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Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of 'Early Intervention and Prevention for Children, Young People and Families' Project – **Conwy County Borough Council**

Audit year: 2018-19

Date issued: June 2019

Document reference: 1248A2019-20



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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Jeremy Evans, Gwilym Bury and Charlotte Owen under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

Why we undertook the Examination

- 1 In accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) the Auditor General for Wales (the Auditor General) is statutorily required to examine public bodies to assess the extent to which they have acted in accordance with the sustainable development principle when:
 - a. setting their well-being objectives; and
 - b. taking steps to meet them.

The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: '...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

- 2 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 3 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 4 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, **Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**. He concluded that public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 5 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 6 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their Well-being Objectives, the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their well-being objectives.
- 7 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period October 2018 to February 2019.
- 8 This report sets out our findings from our examination of Conwy County Borough Council's Plan for 2017-22 which includes a citizen outcome that people in Conwy are healthy and active. The outcome aims to reduce demand on public services by promoting healthy choices and lifestyles and provide simple and seamless access to the services people need by strengthening partnership working between Health and Social Care.
- 9 We asked the Council in January 2019 to respond to our findings, so they could be included in this report and we received their action plan in response in March 2019.

What we examined

- 10 We examined the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle. We reviewed the work of the Council with its partners to focus on adverse childhood experiences and providing support to parents through multi-agency approaches and developing new models to promote health and well-being so that people of all ages are less reliant on health and social care.
- 11 One of the ways the Council aims to achieve these steps and contribute to the citizen outcome is through its Early Intervention and Prevention for Children, Young People and Families project. The Council has developed a family centre model to deliver its early intervention and prevention approach. The model enables families to access support in the community from multi-agency teams. We reviewed the processes the Council is following to develop and implement the family centre model. This allowed us to assess the extent to which the Council is considering the sustainable development principle through the Early Intervention and Prevention for Children, Young People and Families Project ('the step') towards meeting its well-being objectives.
- 12 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle, public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working':

Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

The table below sets out the 'five ways of working' as defined in the Welsh Government's **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**¹ document.

The Five Ways of Working
Long-term The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
Prevention How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
Integration 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.
Collaboration Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.

¹ Welsh Government, **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 The Essentials**, (2015)

The Five Ways of Working

Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 13 Our examination found that: **'In a challenging financial climate, the Council is taking promising action to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle when taking steps to implement its Early Intervention and Prevention for Children, Young People and Families Project but needs to consider its next steps to further embrace the principles of the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015'**

Detailed report

Part One: Examination Findings

The Council is taking steps to balance current and long-term needs through the focus on long-term prevention but needs to consider the financial sustainability of the work

What we looked for

- 14 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of current and long-term needs and the associated challenges and opportunities;
 - planning over an appropriate timescale;
 - resources allocated to ensure long-term benefits; and
 - appropriate monitoring and review.
- 15 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for the 'long-term' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.²

What we found

- 16 We identified the following strengths:
- The family centre model is helping to address the short-term needs of families whilst also seeking to break generational cycles and reduce long-term demand for statutory intervention.
 - The Council is collecting qualitative and quantitative data to measure the short and long-term impacts of the family centres on local needs.
 - The Council is making use of grant funding and partners' funding streams to finance the centres and is committed to continue rolling out the project across the county.
- 17 We identified the following opportunities:
- In reporting outcomes, the Council could demonstrate more comprehensively the long-term financial benefits the project is delivering by calculating the costs avoided by early intervention and prevention.
 - To mitigate potential financial risks around the long-term sustainability of the work – particularly given reliance on grant funding – the Council should consider how it can ensure the long-term resilience of the model.

² See Appendix 1

The Council understands the needs of local families and has considered how family centres can address those needs and prevent problems escalating, but should further consider how preventative programmes could be used more widely across the Council

What we looked for

- 18 We looked for evidence of:
- a thorough understanding of the nature and type of problem the step could help prevent from occurring or getting worse;
 - resources allocated to ensure preventative benefits will be delivered; and
 - monitoring and review of how effectively the step is preventing problems from occurring or getting worse.
- 19 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'prevention' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.³

What we found

- 20 We identified the following strengths:
- Officers and Councillors we spoke to had a good understanding of the need to build more resilient families, protect children from adverse childhood experiences and reduce the need for statutory intervention.
 - The Council has worked with partner organisations to establish multi-agency teams to support families out in the community.
 - Family centres enable all families to access help and support much earlier and in a neutral setting.
 - The project aims to create conditions in which problems do not arise by providing families with open access to support and activities that help develop resilience.
 - The Council is collecting qualitative and quantitative data to measure how the project is supporting families and preventing statutory service intervention. This data also helps the Council understand local needs and informs the preventative services on offer.
- 21 We identified the following opportunities:
- Given the cross-cutting benefits of early intervention and prevention, the Council should consider how it can focus budgets and future investment on preventative programmes.

³ See Appendix 1

- The Council should consider further modelling the impact of prevention in terms of costs.
- The Council should consider further how it can learn from the project's early intervention and prevention approach and shift resources towards prevention across the Council as a whole.

The Council has taken an integrated, multi-agency approach to delivering the work and has considered how outcomes will benefit its partners as well as its own wellbeing objectives but there are opportunities for the Council to strengthen its approach

What we looked for

- 22 We looked for evidence of consideration of:
- how this step could contribute to the seven national well-being goals;
 - how delivery of this step will impact on the Council's well-being objectives and wider priorities; and
 - how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' well-being objectives.
- 23 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁴

What we found

- 24 We identified the following strengths:
- The Council has considered how the project could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals.
 - The Council has considered how the project contributes to its wellbeing objectives and wider priorities.
 - The Council has worked with a number of partners to develop the project and has considered how it contributes to partners' objectives.
- 25 We identified the following opportunities:
- The Council should consider how to take forward learning on the benefits and challenges of working in a more integrated way and how it can embed this approach corporately.
 - Governance arrangements could be strengthened. It is not clear how, if the project was failing, it would be addressed.

⁴ See Appendix 1

- Despite working to reach very vulnerable families, it is not clear how the Council will judge success in take up of the service by these people.

Collaborative working is a key component of the Council's early intervention and prevention approach and it has worked closely with partners on the design and delivery of the family centres but the project links with neighbouring councils could be strengthened

What we looked for

- 26 We looked for evidence that the Council:
- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its well-being objectives, or assist another body to meet its well-being objectives);
 - is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
 - is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet well-being objectives.
- 27 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'collaboration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁵

What we found

- 28 We identified the following strengths:
- The Council is collaborating with a range of internal and external partners so that families can access the support they need regardless of which organisation or service is responsible for providing it.
 - Qualitative data collated by the Council from family centre users and staff suggests this approach to service provision removes barriers to access and is key to the project's success.
 - Partners spoke positively about the way the Council has meaningfully involved them in the project's design and delivery.
- 29 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- The Council should continue to evaluate and learn lessons from its approach to collaboration and consider whether ownership of the project and its performance is shared with partners.
 - The project's links with Gwynedd and Denbighshire could be further strengthened.

⁵ See Appendix 1

The Council is effectively involving stakeholders in the design and delivery of its family centres and is responsive to local needs but recognises further work is needed to involve stakeholders and learn from its approach to date

What we looked for

- 30 We looked for evidence that the Council has:
- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
 - effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
 - used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
 - sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.
- 31 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.⁶

What we found

- 32 We identified the following strengths:
- The Council has engaged with families to establish local needs and involved them in the design and delivery of the project. For example, families have helped shape:
 - the concept of the family centre;
 - the location of centres and the services they offer; and
 - the way centres measure outcomes.
 - The Council proactively reviews its approach to involvement and uses this to inform future ways of working. For example, the Council is now:
 - developing ongoing consultation with children and young people; and
 - creating community-specific parent advisory groups.
- 33 We identified the following opportunities:
- The Council is taking steps to engage with hard to reach groups but further work is needed to involve some of the more challenging groups.
 - The Council should continue to use learning from the roll-out of centres to evolve the way it involves stakeholders.
 - Although having 'somewhere to go' is very important to most communities, the project should consider how people may communicate and congregate in the future and the impact of social media.

⁶ See Appendix 1

Part Two: Council's response and actions

34 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to senior officers of the Council at a workshop in February 2019. At this workshop the Council began to consider its response to our findings and because of discussions at the workshop, and further reflection on our findings, the Council has developed the following actions under specific themes. We will continue to monitor the Council's progress in implementing their action plan, and the extent to which they address the issues we have identified in our findings. The Council will provide an update on most areas in September and December 2019.

Exhibit 2: Council Actions

Sustainable Development principles	Opportunities for Improvement	Action response
Long-term	In reporting outcomes, the Council could demonstrate more comprehensively the long-term financial benefits the project is delivering by calculating the costs avoided by early intervention and prevention.	Explore the use of the Social Return on Investment tool currently being developed for Families First funded activities, for the full family support programme. Identify from a range of tools, the most appropriate method of measuring social return on investment for prevention work.

Sustainable Development principles	Opportunities for Improvement	Action response
Long-term	To mitigate potential financial risks around the long-term sustainability of the work – particularly given reliance on grant funding – the Council should consider how it can ensure the long-term resilience of the model.	<p>Identify mitigating actions to the financial risks through robust planning of grant funding in the medium-term through considering the reconfiguration of core services around this model to ensure sustainability through continued partnership working.</p> <p>Funding Flexibility process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain an understanding of the needs in each of the five areas of Conwy • Understand what is available to meet the needs in the areas, and identify gaps • Focus provision (through grants or core funding) to meet the needs
Prevention	Given the cross-cutting benefits of early intervention and prevention, the Council should consider how it can focus budgets and future investment on preventative programmes.	<p>The Council adheres to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and therefore the five ways of working, which includes prevention. All reports to democracy must detail their contribution to the five ways of working (as prompted in the cover report). The corporate priorities also focus on the longer term and include preventative actions across all eight citizen outcomes.</p> <p>A new resources and resilience portfolio of projects and programmes is currently being developed and this will include the scrutiny and analysis of projects and programmes and weighting their potential and benefits realised. One of the draft weighting criteria is the contribution to the preventative agenda.</p>

Sustainable Development principles	Opportunities for Improvement	Action response
Prevention	The Council should consider further modelling the impact of prevention in terms of costs.	<p>(As above)</p> <p>Explore the use of the Social Return on Investment tool currently being developed for Families First funded activities, for the full family support programme.</p> <p>Identify from a range of tools, the most appropriate method of measuring social return on investment for prevention work.</p>
Prevention	The Council should consider further how it can learn from the project's early intervention and prevention approach and shift resources towards prevention across the Council as a whole.	<p>Implement the evaluation strategy developed for the Social Care Early Intervention and Prevention Services. Share the results of the evaluation corporately.</p> <p>All programmes and projects follow the project and programmes governance framework, which includes a benefits realisation and a lessons learned log. Good practices and lessons are shared with colleagues at the programme and projects Forum.</p>
Integration	The Council should consider how to take forward learning on the benefits and challenges of working in a more integrated way and how it can embed this approach corporately.	<p>The Benefits Realisation Plan and lessons learned from the project are shared through the Project Management Framework.</p> <p>The application of the Senior Management Team Charter, which is an agreement between heads of service to work in an increasingly collaborative way across the departments.</p>

Sustainable Development principles	Opportunities for Improvement	Action response
Integration	Governance arrangements could be strengthened- it is not clear how if the project was failing how it would be addressed.	<p>Confirm the ongoing governance arrangements, once the change/project has become 'business as usual'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the population needs assessment biannually • Identify new areas of need and refocus provision to address these needs • Strengthen the role of the Area forums (elected members) and scrutiny committees, Area Integrated Services Board (multi-agency)
Integration	Despite working to reach very vulnerable families, it is not clear how the Council will judge success in take up of the service by these people.	Further develop networks with other universal services such as Health Visiting, community midwifery and schools to identify and target vulnerable families.
Collaboration	The Council should continue to evaluate and learn lessons from its approach to collaboration and consider whether ownership of the project and its performance is shared with partners.	The governance arrangements for the project is being reconsidered and will form part of a wider programme of work to be delivered – part of the Welsh Government Care Closer to Home agenda.
Collaboration	The project's links with Gwynedd and Denbighshire could be further strengthened.	Continue to develop relationships with neighbouring counties to ensure consistency and equitability of services for Conwy residents.
Involvement	The Council is taking steps to engage with hard to reach groups but further work is needed to involve some of the more challenging groups.	As part of the process of identifying the needs of the five areas, an inclusive engagement plan will be developed.
Involvement	The Council should continue to use learning from the roll-out of centres to evolve the way it involves stakeholders.	Use the corporate engagement network to share lessons learned and good practice.

Sustainable Development principles	Opportunities for Improvement	Action response
Involvement	Although having 'somewhere to go' is very important to most communities, the project should consider how people may communicate and congregate in the future and the impact of social media.	The wider Family Support model includes outreach work, and visiting families in their homes where appropriate. Action: Continue to develop the use of social media by the Family Support Teams. Work with the Corporate Communications Team to develop this strategy further.

Appendix 1

Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

The table below sets out 'positive indicators' for each of the five ways of working that we have identified and will use to help inform our assessments of the extent to which bodies may be applying the SDP. We do not intend to use the indicators as a 'checklist'. They should be viewed as 'indicators' that will help us to form conclusions, rather than 'determinants' of the extent to which a body is acting in accordance with the SDP in taking steps to meet its well-being objectives.

Exhibit 3: Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

What would show a body is fully applying the long-term way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a clear understanding of what 'long-term' means in the context of the Act• They have designed the step to deliver the well-being objective/s and contribute to their long-term vision• They have designed the step to deliver short or medium-term benefits, which are balanced with the impact over the long-term (within the project context)• They have designed the step based on a sophisticated understanding of current and future need and pressures, including analysis of future trends• Consequently, there is a comprehensive understanding of current and future risks and opportunities• Resources have been allocated to ensure long-term as well as short-term benefits are delivered• There is a focus on delivering outcomes, with milestones/progression steps identified where outcomes will be delivered over the long-term• They are open to new ways of doing things which could help deliver benefits over the longer term• They value intelligence and pursue evidence-based approaches
What would show a body is fully applying the preventative way of working?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The body seeks to understand the root causes of problems so that negative cycles and intergenerational challenges can be tackled• The body sees challenges from a system-wide perspective, recognising and valuing the long-term benefits that they can deliver for people and places• The body allocates resources to preventative action that is likely to contribute to better outcomes and use of resources over the longer-term, even where this may limit the ability to meet some short-term needs• There are decision-making and accountability arrangements that recognise the value of preventative action and accept short-term reductions in performance and resources in the pursuit of anticipated improvements in outcomes and use of resources

What would show a body is taking an 'integrated' approach?

- Individuals at all levels understand their contribution to the delivery of the vision and well-being objectives
- Individuals at all levels understand what different parts of the organisation do and proactively seek opportunities to work across organisational boundaries. This is replicated in their work with other public bodies
- Individuals at all levels recognise the cross-organisation dependencies of achieving the ambition and objectives
- There is an open culture where information is shared
- There is a well-developed understanding of how the well-being objectives and steps to meet them impact on other public sector bodies
- Individuals proactively work across organisational boundaries to maximise their contribution across the well-being goals and minimise negative impacts
- Governance, structures and processes support this, as do behaviours

What would show a body is collaborating effectively?

- The body is focused on place, community and outcomes rather than organisational boundaries
- The body has a good understanding of partners' objectives and their responsibilities, which helps to drive collaborative activity
- The body has positive and mature relationships with stakeholders, where information is shared in an open and transparent way
- The body recognises and values the contributions that all partners can make
- The body seeks to establish shared processes and ways of working, where appropriate

What would show a body is involving people effectively?

- Having an understanding of who needs to be involved and why
- Reflecting on how well the needs and challenges facing those people are currently understood
- Working co-productively, working with stakeholders to design and deliver
- Seeing the views of stakeholders as a vital source of information that will help deliver better outcomes
- Ensuring that the full diversity of stakeholders is represented and they are able to take part
- Having mature and trusting relationships with its stakeholders where there is ongoing dialogue and information is shared in an open and transparent way
- Ensure stakeholders understand the impact of their contribution
- Seek feedback from key stakeholders which is used to help learn and improve

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