

By email

5th October 2021

Dear Jenny,

I write to share some of the findings and advice which have emerged from my work in relation to equality and social justice and which may be of interest to the Committee's work during the next Senedd term. Several of my recommendations and commentaries below are relevant to other Senedd Committees, but I wanted to flag them to you too because efforts should be made across Committees to integrate respective areas of work. Better integration of policy areas will ensure collective scrutiny, the ability to identify implementation gaps and offer solutions across the Senedd's work. You can find my letters to other Committees [here](#).

I would also like to suggest to you and to other Committees a cross-cutting area, which can be looked at jointly and in collaboration by some, or ideally all, Senedd Committees: Skills for a Green Recovery. A prosperous, equal, green recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 means delivering good quality livelihoods to all, whilst supporting rapid decarbonisation and improving biodiversity. This is reliant on having the right skills and training for our population. This is an area my own team has recently explored, and you can find our latest publication [here](#).

In May 2020, I published the first ever [Future Generations Report](#), which considered the progress made by public bodies in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act. It also set out the actions and recommendations public bodies should adopt as they further implement the legislation. I have highlighted for the Committee below the most relevant findings of the report for your consideration (see Annex 1 for relevant recommendations). I would encourage all Committee Members to consider the report and in particular the Sections on [A More Equal Wales](#), [A Prosperous Wales](#), [A Wales of Cohesive Communities](#) and Chapter 2 on the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act by [Welsh Government](#) and [public bodies](#).

Equality is a cross-cutting theme runs through most of our work and is touched upon in many other sections of the Future Generations Report, so you may also wish to look at the full [executive summary](#) of the report.

I would suggest you consider the [upcoming second iteration of the Future Trends Report](#), which will be published later this year by Welsh Government. Annex 2 below provides you with some of the relevant future trends which could impact the Committee's remit.

I would also advise all Committees to consider how their chosen priority areas align with the objectives and steps within the published [Programme for government](#).

Importantly, in September, I will also be publishing a report on future trends specifically related to inequalities, which will be of interest to the Committee. While this work has not been published yet, I have included some of the findings from that report below.

My team and I would be happy to meet with Committee Members or clerks to discuss this further, if you think that would be useful.

Equality and Social Justice

Equality is everyone's issue. Despite progress in some areas, such as increases in employment, a narrowing of educational attainment gaps for some, and an increase in levels of political participation, we still see levels of inequality that are unacceptable in the 21st century. There is a lot still to do in Wales to ensure everyone is free from discrimination and can enjoy their basic human rights.

COVID-19 showed how existing structural inequalities led to an uneven distribution of suffering in terms of illness, poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and access to green space.

These inequalities need to be addressed urgently in an integrated and holistic way to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities and ensure that Wales' vision for A More Equal Wales is achieved. You can find the actions I propose Welsh Government needs to take in order to do this in Annexe 1.

The findings that emerged through the Future Generations Report and my subsequent work include:

- Patterns of poverty have not changed significantly over generations - more work needs to be done to develop thinking beyond well-the economic and social elements of poverty.
- Employment in Wales has risen in recent years, but there are still unacceptable inequalities for many groups of people.
- Our perceptions of 'poverty' must shift. While the unemployment rate in Wales remains at historically low levels, over half the people living in poverty in Wales today are in work.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted entrenched labour market inequalities, particularly for young people, disabled people, women and minority ethnic people.
- Welsh Government should explore opportunities to pilot a four-day working week, aligned with a universal basic income, building on evidence gathered from pilots in other countries as a way to address current and future inequalities.
- Further work is needed to ensure our decision makers share the characteristics of the people they are making decisions for.
- Violence Against Women remains a significant and persistent challenge despite an increased focus and introduction of specific legislation.
- Digital connectivity has the potential to transform the rural economy, helping people and communities in rural areas address some of the key challenges they face.
- Over 60,000 jobs could be created in the green economy by 2022 with infrastructure investment. However, the current skills pipeline is not prepared for this demand and without an intervention the same labour inequalities that exist now will be reproduced in the 'green' and digital economy.
- The poorest and most marginalised populations are least responsible for the production of greenhouse gases and are a) the most likely to be exposed to its negative effects, b) more susceptible to damage, and c) have the least resources to respond, cope and recover.

Based on my existing advice and work, I would encourage the Committee to consider focusing their work on equality around the following themes:

- **Tackling poverty and socio-economic disadvantage**
- **Our ageing population**
- **Public bodies identifying and mitigating the equality impacts of climate change**
- **Fair work: ensuring equal access to decent jobs, recognising everyone's value**
- **Participation: Giving people equal opportunities to participate in decision making, to enable equal outcomes**
- **Educational opportunities: Enabling people to develop the skills and knowledge to be fulfilled**
- **Equality of health outcomes: understanding the causes and effects of health inequalities**

More detail and advice in relation to equality can be found in the Sections on [A More Equal Wales](#), [A Prosperous Wales](#), [Skills for the Future](#) and [Decarbonisation](#) in the Future Generations Report; my recent analysis of Skills, [Skills through Crisis: Upskilling and \(Re\)Training for a Green Recovery in Wales](#); my paper, '[A Fit For the Future Programme for Government](#)'; and my recent report on financing a national retrofit programme, [Homes fit for the Future](#).

Cohesive Communities

In relation to cohesive communities, my advice, findings and recommendations can be found in the Sections on [A Wales of Cohesive Communities](#) in the Future Generations Report.

My findings include:

- Public bodies and Public Services Boards should ensure they are embedding a culture of meaningful involvement, enabling communities to inform and shape local decisions.
- Public bodies and Public Services Boards need to consider mobility solutions that benefit community cohesiveness, health, equality and the environment.
- Public bodies recognise the importance of good quality housing on people's well-being but are not considering the longer-term trends.
- Loneliness is a national crisis and is being increasingly recognised by public bodies in their wellbeing objectives and steps.
- Access to key well-being services in communities is unequal across Wales.
- More public bodies are recognising that access to green and blue spaces can have a positive influence on community health and well-being.
- Economic growth has become unbalanced, and many communities across Wales are being left behind.
- Digital connectivity has the potential to transform the rural economy, helping people and communities in rural areas address.
- There is little demonstration of how public bodies understand the diverse nature of their rural communities.

Based on my existing advice and work, I would encourage the Committee to consider focusing their work on cohesive communities around the following themes:

- **Creating the conditions where people and communities can do the things that matter to them**
- **Supporting communities to be well-connected and safe**
- **Ensuring everyone has access to key services**
- **Valuing the role and potential community anchor organisations can play in building cohesive communities**
- **Greener town and city centres for people and wildlife**
- **Working with the creative and cultural sector to support the regeneration of towns and cities**
- **Capitalising on the increase in remote working during the pandemic to repurpose buildings in village, town and city centres to support cross-sector shared working spaces, housing and other uses that benefit people, communities and well-being**

The Implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act

In relation to the implementation of the Act, my advice, findings and recommendations can be found in [Chapter 2 of the Future Generations Report](#) and the report I published following my first round of Monitoring and Assessing the extent to which public bodies are meeting their well-being objectives, [Progress towards the Well-being of Future Generations Act](#). In November 2020, I also wrote a [letter to the Public Accounts Committee](#) outlining the barriers to the implementation of the Act. In March 2020, the Public Accounts Committee produced a [report](#) with their findings on the barriers to the implementation of the Act, which will also be of interest to you.

My findings include:

- The Act is bringing about some excellent innovation. I am seeing a growing movement of change, with people daring to deliver differently to improve economic, cultural, social and environmental well-being.
- The early years of the Act required significant focus on process and on building relationships, but attention is now turning to action. Most public bodies are making progress on implementing the Act but in different ways. In the next phase, they need to apply the Act across all of its aspirations and legal requirements.
- There is an implementation gap between the aspiration set out by Welsh Government in policy and legislation and their commitment to delivery on the ground.
- The short-term funding cycles, corporate planning requirements and performance management requirements set by Welsh Government for public bodies are a barrier to long-term thinking and are often driving the wrong behaviours.
- More needs to be done to ensure grant funding and core funding criteria incentivise and encourage the application of the Act.
- The corporate areas of change (i.e. corporate planning, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, assets, risk management and performance management) outlined in the Act are potential levers to drive change, but public bodies must make better use of them.
- Performance and regulatory frameworks drive progress and change in the wrong areas.
- Welsh Government finance and budgeting structures based on main expenditure groups, linked to individual ministerial portfolios, are not integrated.

- More needs to be done by Government to demonstrate a cross-government, coherent and evidence-based approach to prevention

Many of these findings demonstrate that implementation of the Act cannot be restricted to the remit of just one Senedd Committee, given the Act should apply to both what Welsh Government and the other public bodies across Wales do and how they do it.

I would encourage the Committee to carefully consider these findings and use them to inform their priorities and work in relation to the Well-being of Future Generations Act in the next Senedd term.

You may also be interested in some of the case studies of good practice that I have been collecting, which are available [here](#).

Once again, I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to feed into their priorities for the next Senedd terms. Should you wish to discuss any of the above points in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact my team at ContactUs@futuregenerations.wales.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe

Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Annexe 1

Relevant Recommendations from the Future Generations Report 2020

A More Equal Wales

Key Recommendation

Welsh Government should consider how it can respond to future trends (such as increasing automation, our ageing population and climate change) in ways that reduce inequalities rather than perpetuating them.

Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should:

- Implement the recommendations of the Gender Equality Review with a particular focus on the implications of future trends as well as current challenges.
- Ensure that it is using levers such as the Public Sector Equality Duty; socio-economic duty and the Social Partnerships (Wales) Bill, in ways that align to the requirements of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 - particularly setting, delivering and reporting on well-being objectives.
- Take bold steps to tackle the inequalities experienced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales - including through a Race Equality Strategy.
- Set challenging targets for public sector recruitment, ensuring people with diverse characteristics are visibly represented in government at all levels. This approach should recognise the importance of lived experience of disadvantage as a valid recruitment criteria. A Real Life Fast Track should be introduced as part of government recruitment. (See Chapter 2 recommendation on the 'Real Life Fast Fast Track'.
- Ensure that the new school curriculum in Wales adequately equips children to become ethical informed citizens of a diverse Wales; especially in the context of the apparent growth in hate crime exacerbated by Brexit.
- Ensure that it uses every lever available to reduce inequalities and end poverty in Wales, maximising opportunities across all of the well-being goals.

Process Recommendations:

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should stop:

- Focusing efforts to tackle poverty and reduce inequality largely in the space of economic and social interventions, missing opportunities to take a more holistic approach that contributes to all of the well-being goals.
- Approaches to apprenticeships, mentoring, work shadowing and paid internship/work placement programmes which do not seek to tackle under-representation of certain groups.

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should start:

- Using future trends research and futures techniques to plan how to reduce poverty and inequalities for future generations.
- Using the definition of prevention to ensure that the overall approach to ending poverty and reducing inequality shifts to preventative approaches, as well as supporting people experiencing disadvantage.

- Better aligning key levers to tackle poverty and inequalities to the requirements of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Requiring all recipients of government funding to provide equality, diversity and unconscious bias training to its senior and public facing workforce.
- Seeking to reduce inequalities by involving people in the 'story behind the data' and collaborating with others.
- Addressing the recommendations contained in Audit Wales' report: 'Progress in Implementing the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' Act.

A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Key Recommendation

Welsh Government should seek to adopt a placemaking approach for community programmes, facilities and services aligned to the placemaking principles contained within Planning Policy Wales.

Policy Recommendations

Welsh Government should:

- Support the establishment of two or three pilot landscape-scale, community stewardship projects, building on the lessons learned from the Skyline project.
- Ensure everyone in Wales has access to reliable digital and internet connectivity; and work with business and voluntary organisations to help achieve this.
- Ensure its loneliness strategy is identifying how it can make a contributing to meet its well-being objectives and Wales' well-being goals.
- Support public bodies to work better together to plan, prepare and shift their activity and resources towards prevention; to help tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Support public bodies to deliver a more integrated approach to service delivery in rural areas.
- Require applications for the community facilities programme to demonstrate how they will contribute to local well-being objectives.
- Ensure the socio-economic duty aligns to The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- Set standards to ensure people can access biodiverse green spaces within 300 metres of their home.
- Commit to introducing the 20 minute neighbourhood concept for all towns and cities in Wales; creating healthier, happier communities fit for a zero-carbon future. This means strong, well connected neighbourhoods where people live within a 20 minute walking distance of key everyday services, and prioritising mix-type development which combines housing, transport links, public services, workplaces and recreational facilities.

Process Recommendations:

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should stop:

- Funding fragmented programmes that expect results within short term timescales.
- Focusing on perceived weaknesses in communities and ignoring their strengths.

- Considering community ownership and management of assets as only possible when public bodies can no longer afford them.
- Working in silos and isolation; failing to see the connections across government departments in order to support communities

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should start:

- Analysing the provision of and access to nature by socio-economic disadvantage, particularly in respect of funding programmes.
- Taking 'placebased' approaches in communities.
- Creating the conditions to help communities do what matters to them.
- Taking partnership working beyond 'dealing with' problems in communities towards preventing problems in communities.

A Prosperous Wales

Policy Recommendations:

Welsh Government should:

- Ensure everyone in Wales has access to reliable digital and internet connectivity; and work with businesses, voluntary organisations and communities to help achieve this.
- Adopt a whole government approach and work collectively with businesses, trade unions, the voluntary sector, communities and people across Wales to implement a low carbon society for current and future generations that leaves no one behind.
- Explore opportunities to pilot a four day working week, aligned with universal basic income, building on evidence gathered from pilots in other countries.

Process Recommendations:

In their day to day actions Welsh Government should start:

- Support local initiatives on stewardship of land and renewable energy, to help Wales' transition to a low carbon society and bring a wide range of benefits to local communities.

You may also find the recommendations in relation to leadership and cultural change in Welsh Government and Public Bodies of interest. You can find these recommendations [here](#) and [here](#).

Annexe 2

Future Trends to Watch

Current Trends

- Since 1994 poverty has only decreased slightly [from 27% of the population to 24%](#).
- Poverty in Wales generally has been [higher than in any other area of the UK](#) for the past 20 years.
- Children are the most likely to be in relative poverty ([29% of children compared to 19% of pensioners](#)).
- The pandemic has increased existing inequalities - nationally, the unemployment rate has reached [8.5% for BAME workers compared to 4.5% for white workers](#).
- Employability and skills programmes have experienced [reduced funding](#). In line with industrial trends, they have been targeted towards sectors of today rather than sectors of tomorrow.
- [63% of those newly unemployed in the UK in 2020-21 are under 25](#). Approximately 26,802 young people were unemployed in Wales as of Dec 2020.
- The proportion of women who provide unpaid care increases steadily with age, peaking in women's 50s and early 60s when [more than a quarter of women \(26%\) provide unpaid care](#).
- The number of hate crimes [doubled between 2012-13 and 2018-19](#), with race, sexual orientation, disability and religion judged to be motivating factors. Race has the highest prevalence as a motivating factor with 68% of hate crimes in 2017-18 being motivated by race.
- Records of domestic violence are increasing. In 2020, the police recorded 758,941 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales - [an increase of 9% from the previous year](#) and [27% from 2018](#).
- The number of people living alone and without family members is increasing. People aged 65 and over now make up 45% of single person households.
- [141 countries are exposed](#) to at least one ecological threat between now and 2050. The 19 countries with the highest number of threats have a population of 2.1 billion people.
- [One in seven adults in Scotland and Wales are experiencing data poverty](#): Nearly a million adults in Scotland and Wales struggle to afford sufficient, private and secure access to the internet.

Future Predictions:

- The Chief Economist says unemployment in Wales could peak at around [114,000 people in 2021](#) - double pre-crisis level of 55,000.
- The [future of work](#) could see a shift in demand away from office support positions, machine operators, and other low-skill professions - towards technology professionals such as 'computer engineers' and 'information communication technology specialists'.
- An estimated [1.2 billion people are at risk of displacement by 2050](#).
- The population is expected to continue to grow and then fall as we move to 2050, although this may be slowed by improvements in life expectancy.
- Social and health care costs will increase. Projections for an ageing workforce mean that there will be proportionately more people of pension age for every person of working age compared to now.