single way to go about how we work with and involve our communities but we are taking steps to try a range of different approaches. Our full Annual Report will include case studies as examples of how we are doing this.

Resilience

Last year we said that we are confident that the second year will see us ‘switch’ from being process driven to being brave, exploring new and different ways to improve well-being and using the ways of working to create thriving communities of healthy people, enjoying a strong economy. We have taken steps towards this, particularly in thinking about how we involve our citizens and carry out community development but we still have some distance to go.

We are still learning; the Board is becoming more mature and open to challenge but wants to become more innovative in how it works. We want to improve how we involve our citizens in how we work and make sure everyone feels listened to.

Our motivation remains making a real difference to our residents, and takes into account changing trends and uncertainties. The last year has seen changes in both the Health Board boundary and the Police ‘basic command unit’ to include Bridgend, and this has focused thoughts on a more regional Cwm Taf Morgannwg footprint. This also presents many opportunities for collaboration and learning.

We also continue to recognise that the PSB is only one body that is working to improve well-being in Cwm Taf. There is a wide range of grass roots and community organisations the length and breadth of Cwm Taf doing fantastic work, based entirely on meeting local needs. The individual partners are also working in their own right in the areas for which they are responsible.

The last half of our 2019-20 year has been particularly challenging for our communities but there have been many and excellent examples of community cohesion; of communities responding and working together to find solutions to ensure those most vulnerable are receiving what they need. What we are interested in doing is exploring how we can support this work, work with these groups and remove barriers to build community capacity in this way.

A full version of our Annual Report will be released later in the year with more examples of how we have been working and what we have achieved. When we can, we will also start preparing for our next Well-being Assessment, something that we plan to carry out in collaboration with Bridgend PSB so will be looking to involve our communities in that work too as it will help inform and shape our understanding and priorities from 2023.

For more information about how you can get involved and have your say on the PSB, and to give any feedback, please visit www.ourcwmtaf.wales