

OUR APPROACH TO INVOLVEMENT

1.1 Involvement and the Sustainable Development Principle

Involvement is one of the key sustainable development principles that must be done in conjunction with communities and wider stakeholders. The views of communities on how resources are used to meet needs of current and future generations are essential to allow public, private, and voluntary sector partners to take decisions about how they deliver programmes and projects within, and, alongside communities. This is particularly true for sections of our communities who are less heard, such as those with protected characteristics.

The Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) has a duty to work jointly toward achieving the seven national well-being goals. This must include assessing the state of well-being in the region, including assessing community strengths, to inform the setting of objectives that contribute to well-being, and identifying the reasonable steps needed to meet those objectives. The Public Services Board must ensure that it is involving people throughout this process to understand their needs and aspirations for the future of the area in which they live. Effective communication and engagement are crucial if the Public Services Board are to deliver a high-quality response to the issues facing communities now and in the future. It is also important to maintain a continuous dialogue with communities and provide feedback on how their ideas have helped to shape the well-being plan.

1.2 The Processes We Followed

A group of engagement and communications professionals from across the Public Services Board member organisations was convened, as the Gwent PSB Communications and Engagement Group, to develop the involvement processes necessary to gather community views to support this assessment.

To enable consistency across the partners involved in the engagement process a common set of questions was developed, building on the approach taken when undertaking the previous local assessment in 2017/18. This enabled us to see whether the views of communities had changed since the last well-being assessment. A stakeholder mapping exercise established the key groups and organisations we needed to target and prevented duplication by the many partners involved in the group. The former Public Services Boards in the region have a range of existing well-being objectives and it was important to understand whether these were still important to communities, as well as provide feedback on work that had happened to deliver the existing objectives. Each former board area was

therefore able to refer to their existing well-being plans, which run until May 2023. Two common questions were used when referring to the existing plans:

- **Are these well-being objectives still important to you?**
- **Has anything changed?**

The following questions were used as the basis for the well-being survey and for local engagement sessions. Supplemental questions were used to develop the conversation and tease out ideas.

- **What is special/good about your community/where you live?**
 - Supplemental prompt- Tell us about the positives of where you live.
- **What would make it a better place?**
- **What things are important to you and your family?**
 - Supplemental prompt- Places, services, facilities, community groups/activities.
 - Supplemental question- How safe do you feel in your community?
 - Supplemental question- How can we support and care for older people in the future?
- **What would you want your community to look like in the future?**
 - Supplemental prompt- It is important for us to know what our communities want for the future.
- **How could your community work with us to make that happen?**

People were also asked if they would like to stay involved and were given the option of providing contact details.

The primary engagement tool was a SNAP-based on-line survey which was available in English, Welsh, Arabic, Bengali, Hungarian, Mandarin, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Turkish and Urdu, as the main and minority ethnic languages in the region. The survey period ran from the 16th August 2021 to the 30th September 2021.

Paper copies of the survey were made available in communities using postcards with a QR (quick response) link to the online survey which were distributed to venues such as libraries, doctors' surgeries, and leisure centres.

Stakeholder self-directed packs were developed to enable and encourage interested organisations to feed into the survey with a simple slide deck and instructions aimed at adults and young people. Individual Youth Forums and 50+ Groups were asked to engage with their members. Groups representing people with protected characteristics were particularly encouraged to contribute to the survey, as well as engage in a way that was meaningful to them, for example, via on-line discussion.

Social media was used to advertise the on-line survey, and to generate an ongoing conversation with one question from the common question set released each week through the social media channels of the member organisations.

Public bodies, as members of the Gwent Public Services Board, are major employers and so the survey was circulated to staff, many of whom will live in the region. However, people who work in the region were also encouraged to respond.

Some member organisations were able to either run, or piggy-back, face-to-face engagement events. Although this wasn't possible for all, as explained in the following section.

Direct engagement took place with the voluntary sector and representatives of town and community councils in some areas. Efforts were also made to engage in specific geographies/communities and in some cases, virtual engagement events were run using the question set as the basis for the sessions.

Data on the protected characteristics of respondents was not specifically gathered, although all respondents were asked whether their equality status affected their responses.

1.3 Quantifying and Analysing the Response

A total of 1,713 respondents took part in the Gwent Well-being Survey providing a large amount of qualitative information during the first engagement period. To manage this effectively, a graduate student was employed from the University of South Wales Springboard Plus+ Programme to sort and analyse the responses thematically and geographically.

The data included survey responses from each of the five local authority areas: Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. These were analysed on a regional and local basis. The first step of the analysis process was to match each survey response to the themes in our well-being assessment chapters; Social, Economic, Environment and Cultural. This was done by identifying the issues within each response and identifying which of the themes it aligned to. Once each response was matched up to a core chapter theme, we then worked back through the responses to determine a topic for each response along with whether the response was positive or negative. These topics range from housing to community safety, air quality and more. This was conducted to help us provide a deeper analysis into the well-being survey responses.

Our next step was to sort into the community areas in each of the five local authority areas and match each respondent's postcode to a community area. This helped us provide a rough estimate as to the quality of wellbeing within each community.

After undertaking deeper analysis into the topics that have emerged from the assessment survey results, we grouped each theme into the chapters; Social, Economic, Environment and Cultural.

Going forward, the need for qualitative analysis software to further assist the process, and subsequent engagement stages, has been identified and is currently being explored. It would be useful to provide greater insight as the Gwent Public Services Board moves from assessment to planning over the course of 2022.

1.4 Reflections on Involvement

Well-being is a subjective concept that means different things to different people and those perceptions are influenced by personal experience, including their experience of dealing with individual Public Services Board member organisations. Despite exercises being presented as 'on behalf of the board', responses are inevitably influenced by whichever organisation's social media channels they appear on. For example, questions posted on police social media channels were likely to elicit responses on crime and disorder; questions posted on local authority channels were likely to receive responses related to council services.

The engagement exercises described above took place during the second summer/autumn period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the tools used to engage were very much influenced by the need to maintain social distancing and prevent risk to participants. At the time, organisations delivering the elements of the engagement were largely restricted to virtual and digital engagement rather than in-person engagement. Very few face-to-face engagement exercises took place and where they did, they tended to be outdoors. It was simply not possible to gather a room full of people to share and exchange views in a safe way. Council services, other than those that required direct in-person interaction, were being delivered remotely. This meant less footfall to offices and less opportunity to engage. Town centres were quieter over the first engagement period as people avoided public places. The engagement professionals reflected that when the previous well-being plans were being developed, the face-to-face, open, two-way conversations yielded greater interest, far more content and a higher number of 'engagements'.

Some sections of society were very difficult to reach, for example, young people where engagement would ordinarily have taken place in schools and at summer events. As none of the councils were running their typical programme of summer events during 2021 this was not possible, or very limited, depending on the individual council and the decisions they had taken. Where face-to-face engagement was possible, it was noted that people seemed less inclined to pick up a paper survey than usual, or to speak to an interviewer for any length of time, and this is assumed to be because of a fear of infection and altered behaviour.

While more and more people became comfortable with digital communication, and video messaging during the pandemic, it is not the preferred method of communication for many.

Many public sector organisations were unable to use 'Zoom', (one of the more common and publicly familiar video calling tools), due to data protection concerns and so 'Microsoft Teams' was used for some engagement. 'Teams' is less well-understood by the public which may have put many people off accepting a link to a 'Teams' meeting. Social media was used as much as possible and the main engagement tool, the SNAP survey, was promoted in this way as well as through more traditional channels for those less comfortable with digital communication. However, it has to be acknowledged that digital exclusion would have been an issue. Many public access internet points, such as libraries, remained closed. Delivering education virtually throughout the pandemic had already highlighted the digital disparity across communities with socio-economically disadvantaged people more likely to rely on mobile data packages than home Wi-Fi. In addition, anecdotally, professionals reported a sense of 'digital fatigue' in communities. Many people were working from home virtually, with a general instruction from Welsh Government to continue to do so. Attending virtual events at the end of the working day would have been less attractive.

Some partners were able to offer prize draws as an incentive to participate but even this did not gather much additional interest. Many organisations had been conducting surveys of clients, service users, and the general public, as organisations adapted to new ways of delivering services and were using social media surveys to understand people's perception of the pandemic and recovery. This too, may have influenced the lower number of returns to the SNAP survey than would otherwise have been expected; a possible case of 'survey fatigue'.

1.5 Using the Engagement Outputs

Despite the challenges, we were able to gather rich sources of qualitative data and views from the residents in the region over the summer of 2021. Those people who engaged did so at a deeper level than a potentially fleeting conversation at an outdoor event. Their views have been thematically and geographically sorted to feed into the relevant sections of this local assessment of well-being. In addition, input that was particularly relevant to one Public Services Board member, or another, has fed into individual public body service planning.

Two questions were specifically aimed at illuminating other engagement exercises being undertaken at the same time:

- Supplemental question- How safe do you feel in your community?
- Supplemental question- How can we support and care for older people in the future?

The responses to these have fed into the Police and Crime Plan 2022-2026; and the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 population needs assessment- for those needing care and support, respectively.

In each of the sections of this local assessment of well-being the qualitative views of communities and stakeholders have been used to illuminate the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural chapters. The key sections to understand these views are the 'What People are Telling Us' sections. Where particularly insightful comments have been gathered these are used to summarise the general feeling of a group of people and provide the 'voice' of communities and are interspersed throughout the narrative.

1.6 Engagement with 'experts' and statutory consultees

The Public Services Board agreed the draft local assessment of well-being for further engagement in December 2021. The views of professionals and stakeholders from partner organisations, recognised as a 'community of experts', were gathered on the draft local assessment of well-being during the early part of 2022. The methodology for this was broadly similar across the region and included the views of the Public Services Board's 'Local Delivery Groups' which have been set up in each of the five local authority geographies. These professionals were likely to have been involved in delivering against the five existing local well-being plans.

In some organisations, notably the local authorities, direct engagement took place with senior leadership teams and with their informal Cabinets. Sense checking took place with professionals such as experts in planning, spatial data, environmental health, community development, tourism/destinations, and procurement, for example.

Section 38 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 lists statutory consultees who must be engaged in development of the local assessment of well-being:

- The Future Generations Commissioner
- The board's invited participants and partners
- Each local authority overview and scrutiny committee
- Relevant voluntary organisations
- Local residents
- Representatives of local businesses
- Trade unions
- Relevant bodies with and interest in natural resources
- Other person with an interest in well-being

In some cases the Section 38 consultations were managed on behalf of the region- Members of the Assembly and Members of Parliament, the Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Government, Community Voluntary Councils etc. Others were managed locally- local scrutiny committees, all local elected councillors, town and community councils, trade unions, local business representatives, schools, staff, 50+ Groups,

Youth and Junior Council's, local groups representing people with protected characteristics, health social care and well-being networks etc.

A further social media 'conversation' asked the public to consider the findings in the draft assessment and give their views on them over the course of January 2022. Specifically, around the headline data coming out of the draft assessment, and to ask whether people agreed with the findings of the engagement that took place over the summer of 2021.

Public Services Board member organisation also fed in views. For example, Public Health Wales, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Registered Social Landlords, and Natural Resources Wales.

In a similar way to the public engagement that took place over the summer of 2021 the output of the engagement on the draft assessment was sorted thematically into the themes; Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural and incorporated by chapter authors where it was felt that the suggestions improved the quality of the assessment. It was further sorted geographically to aid in the understanding of well-being at the community level.

The views of the statutory consultees, notably the Future Generations Commissioner, Welsh Government and the local scrutiny committees were also incorporated, as far as was possible. Where this was not possible the reasons are likely to have been because of data constraints.

1.7 Community Area Assessments

Community Area Assessments are an important part of this assessment as the Public Services Board must assess the well-being of sub-geographies, below the local authority level, that reflect the differences between communities and areas. The Gwent region has been divided into 22 community areas and through postcode and other analysis, the views of residents within these community areas has been sorted so that differing perceptions can be understood. The region is large, and just as the data varies with communities, their views and perceptions also vary. All board members followed the processes set out at 1.2 (first stage engagement) and 1.6 (engagement on the draft) above. However, some local variations in approach will have occurred and where local engagements exercises happened in a slightly different way, the output is summarised in the Community Area Assessments. The geographically sorted engagement data has been used to illustrate each of the 22 Community Area Assessments.

1.8 The Continued Dialogue with Communities

Gwent Well-being Assessment

The Gwent Public Services Board is a new organisation, and the residual former boards will continue to deliver the existing well-being plans until 2023. The engagement has been conducted regionally, but within and by, the member organisations.

Over the course of the summer of 2022 the engagement with members of the public, and interested parties, will be important in developing the Public Services Board's well-being objectives through response analysis to the Well-being Plan for 2023-2028. It is very much hoped, that with COVID-19 restrictions easing, much more of this engagement can be face-to-face.

The openness and transparency of the Board and ongoing dialogue with people who have given their views will be maintained through a new Gwent Public Services Board website with contact points. In addition, a Twitter feed; @gwentpsb, and Facebook account, Gwent Public Services Board, have been developed. The website and social media accounts will become increasingly important as the Board moves from assessment to planning. In particular, testing whether its chosen well-being objectives are the right ones with communities.

It will be key that the Gwent Public Services Board implements a longer-term communications and engagement plan throughout the forthcoming well-being plan and, beyond 2023 to engage and involves communities and stakeholders in delivery.