The Ways of Working of The Well–being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Acting to improve the well–being of Wales – now and in the future

What do these factsheets do?

These factsheets introduce the five ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. They explore what the ways of working might mean in practise, some of the barriers to implementation, their potential impact on the third sector, and some useful resources and support for further thinking.

What is the Well-being of Future Generations Act?

The Well-being of Future Generations Act is a ground-breaking piece of legislation that requires public bodies in Wales to work better with others (including each other and communities) and take a more joined up, long-term approach so that their decisions have a positive impact on people living in the future as well as those living today.

Why has the Act been passed?

Wales faces some significant challenges in providing a decent quality of life for all its citizens and in ensuring that the same living standards will also be available to future generations. These challenges include an ageing population, pockets of generational economic inactivity, health inequalities, poverty and a shrinking public purse. We also face the local consequences of global threats such as climate change, biodiversity loss and the impacts of a globalised economy.

The thinking behind the Act recognises that, to overcome these challenges, **public bodies and government need to work in a different way – a way that will:**

• **Consider all aspects of well-being in decision making - cultural, social, environmental and economic**

• **Help public bodies, businesses and communities cooperate more effectively to draw out the amazing wealth of expertise and knowledge that is available**

• **Recognise and respect the limits of our natural environment and resources.**

If you have any suggestions to add to or improve these factsheets please contact **help@wcva.org.uk**

The Act has two main parts:

1. The Well-Being Goals

These seven goals (see the chart on the left) set out a common vision for public bodies to work towards.

There is more information about the Goals and how organisations can demonstrate or step up their contributions to them in our WFGA Goals Factsheets available at **www.wcva.org.uk/wfga.**

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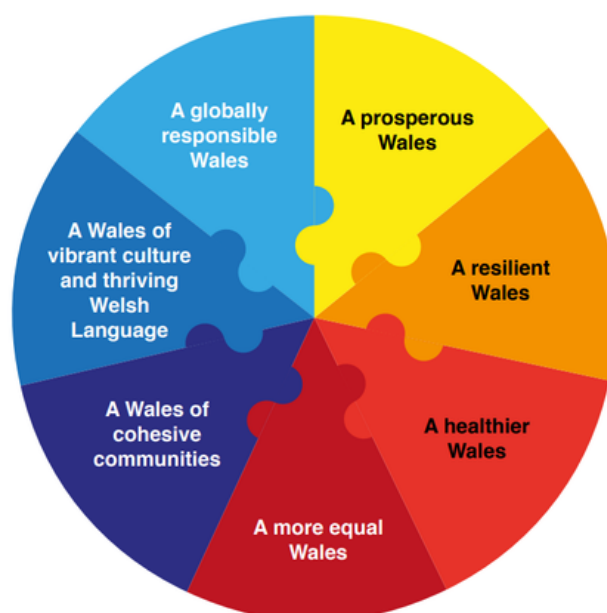
2. The Ways of Working

These are the principles that the public bodies listed in the Act must demonstrate in their decision making in order to show that they are taking into account the impact that they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future as well as in the present.

This is to show that they are acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle, defined as *'acting in a manner that seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.*

The five ways of working are:

Thinking for the long-term   **Prevention**   **Integration**

Collaboration   **Involvement**

The 44 public bodies bound by the Act must embed both these elements to fulfil the duty that the Act places on them *'to carry out sustainable development'.*

Further reading:
The Future Generations Commissioner has been working with Welsh Government to develop a **Future Generations Framework for Service Design.** This is a practical tool to help people working in public services to apply the Act's ways of working to the design and delivery of services.

Thinking for the Long-Term

In a Nutshell:
Avoiding short-termism and considering how decisions will impact on the well-being of future as well as current generations.

The legal spiel:
The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs, especially where things done to meet short-term needs may have detrimental long term effects.

Why is it important?

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies to take account of the impact that their decisions could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

The inclusion of long-term as a way of working seeks to ensure that the importance of meeting current demands (e.g. for affordable seafood or availability of housing) is balanced against the need to safeguard the ability of future generations to also meet their needs, especially where things done to meet short term needs may have detrimental long term effects (e.g. by over-fishing stocks to a point at which they are unable to recover or by building houses in ways that might leave future generations unable to meet needs for warmth, clean air or access to services).

The Act also recognises that in order to make decisions that will be fit for future as well as current generations, public bodies need to understand what factors may be influencing the Wales of the future and how decisions from different bodies or areas will interact with each other to reduce or perpetuate certain trends.

The Act therefore also requires Welsh Ministers to publish a **Future Trends report** within 12 months of an Assembly election. The report contains predictions of likely future trends in the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales.

In preparing the report, Ministers must also take account of the **impact of climate change in Wales** and the **United Nations' sustainable development goals.**

Decision-makers can then use this information as a basis for collaboration and integration – two of the Act's other Ways of Working – to help ensure that their decisions do take account of future as well as current generations and all of Wales' Well-being Goals in line with the sustainability principle.

Why is it so difficult to do?

Looking to the long-term can be a challenging task. Finding time for long term thinking can feel like a luxury when faced with pressing short term needs, especially in busy organisations with limited budgets and capacity.

It is also human nature to focus on the short-term and deal with immediate priorities even if this is at the expense of longer-term planning.

Shorter-term tasks can be easier to manage and we get satisfaction from 'quick wins' and dealing with problems promptly and efficiently.

Of course this is also easier to do when the situation around us is known and we do not have to think about what other decision-makers may be planning or already implementing.

Focusing on the longer-term means dealing with less certainty and thinking about situations where a number of situations or outcomes may be possible.

Techniques that are commonly used include **Visioning** and **Horizon Scanning** which consider the likelihood of different events or scenarios happening and the impact this would have on an organisation or the community that it serves.

These often look at potential, possible or probable changes in STEEPLE issues - **Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal and Ethical.**

Graphs or tables can also be used to consider, or show to others, the timescales in which these events may have greatest impact or which one of several trends is most likely to affect the organisation's work or the lives of the people it works with.

Why this matters to the third sector...

The sector has always been at the forefront of responding to social change and it is likely that this will continue. However, just like public bodies, it can be difficult for us to find time and resource to prepare for the implications of future trends - such as climate change, demographic change, technological advancement and disruptive economic change – and to consider the long-term impact of our decisions within this context.

Our ability to do so however will influence how well we will be able to build resilience for the long term and our ability to support existing as well as future generations. We can also help support public bodies by sharing our experiences and insights of how likely future trends might impact on less visible or lesser-heard groups and by challenging decisions if we feel that possible or probable detrimental long-term effects have not been adequately considered.

Although we cannot predict the future, there are currently several significant pieces of research in Wales that identify similar trends in terms of changes to Wales's economy, population, climate and levels of citizen engagement. These are all tools that can also be used by the third sector to help inform long-term thinking and planning:

- **Welsh Government's Future Trends Report**
- **WCVA's Shape Your Future Reports**
- **Office of the Future Generations Commissioner Strategic Priorities Research**

Exercises in Long-Term Thinking

The essence of the Act requires us to approach this in two ways. The first is to make sure our decisions will stand the test of time and that we make choices based on what we anticipate the needs of tomorrow are as well as the needs of today. The second is to ensure that we minimise the probability of our decisions having a detrimental effect on the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

1. Imagining the world of tomorrow

Taking the trends identified above - climate change, demographic change, technological advancement and disruptive economic change – consider how these might impact on your work within different scenarios, for example:

**How might things pan out for your organisation if:**

• People start rating the volunteer experience you offer like Trip Advisor

• Your energy efficiency project has to start thinking about how to keep homes cool as well as warm

• Your main sources of income rely on public engagement (such as online nominations or votes) or crowd funding as traditional funding streams dry up

• Your volunteer base contracts as more people take on additional caring duties – or perhaps it expands if employee-supported volunteering becomes a more popular form of corporate social responsibility or work patterns change to reflect the advancement of artificial intelligence

Whilst decisions need to be based on the best information that we have at the time and our best estimate of the likely world around us, imaging a range of possibilities and scenarios can help us to be more agile and flexible in our thinking. This can help us respond better to unexpected changes, be better prepared for expected ones and help us make more rounded decisions.

It may be helpful to reflect on the extent to which these future trends – and their possible impacts – are considered in your decision-making. The following exercise may be helpful and can be done individually or in groups.

Reflect on:

• **What is the problem you are trying to solve?**

• **What economic, cultural, social and environmental factors are contributing to the problem?**

• **Does your proposed solution take account of those factors? If not, does it need to be adapted?**

• **In light of known trends in those factors, what might the problem look like in 10, 20 or 50 years time?**

• **Will your proposed solution still be fit for purpose?**
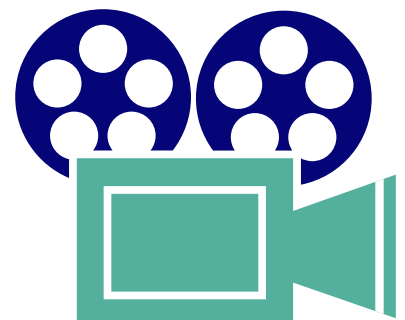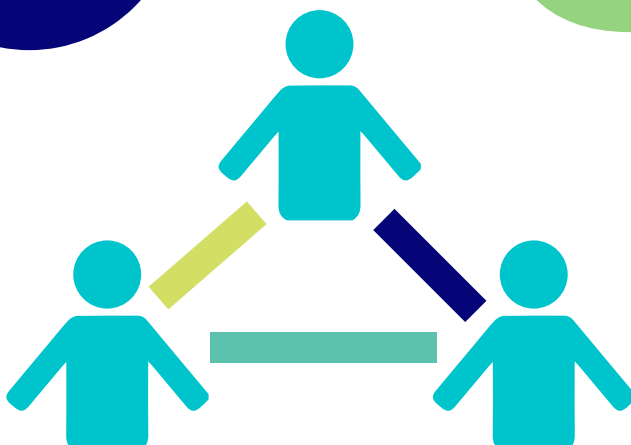
2. Avoiding detrimental long-term effects

The Act's sustainability principle requires us to maximise our contributions to current and future well-being across the seven Well-Being Goals.

• Looking at your proposed solution, score between -5 and +5 the extent that your solution will contribute to, or detract from each Goal in the immediate term (0-2 years), with 0 being neutral.

• Repeat this exercise, in light of known future trends, to consider the impact of your decision on these spheres over the longer-term (5, 15, 30 years).

Reflect on whether the solution could be adapted or modified to improve any negative scores and consider if any detrimental long-term effects can be avoided.

In extreme instances you may find that long-term detriment outweighs short-term gains, in which case the solution will need to be re-thought.

Repeating this exercise for multiple areas of your work will help identify the impact of your organisation more broadly across the Goals and whether there are certain Goals that are consistently under- or over-represented.
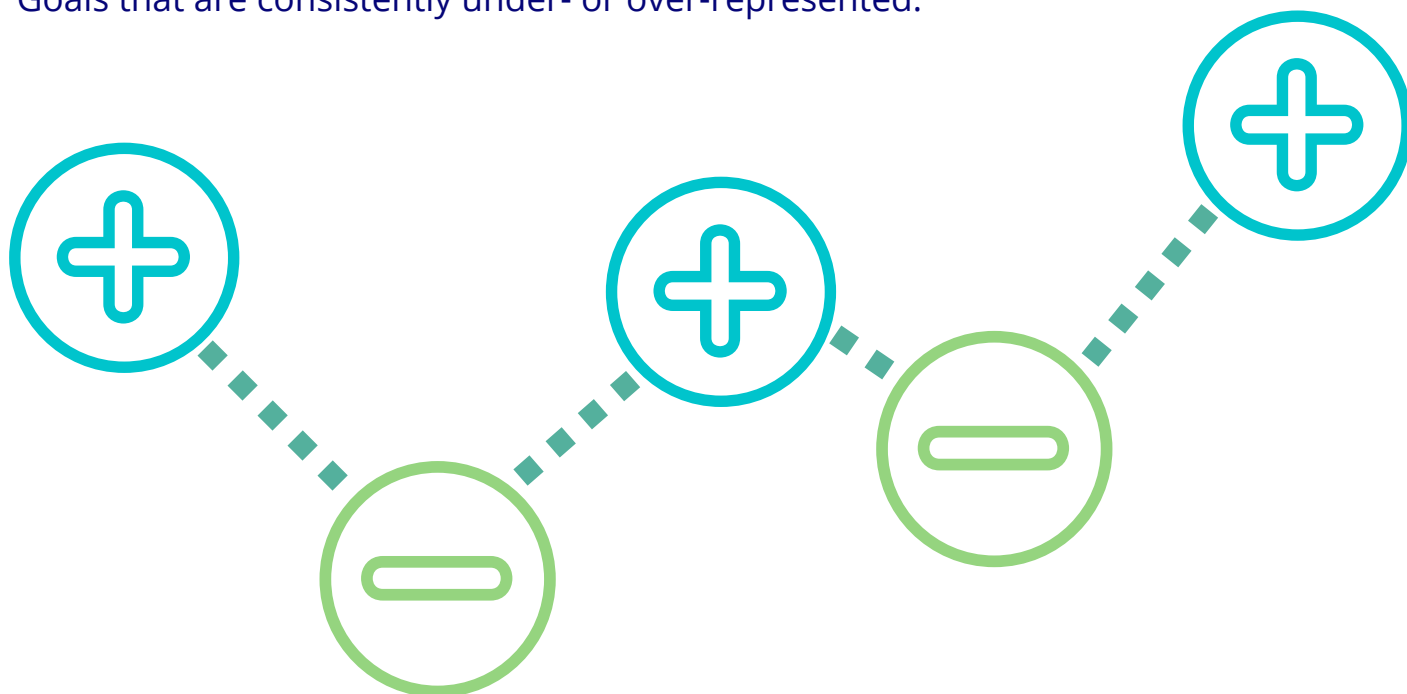
Useful Resources

• **Future Generations Framework** – published by the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner to help projects to be developed in an integrated and collaborative way, based on what people need now and in the future.

Prevention

In a Nutshell:
How acting early – and with others – to tackle the root cause of problems before they arise or get worse can bring about better outcomes for individuals, public bodies and society as a whole.

The legal spiel:
How deploying resources to prevent problems occurring, or getting worse may contribute to meeting the body's well-being objectives, or another body's objectives.

Why is it important?

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies to take steps to prevent problems from arising or escalating for current or future generations. By working to prevent problems from getting worse, or avoiding them all together, public bodies can meet their objectives, save money and create more positive outcomes for citizens.

Two key aspects of prevention are to **identify risks** and to **take early action** that enables problems to be overcome before they become harder to tackle.

Taking early action applies as much to people as it does to broad social or economic issues such as climate change or inequality.

This is why one of the **Future Generations Commissioner's priorities** is supporting young people to have the best start in life for the benefit of future well-being. Likewise, investing in early education is one of the methods for delivering Welsh Government's national strategy, **'Prosperity for All'.**

There are strong links between prevention and the other ways of working including 'long-term', 'integration' and 'collaboration' as it is recognised that many of the problems facing our communities have complex causes that cannot be tackled by one intervention or public service alone.
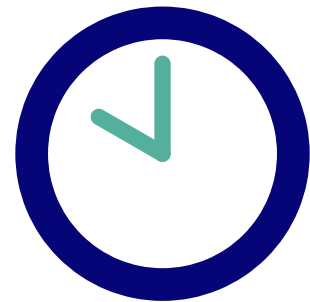
In order to take preventative action it is important to understand fully the potential risks facing people or communities and how these might interact. This requires work with partners across different sectors who may have different perspectives on the factors that contribute to a problem or the best options for removing them.

The sharing of data and insights between public bodies in this way is encouraged in the statutory guidance, which recognises that early intervention in cross-cutting issues can generate time and financial savings as well as better outcomes for citizens.

The guidance encourages public bodies to '*collect evidence that understands the root causes of issues and where efficiency gains can be realised.'*

Why is it so difficult to do?

Although we are all familiar with the saying that prevention is better than cure, pressure on resources and the very real need of public services to focus on crisis interventions means that the money spent on prevention is only a fraction of what is spent on other parts of service delivery.

For example, the British Medical Association reports that **between 2013 - 2017 only 2.2% - 2.6% of Wales' annual health and social services budget was spent on public health and prevention**, despite prevention being widely acknowledged as being more cost-effective and financially prudent in the longer-term than treatment 'down-stream'.

Prevention strategies are further complicated by the fact that some of the actions required to prevent the problems tackled by one public body or department (e.g. hospital admissions for road accidents) may need to be taken by an entirely different public body or department (e.g. introduction of pedestrian crossings or other safety measures).

Equally the money invested by one body or department (e.g. planting of urban street trees by local authorities) may generate savings for another body (e.g. Health Boards if improved air quality leads to reduced respiratory problems) but generate fewer, or less immediate or obvious, cost-savings for the acting body itself.

This can lead to services that do not contribute visibly to a body's short-term statutory targets being cut even where this is likely to contribute to greater problems being faced by other public bodies in the future.
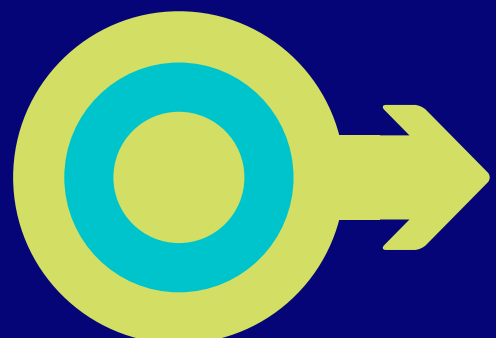
For many organisations therefore it can be hard to make a compelling case for resources to be allocated to preventative spending if issues are cross-cutting, not directly related to a public body's objectives or likely to produce benefits for another public body's budget, or in the distant future.

Even when an undesirable outcome is prevented it can be difficult to say exactly which interventions had the greatest effect to develop 'good practice'.

Similarly, it can be difficult to demonstrate what has not happened or prove the consequences of what could have happened without preventative actions.

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act encourages public bodies to try to break this cycle and although it is not yet the norm, there are examples of public bodies and other organisations that have successfully done so.

The Early Action Taskforce has a collection of **case studies** demonstrating how effective collaboration to tackle problems at an early stage can result in innovative strategies that can save money and improve lives. The installation of heating improvements in the homes of elderly people with chronic lung disease is an example.

Why this matters to the third sector…

WCVA believes that a thriving third sector plays a crucial role in the prevention agenda. This is not just because of the countless community groups and third sector organisations that have developed either to redress specific problems or to prevent them from getting worse or the positive impacts that these have on their beneficiaries. It is more about the benefits to individuals, communities and wider society gained through engagement with third sector groups, whatever their form or purpose, and the experiences of empowerment, cooperation and connection that they can offer.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive impacts that volunteering has on health and well-being through its role in increasing social connections, helping to combat isolation and loneliness, building trust and improving community cohesion.

These are all factors that benefit individuals but they also help to build social capital – the term that is given to the social networks and relationships, and the shared values and behaviours, that help society to function effectively.

Social capital is recognised as a driver for economic growth and sustainability as well as for individual and community well-being. It is essential for a productive and cohesive society that has the resilience and capacity to respond to existing problems or prevent them getting worse.

The Early Action Taskforce has highlighted that *'building relationships is central for effective early action, be that better connecting communities or increasing trust among services and the people who use them.'*

Many third sector groups contribute to this work and their local and specialist knowledge, their ability to act as a trusted intermediary, and the social networks that they facilitate, represent a huge resource that can enable more integrated, collaborative and preventative actions to be taken.

Useful Resources

• **Early Action Task Force** is a cross-sector network providing support and guidance for those seeking to take preventative approaches, including **'Rough Guide to Early Action'** and **'One Hundred Days for Early Action'** resources

• The Big Lottery Fund, Comic Relief, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Legal Education Foundation, and Barrow Cadbury Trust have piloted projects under a collaborative **'Early Action Neighbourhood Fund'** to develop and implement early action initiatives in family support, young people's well-being and legal advice

• **The Early Intervention Foundation** provides evidence and advice on early intervention for tackling the root causes of social problems for children and young people

• **Public Health England** have published a series of blogs on making the case for prevention and health economics

• **WCVA's Empowering Communities report** outlines a set of six principles and seven actions to enhancce community empowerment in Wales

Integration

In a Nutshell:

Ensuring that the full range of consequences of an action are considered so that activity in one area of work can be shaped to complement, rather than undermines, the activities in others.

The legal spiel:

Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies. In particular where steps taken by the body may contribute to meeting one objective but may be detrimental to meeting another.

Why is it important?

There are several definitions of 'integration' from fields as diverse as psychology to mathematics but it is commonly understood to be a process of bringing together different parts or elements to form a complete – integral – whole.

In terms of public services there has been much discussion about integration, for example of health and social care. In this case, it is suggested that there may be better and more cost-effective outcomes for both services and service-users if these two overlapping elements are considered and provided together instead of separately.

The requirement of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act is that public bodies take an integrated approach to delivery of their well-being objectives in recognition of the interdependence that exists between economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
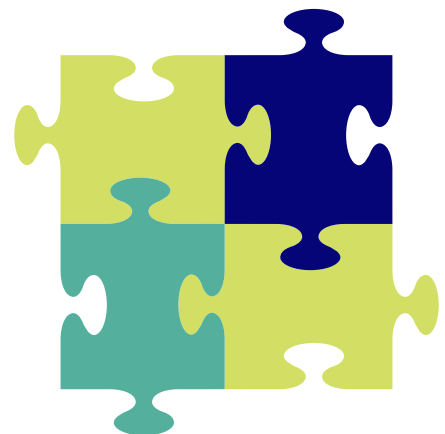
The statutory guidance outlines that this requirement has three distinct elements:

First, it requires public bodies to consider the potential positive and negative impacts of their objectives on each goal and to identify if any of these could be strengthened or reduced to maximise their contributions.

Next it requires them to look at how the objectives as a whole may be impacting upon each other (and by extension the Goals) and whether achievements in one area may be undermining achievements in others.

The guidance advises public bodies to seek to resolve, manage or mitigate any potential conflicts identified at this stage. Ideally this would mean finding different approaches or methods that would avoid the negative impacts. If this is not possible then it would mean ensuring that negative impacts on certain Goals caused by one area of activity can be countered or exceeded by positive impacts in other areas.
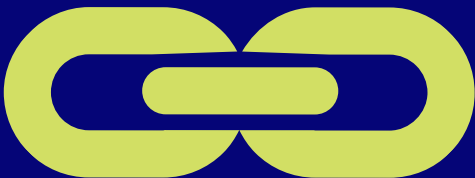
The public body could then demonstrate that its activities deliver a net positive contribution. It is important to emphasise though, that this latter approach should be a last rather than first resort. The statutory guidance is clear that there is no hierarchy of well-being goals and that the Act is not aiming for '*balancing impacts*'.

The guidance states that the purpose of integration is about '*working towards win-win solutions and identifying the multiple benefits where they exist.*'

The third step is for public bodies to consider how their well-being objectives, or their pursuit of them, may impact on the well-being objectives of other organisations. This recognises that public bodies do not exist or act in isolation and that their actions will have numerous consequences and impacts, both intended and unintended across all areas of well-being.

To help ensure that these are positive wherever possible, the guidance encourages public bodies to have arrangements in place to discuss their work programmes with other organisations '*at the earliest opportunity*'.

If these steps are implemented, then the public bodies seeking to implement the Act will stand a better chance, both individually and collectively, of ensuring that their activities align with the sustainable development principle and the duty to maximise contributions to all seven of the well-being Goals.
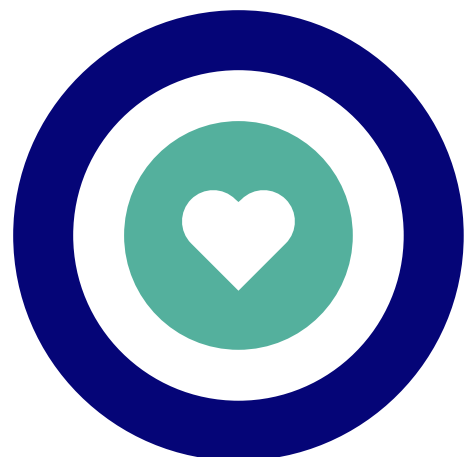
Why is it so difficult to do?

Human beings tend to focus on the areas that affect us most and so our natural instincts are to consider how our 'important' issues will be resolved by a singular solution or approach. This can blind us to how our solutions may impact upon seemingly unconnected areas or prevent us from discovering a solution which could lead to multiple positive outcomes.

This is not always true of course, but this effect can be heightened if resource or staffing pressures lead to teams or organisations working in silo-ed ways focusing solely within the remits of a particular brief and without the capacity or motivation to build strong external links. The problems can also be exacerbated by a lack of access to evidence or data about certain issues or populations.

The statutory guidance therefore encourages public bodies to gather a range of evidence that *"reflects the relationships and interdependencies between economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being"* rather than focusing solely on single issues.

It also advises public bodies to *"consider how linking different data sets together might help highlight evidence about the inter-relationships between interventions or the impact on particular groups of people."*
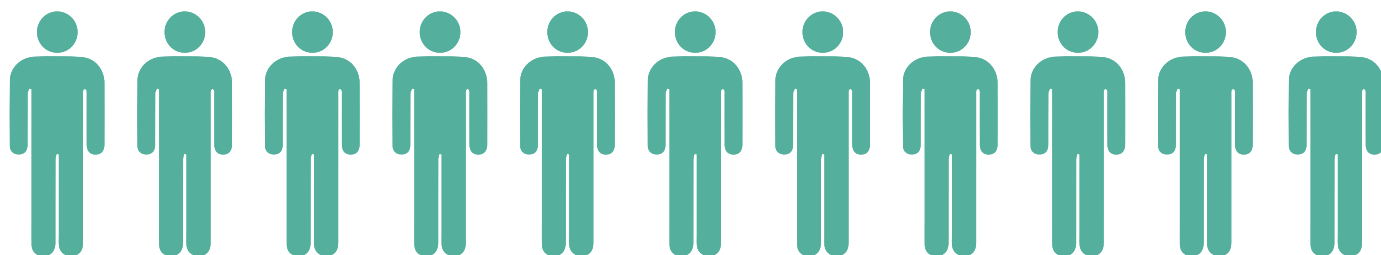
An integrated approach should enable the interconnectedness of issues to become more apparent so that opportunities for more targeted and effective interventions can be identified. As noted in the Collaboration factsheet, **Public Service Boards** are one example of how the Act brings together stakeholders from different areas of work to address cross-cutting issues and identify collaborative opportunities for 'win-wins'.

This should encourage the development of integrated solutions that allow public bodies to meet their own objectives without having a detrimental effect on the objectives of other public bodies, which should in turn deliver better and more widespread outcomes.

Why this matters to the third sector...

The need for integrated solutions requires a detailed understanding of the problems that public bodies are trying to solve. Whilst data sets and surveys can provide important background information, often it is only contact with people that are actually experiencing the problems first hand that can provide the necessary insights to understand the full range of their causes and consequences.

Third sector groups and networks can be gateways to help access this information and, as outlined in the Involvement factsheet, have experience in trialling different engagement techniques to explore and capture this 'lived experience' that paints a much fuller picture than statistics or data alone.

Many third sector organisations have emerged in response to complex local problems and, given their close interaction with volunteers and beneficiaries, often have a deep understanding of the cross-cutting issues or barriers that a community may face.

Their activities may therefore cover a range of interconnected issues like health, social isolation, poverty and poor quality environments.

The increased emphasis on taking an integrated approach may mean that public bodies are more willing to look at and support successful third sector projects and adopt some of our ideas, working practices and culture.

This emphasis may also help those groups working in areas that may be perceived as less important or less popular to ensure that their priorities, or the needs of their beneficiaries, are not overlooked.
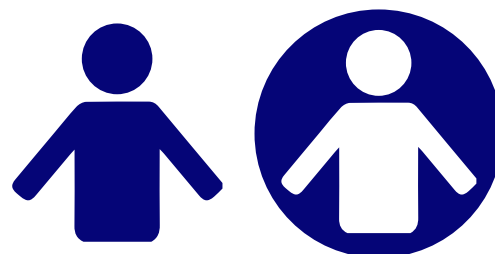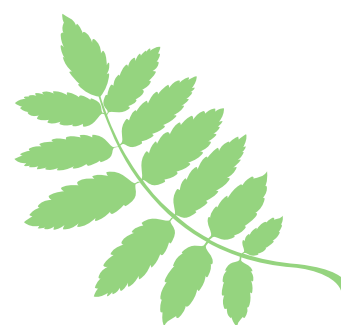
Useful Resources

• **Integrated Thinking and Reporting** - Business in the Community provide a series of tools and approaches including a Big Boardroom Agenda and consideration of different types of capital for organisations to implement and report sustainability and other outcomes.

• **GEF 2020 strategy** – this strategy from the Global Environment Facility emphasizes the need to support transformational change and achieve impacts on a broader scale. The three programs – **Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa, Sustainable Cities, and Taking Deforestation out of Commodity Supply Chains** – will test the delivery of more integrated approaches that address discrete, time-bound global environment challenges.

• **Wales Audit Office** has a number of case studies around integration and collaboration

Collaboration

In a Nutshell:

Working with others, both from within or outside your team or organisation, so that as many objectives as possible can be met with the resources and expertise available.

The legal spiel:

How acting in collaboration with any other person (or how different parts of the body acting together) could assist the body to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its objectives

Why is it important?

Collaborations arise when different partners feel that working together can achieve more responsive and effective outcomes than if they worked alone. This can be achieved through combining the strengths and skills of each partner but also by the people or organisations involved considering how they can contribute to the other partners' aims as well as their own.

Organisations coming together to work on specific topics - such as the Time to Change campaign or Stop Climate Chaos Coalition - can lead to greater visibility, influence and reach to new audiences.

Within organisations themselves, effective partnership work of different teams or departments builds organisational coherence and helps the organisation towards its overall mission or purpose.

It also lessens the risk that outcomes achieved by one part of the organisation may be undermined by the actions of another. Collaboration can build capacity and knowledge, help others avoid past mistakes, and achieve a greater impact than one organisation, team or individual could have acting alone.

At their best, partnerships are about sharing creativity, risk, resources and responsibility and streamlining tasks to those best suited to do them.

Collaboration can enable quick wins, such as doing activities together that no individual partner could have done alone; to intermediate outcomes especially sharing knowledge and resources; and to longer term strategic plans that take account of everyone's interests not just, for example, a particular lead organisation or funder. More broadly it can lead to greater social, intellectual and political capacity of the partners and resilience to changes in society, politics and funding.

The Act requires 44 public bodies in Wales to work better with people and communities and each other to help deliver Wales's 7 Well-being Goals. The Statutory Guidance explains that the purpose of taking a collaborative approach '*is to recognise the different roles that public bodies play in tackling long-term challenges, and to ensure actions by public bodies are complimentary therefore maximising their collective impact.*'

Collaboration is facilitated through the creation of **Public Services Boards** for each local authority area in Wales. These are made up of local authorities, Local Health Boards, the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authority and other invited participants, which must work together to improve the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the area.

Public bodies must also demonstrate collaboration in meeting their own organisational well-being objectives.

Why is it so difficult to do?

Even when we recognise the value of collaboration – or come from organisations firmly committed to the principle of collaborative working - it is not always easy to do.

Some of the issues that affect our ability to collaborate include our personal relationships; the structures of our organisations and networks; and social and political influences upon us.

Working with others to develop or design projects takes more time and effort than if we are working alone and it may involve compromise or even conflict if there are different views on how a situation or project might best be managed.

We need to trust the partners that we collaborate with to work through these differences and be confident that we have common values and aims.

Our organisations and networks can affect our relationships through lack of senior or organisational buy-in, cultural mismatches of organisations, power differentials, under-estimating the time and resource required, confusion over roles and responsibilities and a lack of agreed shared positions or visions.

At a social and political level a major obstacle to trusting each other and being inter-dependent is different interpretations of what collaboration is, with larger organisations often only consulting or funding, not developing mutually beneficial goals with, their smaller or less influential partners.

The good news is that by developing good communications we can overcome these pressures on our relationships. As this **CBS article** identifies, successful collaboration, '*demands excellence in communication, relationship-building and other unglamorous management techniques.*'
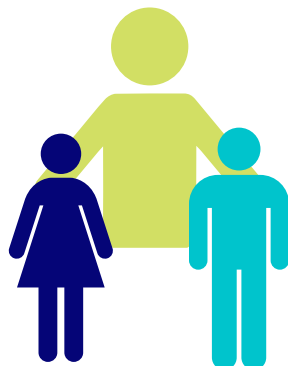
Why this matters to the third sector...

Third sector and community organisations already collaborate in many different ways, from informal networks, to consortia and this form of working is increasingly expected by funders or contract providers.

It is important that we understand the benefits and risks of collaboration and can communicate effectively about the skills, timescales and resources that are often required for it to be successful. We also need to plan for any training, work experience or skills development that our organsiations may need to strengthen our ability to work collaboratively.

Although collaboration can often be a rewarding experience, there can be downsides too and staff and volunteers need to be confident that the risks and benefits of the collaboration will be shared fairly and that the potential outcomes will justify the level of time and resource invested.

Collaboration is not right for every organisation in every case and a clear understanding of the potential risks and benefits can help organisations decide if collaborative working is the right way forward.

NCVO have published **free online guides** that explore these issues as well as the tools and qualities - such as good personal relationships and a clear shared vision of mutual benefits - that can help make collaborative working effective and prevent it breaking down.

WCVA's guide to **Working with Others** explores the different structures that working in partnership can take, including establishing steering groups, co-locating or seconding staff or forming a 'virtual' organisation.

Its **information sheets** cover co-operative and partnership working, legal relationships and liability, contracts, commissioning and tendering, quality management and public service delivery issues. It also provides some practical tools to facilitate collaboration such as a Partnership Checklist, advice on joint working agreements and how to establish consortia to bid for grants or contracts.

The Role of Shared Decision-Making and Co-production

Collaboration can often break down due to perceived or actual power differentials between partners. If the balance of power to make decisions during design or implementation processes is unequal or if the voices of some partners appear, unreasonably, to carry more weight than others, then the collaboration can feel tokenistic and dismissive of the skills and experience that partners around the table can offer. Those partners that can experience these negative consequences most severely can sometimes be those that our services or programmes are designed to support, including citizens and communities.

To counter these potential pitfalls – and to encourage better-designed and more relevant projects and services – several models have emerged, where citizens and communities are recognised as essential collaborators in project design and delivery processes.

Co-production is one such model that has evolved in Wales specifically to improve the design and delivery of public services.

It is described by the Co-production network as *"an inclusive, democratic and effective method of delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and neighbours."*

An asset-based, rather than deficit, approach focuses on what resources people and communities have available or can offer rather than what is missing. This is sometimes known as **Asset Based Community Development** or ABCD.

Useful Resources

- **Copronet.wales –** The Co-production Network is compiling a Knowledge Base of toolkits, research, evidence, information, and other sources of learning relating to co-production

- **Good Practice Wales -** a one-stop not-for-profit online collaboration, aiming to share good practice and knowledge in the public sector in Wales.

- **IVAR -** Reports and research on the challenges and benefits of collaboration

- **NCVO –** free online resources on partnership and collaboration including setting up working agreements and consortia

- **WCVA –** free online resources on working with others, networks, commissioning and contracts

Involvement

In a Nutshell:

Not trying to solve problems alone but understanding the benefits of involving as wide a range of people as possible in helping shape the decisions and services that will affect their lives.

The legal spiel:

The importance of involving other persons with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and of ensuring those persons reflect the diversity of the population.

Why is it important?

Leading thinkers such as Edgar Kahn, the founder of **TimeBanking**, have highlighted the futility of trying to solve complex problems, such as homelessness or youth crime, without the active involvement of those directly affected by them.

Those affected can not only offer first hand insights into their causes and impacts but also the local or community-specific knowledge to help judge which factors are likely to make them better or worse, or could help remove them altogether.

Many people agree that this 'lived experience' has been under-used in the development of public services and policies. Many people who design services do not experience how those services are then delivered in the community or the impacts that they have.

By involving people who have used these services, or 'experts by experience', there is the potential to tap into new sources of information and knowledge. As well as contributing to better-informed services or policies, this involvement can also help citizens feel respected and listened to, which in turn can help build stronger and more empowered communities.

The importance of Involvement is reflected in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and the achievement of many of the **National Indicators** seem dependent on successful implementation of this way of working, particularly Indicator 23: *Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.*

Why is it so difficult to do?

Despite the persuasive case for involving citizens in service design, this remains a field that many organisations and agencies admit to struggling with.

Consultation is a familiar concept to most and means inviting comments on plans or projects that are already taking shape or in some cases have already been decided.

However, this is involving people at almost the last stage of project or service design where it is difficult to change or influence decisions.
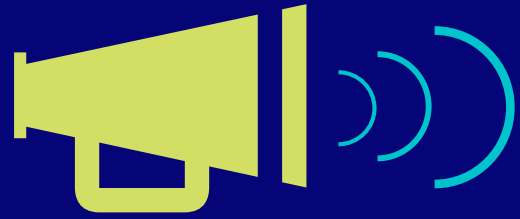
Many believe that it is much more productive, efficient and fair to involve people from the outset and in all stages of the project cycle, from identification, planning and design, right through to implementation and evaluation.

The **Co-production Network** have argued that this requires a change in culture and ethos – 'Working With and Not For' or 'Doing With and Not To' – as much as changes in working patterns and practical engagement mechanisms.

Several bodies have developed **'Ladders of Participation'** to represent these different levels of involvement, highlighting different considerations around resources, expectations and levels of ownership and control, attached to each. There are also accredited training courses to understand these approaches more fully and how to move beyond consultation to more co-productive ways of working.

Even when we are convinced of the importance of involvement however, there are still many practical barriers that may need overcoming before it is integrated within service design and delivery. Understanding the best ways to involve a community in all its diversity will take time, given that most communities will have multiple cultural, linguistic, demographic and other differences. Building and maintaining relationships with other community leaders or service providers, that can act as trusted intermediaries, can make this process easier.

As with collaboration, the pressures to deliver immediate results on reducing budgets can also make it tempting to bypass meaningful involvement at early stages in favour of more superficial consultation at a point where most decisions have been made internally.

The danger of this is that the end result may not benefit from the insights of those actually using existing services or their ideas for innovation and improvement. Worse, unsatisfactory engagement processes can leave people feeling frustrated and powerless and less likely to want to be involved in similar exercises in the future.

Ultimately, we all - public bodies as well as third sector organisations and communities - need to believe that involvement of citizens in decision-making is a worthwhile activity and that the benefits in terms of more effective public services and more empowered and resilient communities outweigh the initial costs, effort, training and lengthier timeframes that may be required to put in place effective participation mechanisms.
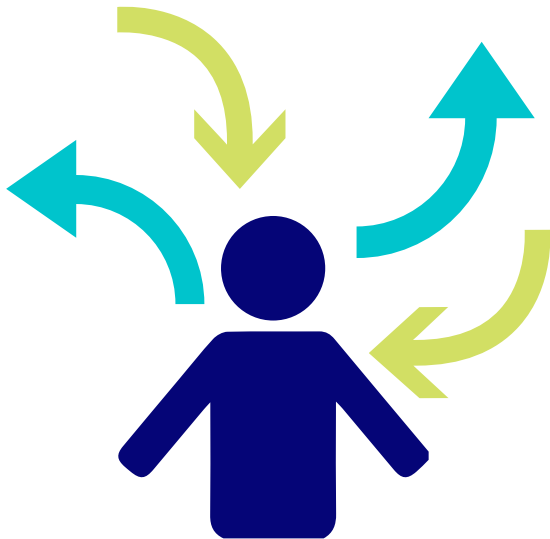
One way for organisations to approach this is to embed involvement in the day to day work of their organisations and services rather than seeing it as a separate process to be called upon as and when the need arises. Front line staff often have acute awareness of the needs of service-users and can be the source of a huge amount of knowledge and insight. They can also be effective communication channels to gather ideas and feedback. Recognising and valuing the role of front line staff in this process, and finding ways to ensure that their insights systematically feed in to decision-making at other levels in the organisation can also help embed relevant 'lived experience' in service design and delivery.

This approach of continuous dialogue – both within organisations and between them and their stakeholders - underpins the **National Principles for Public Engagement** which provide a step by step guide to put meaningful involvement into practice. An **Assessment tool** has also been developed for teams to judge if they are applying the principles correctly and to best effect.

Why this matters to the third sector...

Change in how we provide public services for people in Wales is desperately needed because demand for acute services is rising, their budgets are not being prioritised and community services are being cut.

In 2014 the Williams Commission on Public Services recommended a range of reforms, noting that: '*New models of delivery which focus on prevention, early intervention and demand management through co-production and citizen engagement will be essential.*'

It is recognised that quality of life cannot be delivered by the public sector alone. Partners from other sectors are increasingly being sought both to help deliver public services and to involve people as active citizens and volunteers that can strengthen community resilience to a whole host of issues from loneliness to flooding.

The third sector already has a strong tradition of involving the people that we serve and has been at the forefront of exploring different ways to capture individual stories and insights.

It can be hard to capture the essence of lived experience through an online questionnaire or postal survey and then to interpret this in ways that can justify specific decisions. There are however a wide range of engagement tools that can help us make sense of the insights that people offer. The CVC for Rhondda Cynon Taf, Interlink, has demonstrated many of these through its **Involvement for Mental Health** project and has successfully used **Sensemaker** in its Older People's Listening Project.

Given the sector's relationships with the communities that we serve, and our experience in trialling more modern engagement tools, we may find that more public bodies are approaching us more often to be the trusted intermediaries between them and citizens. This is an important part of our role.

As a sector though, we need to be clear that additional outreach that is not already embedded in our work programmes requires additional time, energy and resource and that we need to be involved ourselves, from the outset, in the design of any involvement programmes that we are being asked to help deliver. This will also help spread the culture and ethos of co-production and enable its benefits to be more visible and more widely understood.

Useful Resources

- **Good Practice Wales** hosts the **Co-production Catalogue** with research reports, case studies, practical tools and websites. **It also hosts a range of research reports around alternative models of service delivery.**

- **International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)** offers resources and training around public participation, particularly continuing professional development for participation practitioners.

- **Involve** is a public participation charity, on a mission to put people at the heart of decision-making. Its knowledge base provides explanations of different democracy terms and concepts, dispels common myths around public participation such as it being too costly or not needed; and provides evidence of impact.

- **WCVA** has useful research, case studies and practical toolkits on involvement and the National Principles for Public Engagement. WCVA also provides training on involvement.