

Involving people in this Well-being Plan: our approach to engagement and consultation

A plan for all.

This document was shaped by many people living and working in Gwent.

During the summer of 2022, staff from PSB member organisations visited a range of public events to increase awareness of the Public Services Board and to talk to people about the findings of our Well-being Assessment and our intention to co-produce this Well-being Plan.

We set up a stall at a number of big community events including the Go Wild event at Parc Bryn Bach in Tredegar, Cwmbran Big Event, Pontypool's Party in the Park, Gwent Police's Behind the Badge open day and shared the Proud Councils stall at Pride in the Port, Newport's inaugural Pride event.

We talked to people to explain the PSB and its remit and listened to their thoughts on the idea of a Well-being Plan and what it should contain.

The Consultation Period

Our statutory public consultation ran from October 1st to December 31st 2022.

Consultation Survey

A survey was launched on 1st October, inviting views on 3 draft Well-being Objectives:

- We want to create a fair and equitable Gwent for all
- We want to create a Gwent that has friendly, safe and confident communities
- We want to create a Gwent where the natural environment is protected and enhanced

The survey also suggested 17 'steps' that could potentially be taken to achieve the objectives.

The survey was available online in both English and Welsh and hard copies and easy read versions were also made available.

Flyers promoting the survey were distributed to a range of public buildings including libraries and adult learning centres. Posters displaying a QR code link were also displayed in these and other buildings.

All consultation materials were available in both English and Welsh language versions.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's engagement team attended 24 different locations across Gwent to distribute consultation materials to the public, talking to people at supermarkets, community hospitals, hubs, community centres, cafes, churches, theatres, indoor markets and a garden centre.

We also presented information to groups via email and by attending meetings.

The survey closed on 31st December having received 360 individual responses from the public.

Listening to community groups

Community groups across Gwent were also given opportunity to be involved in the process of developing the Well-being Plan.

We actively reached out to groups characterised by shared protected characteristics to help us understand lived experiences and consider specific needs.

Engagement methods included online sessions and face to face focus groups, providing us with a broad range of participants and perspectives.

We considered:

- Welsh language and culture, speaking with Menter Iaith
- The needs of older people, speaking with several 50+ Forums
- Young people, speaking with Blaenau Gwent's Youth Forum and an LGBTQ+ youth group
- Disabled people, presenting the consultation to Torfaen Access Forum
- People with learning disabilities, providing easy read versions of the consultation at Learning Disability Wales' annual conference.
- A new dads group, recognising that young men are a group that don't significantly engage with online consultations
- Care givers, linking with the Regional Partnership Board for a joint event with the Gwent Regional Providers Forum.
- We also attended the Gwent Citizens Panel.

A qualitative approach was the ideal method for collecting feedback from the community group engagement as it allowed a deep understanding of the opinions of a range of people living in Gwent. It allowed us to collect data that gave great in-depth understanding of the perceptions on the Draft Well-being Plan. A mixture of structured and open questions allowed facilitators to begin a conversation about the draft but also allowed the participants to input their opinions freely and explore avenues they considered needing tackling. It also provided them with the chance to offer suggestions of issues that were not present within the objectives and steps.

Stakeholder engagement events

Each of the 5 local authority areas hosted a half-day stakeholder engagement event that was open to staff from across the PSB member organisations, the wider third sector and other interested parties.

The sessions allowed stakeholders to discuss both regional and local issues and included a presentation by the Institute of Health Equity to build understanding of inequity in Gwent and the meaning of becoming a Marmot region.

Formal Scrutiny

The Well-being Plan has been through extensive formal scrutiny too.

Each of the 5 local authority areas have formal Scrutiny Committees, made up of elected local government politicians, who examine the local work of the Public Services Board. The Scrutiny Committees in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen all reviewed the draft Well-being Plan and gave their thoughts on it.

A regional PSB Scrutiny Committee has also been formed and they reviewed the Plan in March 2023.

Feedback from the Welsh Government and Future Generations Commissioner

Welsh Government and the Future Generations Commissioner reviewed the draft plan and gave valued feedback. Some of the PSB member organisations also gave written feedback.

What people told us and how this shaped the Well-being Plan

Key messages:

*Responses showed that the **increasing cost-of-living** is having a significant impact on the economic and mental well-being of the people of Gwent. The high cost of energy, housing, fuel and food has had a considerable impact on the disposable income of many within the region and people are worried about further increases.*

*A recurring theme was **food insecurity and food poverty**. Food banks were mentioned, but respondents also addressed the need to support local food shops and supermarkets. They also addressed the link between food and protecting the environment. Some suggested food production should be more local and own food growth supported. Food is clearly linked to health and equality; without access to good quality food, the health of the people of Gwent will also suffer.*

***Housing** was a key theme that emerged, highlighting the need of the housing stock to meet the needs of more people, such as single occupants, and being suitable for the aging population and people with disabilities. Affordable, good quality and appropriate housing is needed.*

*An **emphasis on the environment** emerged clearly, with people highlighting the effects of climate change, carbon emissions and the need to protect the environment. They suggested climate change affects all factors such as transport, food, energy, and health and housing. They recognised the importance of having a plan that adapts to climate changes and resulting effects. A key theme that emerged was to protect and restore the environment already within Gwent, by encouraging more green and blue spaces, reducing carbon emissions and renewable energy. Becoming Net Zero was a key factor.*

Something that we heard regularly when we spoke to groups was that the draft Plan **was too big in scope** and that they were very **sceptical that it could be resourced**. People were by and large understanding of the pressures on public services in terms of budgetary constraints and recognised years of cuts to funding. Whilst they admired the will of the plan, many voiced concerns that it wouldn't be achievable.

How we arrived at the final Steps

Recognising that the content of the draft Plan was very widely supported, but that people thought the steps were too broad and therefore not achievable with current resources, we sought to re-draft a streamlined version of the Plan. We are content that the final version gives emphasis to the key messages received throughout the consultation.

Below are the 5 Steps decided on, with some rationale for how they developed:

Take action to reduce the cost-of-living crisis in the longer term.

This issue emerged extensively within the community engagement and with each focus group. People felt strongly that poverty and the cost-of-living should be further emphasised. It was recognised that this is having a huge effect on people currently but also has potential for long term harm, impacting future generations.

The concern of in-work poverty was clear in the data and many stated that the cost of everyday essentials, including transport, was a concern to many. This step links to 'provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes,' as the consultation also evidenced growing concern about unaffordable homes, not only to purchase or rent, but to run. The urgency was clear and many expressed the need to tackle the cost-of-living now as well as in the future.

Provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes.

Homes, affordable housing, and good quality housing was a common theme arising from the community engagement. A common comment was "improve the houses we have rather than building new ones." The need to improve the housing already within Gwent was mentioned. Many comments suggested making houses more environmentally friendly, connecting the action to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to climate change and protect and restore our natural environment. Many suggested having solar panels and reducing the number of new houses being built. The positioning of homes to a job, transport, education and health was also deemed important and people felt that low quality homes can affect many aspects of life in Gwent.

Take action to reduce our carbon emissions, help Gwent adapt to climate change, and protect and restore our natural environment.

The data suggested a high number of concerns in relation to the environment and climate change. A common theme that emerged was to preserve the green spaces within Gwent. Reducing our carbon emissions was also a key theme and many viewed reducing private transport reliance as a means to improve this. Many agreed with the need to protect wildlife within Gwent and expressed opinions on how climate change is affecting wildlife. Adapting to climate change was also a key theme as more flooding will affect the well-being of people in Gwent. Food was an emerging theme here too, with participants voicing concern about food waste and food being transported from overseas. Developing understanding of how to grow food was a possible action identified by participants. People also stated the importance of educating people about the environment, climate change and carbon emissions.

Take action to address inequities, particularly in relation to health, through the framework of the Marmot Principles.

It was evident that many participants agreed with the importance of tackling inequalities, especially in relation to health. Many commented on access to hospitals and how transport was a big factor, with the local hospitals being hard to access, particularly with public transport. Some people suggested that the draft plan insufficiently referenced disabled people and the elderly, making points about loneliness and isolation. Participants unanimously agreed that the links between inequality and health are clear. Many said that health care and treatment is harder to access following the pandemic.

Enable and support people, neighbourhoods, and communities to be resilient, connected, thriving and safe.

The consultation showed people want communities in Gwent to be safe and more connected. Many mentioned their desire to live in a safe community, mentioning things like Neighbourhood Watch and police visibility, suggesting this would help people feel safe. People also cited how the effects of Covid-19, the increasing cost of living and the war in Ukraine have made people aware of the need for individuals, neighbourhoods and communities of interest to support one another and to be resilient. Respondents regularly noted the need to be inclusive to reduce isolation and loneliness. Poverty was a common theme that emerged, with people linking this to anti-social behaviour in many deprived areas of Gwent. People suggested that communities need to work for all ages, being age-friendly whilst also providing more youth clubs and community activities for young people, resulting in a mutually respectful, thriving and safe community. Leisure activities and access to high quality, safe green spaces within the local area were clearly valued.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation process and hope it is clear how valuable your input was.