

Reflecting on Year One: How Have Public Bodies Responded to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?



Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.



'I am pleased to hear public bodies talking about the Well-being of Future Generations Act with enthusiasm and optimism. I have been encouraged to hear them describe how they intend to change culture, as well as policies and processes. The examples they have shared with my office give a sense that they are starting to make the changes needed for them to effectively apply the sustainable development principle.'

I do recognise and appreciate the range of internal and external challenges that make implementing

new legislation difficult. However, there is a risk that for some, the Well-being of Future Generations Act is perceived as 'another thing to do'. Unless those bodies and individuals adopt a mind-set where they see sustainable development as an approach that can help them address major budget and service challenges, rather than an additional burden, they will be unable to make the most of the opportunity the Act affords.'

Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales

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Background and purpose

The Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Auditor General for Wales

- 1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the Act) aims to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. It requires 44 public bodies to carry out sustainable development, which is defined as:

‘...the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.’¹

In carrying out sustainable development, public bodies must set well-being objectives and take all reasonable steps to meet them.

- 2 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

- 3 To act in this manner, public bodies must take account of the ‘five ways of working’. These are:

- looking to the long term so that they do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- taking an integrated approach so that they look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives;
- involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them;
- working with others in a collaborative way to find shared, sustainable solutions; and
- understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring or getting worse.³

In this way, the Act aims to improve what public bodies do and the way they do it so that they can collectively improve the well-being of Wales.

1 Part 2 2 **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

2 Part 2 5 (1) **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

3 Welsh Government, **Shared Purpose: Shared Future Statutory Guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, 2016**

- 4 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 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.

- 5 The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales (the Commissioner) also has a part to play in ensuring public bodies are accountable for implementing the Act. The Commissioner is responsible for monitoring and assessing the extent to which public bodies are meeting their well-being objectives. The Auditor General and Commissioner have committed to work together to deliver their responsibilities.⁴

Why we have undertaken this review

- 6 The Act sets out a bold ambition for public bodies in Wales. It aims to drive a long term change in their culture and the outcomes they achieve. As the main provisions of the Act came into force in 2016, it is inevitable that public bodies will need time to effect that change. Therefore, while the Auditor General is required to examine all public bodies and report on them by 2020 he has emphasised that this is a transition period and recognises that all public bodies are on a learning path.
- 7 For this reason, the Auditor General decided to undertake a preliminary piece of work, in advance of commencing his formal examinations. This review aims to:
 - provide an overview of how the 44 public bodies are responding to the Act;
 - identify and disseminate emerging practice to help public bodies learn and improve; and
 - help inform the focus of future audit work under the Act.

4 The Auditor General and Commissioner signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) in December 2017

- 8 Given the nature of the Auditor General's duty (see [paragraph 4](#)), this review has placed a particular emphasis on how public bodies are beginning to apply the sustainable development principle. The Wales Audit Office was also particularly keen to explore how public bodies had applied the sustainable development principle when setting their well-being objectives, given they were required to set them for the first time by April 2017.
- 9 This report, therefore, provides the Auditor General's commentary on how public bodies have responded to the Act in the first year. It gives some early feedback, without prescribing expectations for how public bodies should be undertaking their new responsibilities.
- 10 Overall, the Auditor General has concluded that:

Public bodies support the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and are taking steps to change how they work
- 11 The Commissioner has published a report in parallel to this report: Well-being in Wales: The journey so far looks at the well-being objectives that public bodies have set and provides advice on how they can best demonstrate they are taking effective steps to meet them.⁵
- 12 In addition to this review, the Wales Audit Office has played an active role in helping public bodies learn about the Act through the shared learning seminars that are run by the Good Practice Exchange.⁶

5 Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner, **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far**, 2018.

6 Wales Audit Office, Good Practice Exchange, [Shared Learning Seminars: past events](#)

What we did

13 The Wales Audit Office has sought to understand public bodies' views on the Act, how they are beginning to respond and how they plan to continue improving. The main question we sought to answer was:

What is the public body doing to respond to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to ensure it can deliver its well-being duty and act in accordance with the sustainable development principle?

Specifically, we considered the following questions:

- how does the public body view the requirements of the legislation and the implications for how it works?
- what key actions has it taken to deliver its well-being duty and embed the sustainable development principle in how it works?
- what is it doing to identify further opportunities to deliver its well-being duty and embed the sustainable development principle?

14 To enable us answer these questions, we:

- asked public bodies to respond to a 'call for evidence' ([Appendix 1](#)) in summer 2017. This provided an opportunity for them to tell us about the work they are doing in their own words. It gave them the flexibility to tell us about the things they felt were important, recognising that each public body will respond to the Act in a different way.
- spoke to leaders, board chairpersons (or equivalents) and chief executives (or equivalents) of the public bodies.
- reviewed key documents, such as well-being statements.

15 We also asked public bodies to share examples of how they are applying the Act. Some of these examples are referenced later in this report. They are not intended to promote the right or best way of applying the Act, but rather to share the variety of ways that public bodies are beginning to respond. Many of the examples given are at relatively early stages of implementation and those bodies are continuing to learn and refine the approaches.

Main report

The Act sets out a bold ambition for public services in Wales and many public bodies see it as an opportunity to change their culture and improve how they work

The Well-being of Future Generations Act sets out a bold ambition for public services in Wales

- 16 The Act has been described by many as a ground-breaking piece of legislation, which is far-reaching and pioneering in both its nature and intent. The Act is new for Wales, but it is also unique internationally.
- 17 The Act's broad scope shows there is a clear intention for it to provide a framework for the way public services operate and deliver. It has been designed to promote sustainable development and enable government and other public bodies to meet the significant challenges facing them and the communities they serve.

'No other nation is taking these bold steps to legislate for long term well-being goals...

... It will serve as the central theme of all our policies and legislation.'

Jeff Cuthbert
Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, 2014⁷

'The Bill is perhaps the most ambitious piece of legislation that the Welsh Government has ever attempted. It will require a fundamental shift in how we seek to tackle our biggest challenges as a nation.'

Carl Sargeant
Natural Resources Minister, 2014⁸

7 Statement by the Welsh Government, Jeff Cuthbert, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, 2014

8 Carl Sargeant, Natural Resources Minister, [Wales in 2050: What kind of Wales do we want to live in?](#), Wales Online 2014

'The Well-being of Future Generations Act gives us the encouragement, the permission and the obligation to make the changes needed to deliver the Wales we want'

The Office of the Future Generations Commissioner⁹

- 18 However, the Act is not a complete departure from the policy and practice that preceded it. For example, the public services boards, well-being plans and well-being assessments set out by the Act are a progression from Local Service Boards, single integrated plans and needs assessments. The Act accords with well-established principles of good governance and policy making. Furthermore, pre-existing legislation required public bodies to consider sustainable development. For example, local authorities were required to consider how they contributed towards the achievement of sustainable development as part of their improvement responsibilities. The national park authorities have a longstanding duty to 'foster the social and economic well-being of local communities'.¹⁰ Natural Resources Wales must pursue the sustainable management of natural resources and apply the principles of sustainable management of natural resources in the exercise of its functions.¹¹ Given this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are differing views on the scale and pace of change the Act necessitates.
- 19 The Auditor General has also been clear that the essence of the Act is about changing behaviours and mind-sets. He has recognised that, while the Act is ground-breaking, it is also daunting because effecting that kind of change is not easy. Importantly, the Auditor General has emphasised that public bodies and wider stakeholders are on a journey together.

9 Office of the Future Generations Commissioner website <https://futuregenerations.wales/making-it-happen/>

10 Section 11A (1) The National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

11 There are nine principles; adaptive management, scale, collaboration and engagement, public participation, evidence, multiple benefits, long term, preventative action and building resilience. Natural Resources Wales, **Managing today's natural resources for tomorrow's generations: Well-being Statement 2017-18**

Are we going to rely too much on the past and not think through what we need to do to radically change, to develop new ways of approaching the aims and goals of the legislation?

... Don't expect from the auditor, or from Sophie, a clear 'this is how to do it' - so you can go away and tick the boxes. It's not like that. It is, however, a journey in which I'm engaged, you're engaged and Sophie is engaged.

Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales, 2016¹²

- 20 The Commissioner has emphasised that change needs to go beyond the duties and to focus on behaviours. She sees her role as being a supportive one in the early stages of the Act coming into force but has said she will challenge 'business as usual' and does not accept the notion that 'we are "doing this already"'.¹³

This Act is just what was needed to unsettle the status quo, ruffle a few feathers, and bring public services back to the purpose they were set up for in the first place – to improve the lives and well-being of people here in Wales, today, and for every tomorrow to come...

...we're open and realistic about the fact that this culture change is not going to happen overnight. As we move through turbulent and ever-changing times, the road towards the well-being goals is never going to be straightforward and easy.

Sophie Howe
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2016¹⁴

¹² Auditor General for Wales, Shaping Accountability for Future Generations conference speech, 2016

¹³ Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far**, 2018

¹⁴ Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Shaping Accountability for Future Generations conference speech, 2016

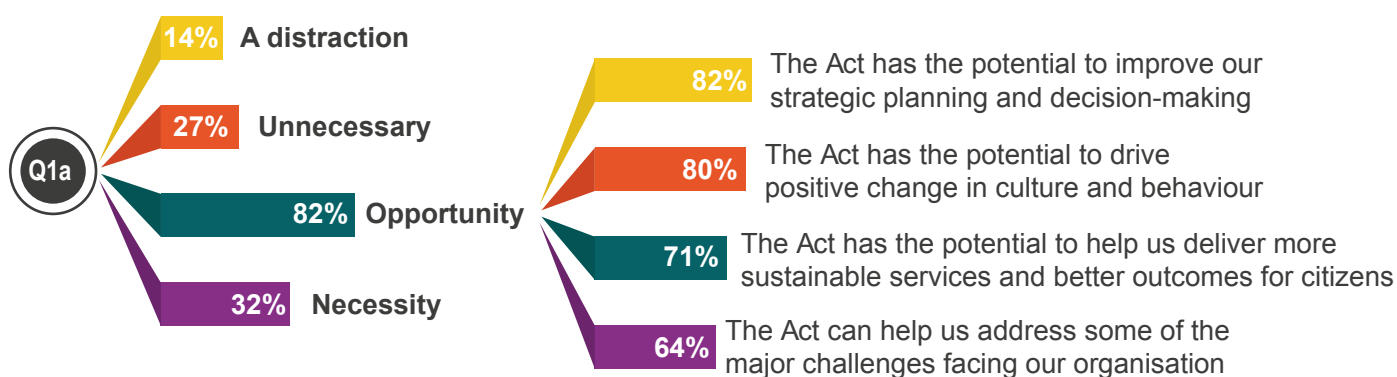
- 21 It will be important for public bodies and stakeholders to continue to discuss the scale of change they think is required and the rate of progress that can reasonably be expected. This discussion will foster a greater collective understanding and help shape challenge and accountability for delivering the Act.

Public bodies see the Act as an opportunity to change their culture and improve how they work

- 22 We have sought to understand how public bodies' perceive the Act. This is because perceptions of the Act will, to a large extent, determine how public bodies respond. We asked public bodies 'how would describe the Act and what it means for your organisation?' We asked whether they saw it as a distraction, unnecessary, an opportunity or a necessity. We explored this as part of our call for evidence and during our interviews.
- 23 Overall, public bodies described the Act in positive terms. The majority, across all sectors, said that they saw it as an 'opportunity'. This was most commonly because they saw the Act as having the potential to improve 'strategic planning and decision-making' and to 'drive positive change in culture and behaviour'.
- 24 Many health bodies also described how the Act can add value by encouraging a broader view of how to improve the health of the population, including by tackling health inequalities and increasing the focus on preventative work. They saw the Act as being important in driving a collective response to these challenges. Similarly, fire and rescue authorities highlighted how the Act provides an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and increase preventative work.
- 25 Some public bodies went further and said that they saw the Act as a 'necessity'. Health bodies, central government and sponsored bodies and fire and rescue authorities were, proportionally, more likely to describe it in this way. This tended to be because they felt the Act could help deliver more sustainable services and better outcomes for citizens.
- 26 However, while most bodies said they saw the Act as an opportunity, a few also saw it as 'unnecessary', predominantly because they felt the Act legislates for things they were already doing or seeking to do. They saw it as a reinforcement of or progression from previous policy, legislation or recognised good practice. Nevertheless, bodies were often positive about the opportunity to review what they do and how they do it in light of the Act.

- 27 Many local authority responses show they feel the Act has affirmed progress they were already making, such as developments in strategic planning and collaboration. Some of these local authorities had been part of the WLGA's 'Early Adopters' programme.¹⁵ While most local authorities were keen to recognise the value of the Act, some also questioned the timing of its introduction. They stated that it would be particularly difficult to implement, given reductions in capacity and resources.
- 28 Very few bodies said they saw the Act as a 'distraction'. Those that did indicated that it was because they will need to devote time and resources to implementation, rather than because they saw the principles as unhelpful.

Exhibit 1 – Call for evidence. Q1a: How would you describe the Act and what it means for your organisation?¹⁶



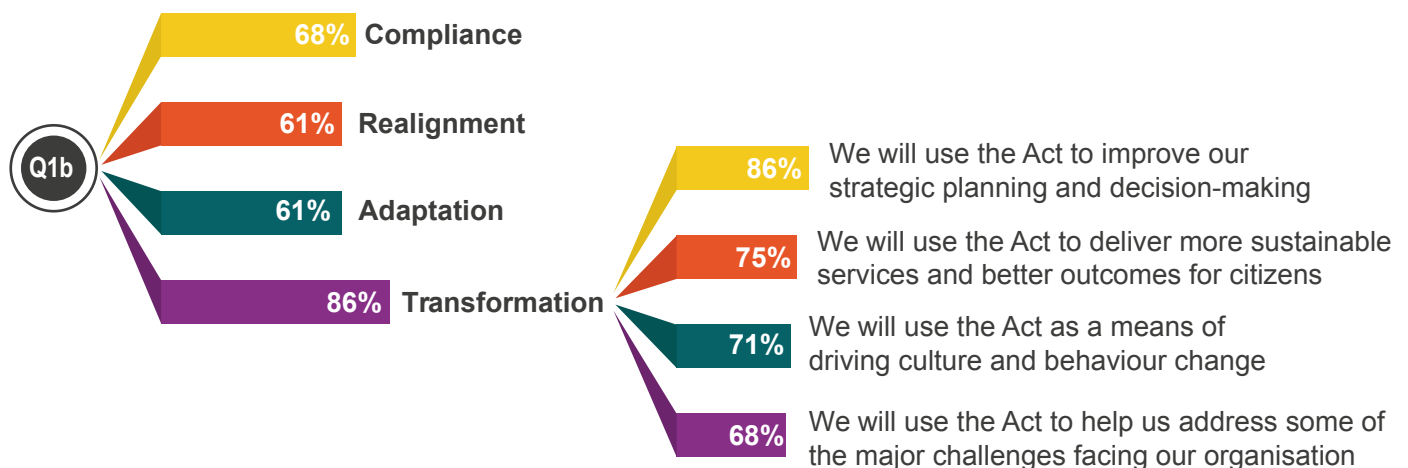
- 29 While some public bodies may have been applying or working towards the principles of the Act prior to its introduction, their challenge is to reflect on where the Act is pushing them to go further. They will need to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and opportunities to improve how they apply the five ways of working. They will need to consider whether they need to apply the five ways of working more consistently or more systematically.
- 30 Furthermore, it is important to remember that the five ways of working are not an end in themselves. The ways of working are a means of helping public bodies maximise their contribution to the well-being goals. For example, the fact that public bodies are collaborating is not sufficient; they should also seek to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being through that collaboration.

¹⁵ [The WLGA worked with 11 councils and all of Wales' national park authorities as early adopters.](#)
¹⁶ [Public bodies were able to tick as many boxes as they considered relevant.](#)

In future work, the Wales Audit Office will distinguish between those bodies that have been making progress in applying the principles of the Act for some time and those that describe themselves as having done so, but have failed to recognise the change it is seeking to bring about.

- 31 We also asked public bodies ‘How would you describe the change you intend to make to deliver the Act?’. We asked whether they intend to focus on compliance, realigning or adapting existing activities or transforming what they do. As with the previous question, we asked this as part of our call for evidence and during interviews.
- 32 Almost all public bodies appear to have been keen to emphasise that they will ensure compliance in addition to realigning, adapting or transforming what they do. Their responses show that they do not see these categories as being in conflict.
- 33 While there was a more even spread of responses than for the previous question, public bodies most commonly stated that they would use the Act to help them transform how they work, specifically by improving strategic planning and decision making. They also intend to use the Act to help them address the major challenges they face, deliver more sustainable services and better outcomes and to drive culture and behaviour change.

Exhibit 2 – Call for evidence. Q1b: How would you describe the change you intend to make to deliver the Act?¹⁷



¹⁷ Public bodies were able to tick as many boxes as they considered relevant.

- 34 Public bodies' responses show that they generally see the Act as an opportunity and recognise it has broad-ranging application. They see it as having the potential for improving what they do and the way they do it.

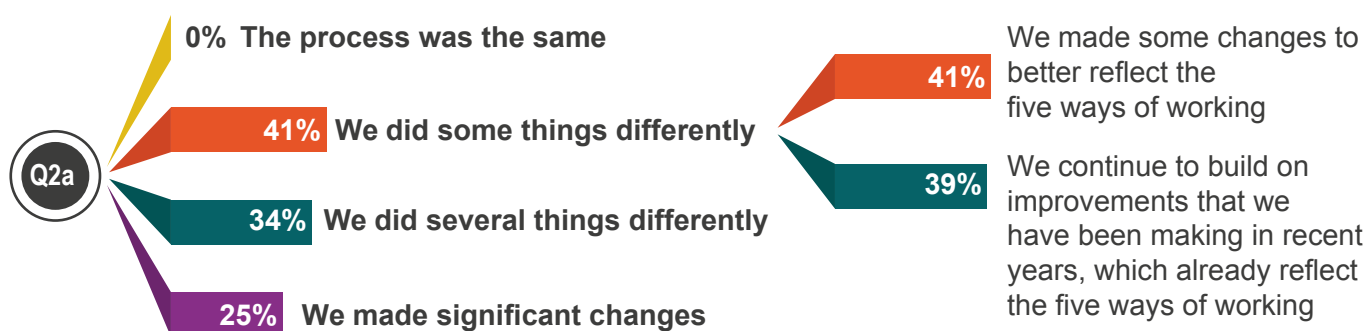
Public bodies are able to provide examples of how they are using the Act to change how they work, but they are not yet able to describe how they are systematically applying the sustainable development principle

Most public bodies set their first well-being objectives in 2017 and were able to provide some examples of how they applied the five ways of working as part of that process

- 35 Public bodies were required to set their first well-being objectives by April 2017. The Act prescribed a challenging planning timetable for setting well-being objectives and it is important to remember that none of the 44 bodies were starting with a blank sheet. Some bodies were required to publish their first well-being objectives mid-way through an existing planning cycle. Local authorities, fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities had to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. They were required to publish their well-being objectives shortly before the local government elections.
- 36 The timetable has been particularly challenging for public services boards. They were required to publish a well-being assessment by May 2017; to seek the Commissioner's views on their draft objectives; and to consult on and then publish the final well-being plan by May 2018. The fact that individual bodies were required to publish their objectives before public services boards has also been highlighted as barrier to integration by some (see [paragraph 50](#)).
- 37 As a result of these challenges, public bodies took different approaches to aligning or integrating their well-being objectives with existing strategies and corporate objectives. They have tended either to replace their previous corporate objectives with their well-being objectives or set well-being objectives in addition to their corporate objectives.
- 38 A few bodies chose not to set well-being objectives by the statutory deadline. They have instead stated their intention to publish well-being objectives in the near future rather than create an additional tier of corporate objectives or 'retrofit' the requirements of the Act to existing plans and strategies. Other bodies reviewed their existing corporate objectives against the requirements of the Act and considered them to be fit for purpose or in need of small amendments.

- 39 A few public bodies said that they intended to revise their well-being objectives soon after setting them. Reasons include:
- new membership in local authorities, following the 2017 local government elections;
 - opportunities to align planning processes as other plans and strategies come to an end, such as the Integrated Medium Term Plans in health;
 - opportunities to ensure the well-being objectives reflect public services boards' well-being objectives post May 2018; and
 - a desire to improve on the process of setting well-being objectives.
- 40 This will be a continuing area of focus for the Wales Audit Office, given the Auditor General will need to assess how well-being objectives have been set as part of future examination work.
- 41 We asked public bodies 'How different was the process compared to the process for setting corporate objectives in the past?'. We asked them whether the process was the same, whether they did some or several things differently or whether they made significant changes.
- 42 No public bodies said the process was the same as for previous years. Most said that they had done some or several things differently. Few said that they felt the process was much improved compared to previous years.

Exhibit 3 – Call for evidence. Q2a: Your organisation has set, or is in the process of setting, well-being objectives. How different was the process compared to the process for setting corporate objectives in the past?



- 43 While bodies most commonly indicated that they did some or several things differently, they often failed to give a detailed explanation of ‘how’ or provide specific examples of how all of the five ways of working have been applied. References to how the five ways of working have been applied tended to relate to collaboration, involvement or integration.
- 44 Most local authorities said that they had drawn on work they had done through the public services boards to help them develop their well-being objectives. They described how they had used the Public Services Board’s well-being assessment as part of their evidence base, as did some health bodies.
- 45 Most local authorities made reference to how they had engaged the public in developing their well-being objectives. It was not always clear how this differed from engagement and consultation they had undertaken in the past. However, some described how they had drawn on the engagement undertaken by the Public Services Board as part of the development of the well-being assessment.
- 46 Most health bodies said they had engaged internal and external stakeholders as part of the process of developing their well-being objectives, though few made reference to engaging the public (beyond drawing on the results of any engagement included in the well-being assessment). A few said they intended to undertake greater involvement when they revise their well-being objectives.
- 47 Similarly, central government and sponsored bodies tended to involve staff and stakeholders in the development of their well-being objectives and some stated that they had involved a wider circle than they had in previous years. However, only a few of these bodies directly involved the public in developing their well-being objectives, though others have since launched large scale public engagement processes.
- 48 Some bodies said that they had taken a more ‘integrated’ approach by involving different internal and external stakeholders to help them identify how they could make a broader contribution across the well-being goals. However, the Commissioner’s analysis of well-being objectives found that:
- ‘Overwhelmingly, objectives have a tone of improving the economic and social well-being of localities, with little emphasis on the environment or culture – despite the need to demonstrate how well-being objectives contribute to each of the seven goals.’
- 49 Therefore, while public bodies may feel that they have improved the process, this has not necessarily resulted in well-being objectives that reflect all of the aspects of well-being.

- 50 Some bodies, notably health bodies, made reference to the statutory timetable and the fact that it poses a challenge to collaboration and integration, given that it requires individual bodies to publish their well-being objectives before public services boards publish theirs. A few said they intend to review their own well-being objectives following the publication of the Public Services Board's objectives.
- 51 There was limited information on how public bodies had used the 'long term' way of working to help them set their well-being objectives and less on 'prevention' (notwithstanding this may be implicit, given the references to drawing on Public Services Board's well-being assessments¹⁸). However, there are references to preventative activities within plans. They include references to delivering the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and aligning the two piece of legislation at a local level. Fire and rescue authorities, in particular, emphasised that prevention is a well-established and successful way of working for them and gave examples, such as work with health and police partners on falls prevention and home fire safety. However, while public bodies may be undertaking preventative work, it is generally unclear how they have taken prevention into account as part of the process of developing their well-being objectives.
- 52 While public bodies may feel they have applied the five ways of working to a greater extent, it is not always clear how the process was different or what has changed as a result. The Commissioner's analysis highlights that:
- 'At the moment, public bodies are committing to well-being objectives that largely resemble the corporate objectives they would have set prior to 2017.'
- 53 The Commissioner has also concluded that well-being statements 'are not yet transparent and that makes it difficult to build up trust with others and enable them to meaningfully get involved in the business of the organisation'. The Commissioner expects public bodies to involve people in writing these reports so that they are more accessible in future.¹⁹

18 The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has previously highlighted weaknesses in how well-being assessments have taken account of future trends. The report 'Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow' states that 'The majority of assessments did not meaningfully consider the long-term, future trends or multigenerational policy challenges' and 'implicit messages from the data needed further exploration to better understand the causes and effects of key issues and trends'. Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, **Well-being in Wales: Planning today for a better tomorrow**, 2017

19 Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far**, 2018

In future, the Wales Audit Office will expect to clearly see how the sustainable development principle and five ways of working have been used to determine a public bodies' well-being objectives.

The Wales Audit Office will assess the extent to which all of the five ways of working are being considered and applied systematically through the process of setting well-being objectives. The ways of working should not be seen as a hierarchy or as unrelated to each other.

RESOURCE

Making a Difference: Investing in Sustainable Health and Well-being for the People of Wales

Public Health Wales produced the report 'Making a Difference: Investing in Sustainable Health and Well-being for the People of Wales', which offers research evidence and expert opinion in support of preventing ill health and reducing inequalities to achieve a sustainable economy, thriving society and optimum health and well-being for the present and future generations in Wales.

View the report [here](#).

Public bodies are beginning to take steps to apply the sustainable development principle across their work

- 54 As already described, public bodies, Public Services Board members and local authorities in particular, have, in general, devoted time and capacity to ensuring they meet the statutory timetable for publishing well-being objectives, well-being assessments and developing well-being plans.²⁰
- 55 However, in order to deliver on the spirit and ambition of the Act, public bodies need to consider how they carry out sustainable development in everything they do. We asked public bodies to tell us what they were doing to embed the sustainable development principle in other areas of work.

²⁰ Local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, health boards and Natural Resources Wales are the statutory members of public services boards. [Further details on public services board membership.](#)

- 56 The activity they described broadly falls into the following categories:
- culture and behaviour change
 - governance
 - strategic planning, performance and risk management
 - project/ service delivery
- 57 Most bodies gave examples of how they had sought to improve awareness and understanding of the Act. This was generally through training, such as:
- inclusion in corporate induction for staff, board members or elected members;
 - inclusion in leadership and management programmes; or
 - specific training for staff, board, cabinet or committee members.
- 58 Beyond this, there were limited examples of how public bodies have sought to begin to change culture and behaviour. Some bodies made reference to:
- using mentors or critical friends to provide advice and help promote the five ways of working;
 - encouraging individuals to assess or reflect on how they are applying the five ways of working;
 - gathering and sharing case studies to make the Act 'real' for people in different parts of the organisation and help them apply it in their day-to-day roles;
 - developing ways of recognising and rewarding the application of the five ways of working; or
 - making managers accountable for delivering outcomes so that they see their responsibilities as cross-cutting.

Public bodies will need to consider how they can best 'drive positive change in culture and behaviour', given they see this as one of the main opportunities afforded by the Act (see [paragraph 23](#) and example of how Welsh Government is seeking to develop people, leadership and culture).

CASE STUDY

Developing people, leadership and culture at Welsh Government

The Welsh Government refreshed its learning and development programme last year to ensure the Act is represented in induction, leadership and more specialist training. The Permanent Secretary has since initiated a wider review of the performance management, progression arrangements, leadership training and other development programmes. The 'future-proofing initiative' will take a fresh look at how Welsh Government manage, recognise, develop and reward people, putting the Cabinet's delivery priorities and the five ways of working at the heart of what is expected of teams and individuals. All recruitment exercises to the senior Civil Service now require candidates to have a knowledge and understanding of the Act as the context for our work. The initiative is focused on developing a capable, confident and resilient civil service that can work in new ways, collaborate across traditional portfolio boundaries and involve stakeholders and citizens to achieve better outcomes for Wales.

- 59 Some bodies, in particular, local authorities, gave examples relating to governance. This perhaps reflects public bodies' view that the Act provides an opportunity to improve decision making (see [paragraph 23 and 33](#)). It might also reflect the fact that making changes to governance arrangements may help affect change across large organisations.
- 60 Some local authorities, central government and sponsored bodies and a few others made reference to impact assessment tools. These are often referred to as 'Integrated Impact Assessments' or 'Well-being Impact Assessments' and they seek to integrate sustainable development into the planning and decision-making process. They build on processes that have been developed to assess the impact that changes in policy or practice might have on areas such as equality, children's rights or environmental sustainability. As with all impact assessments, it is important for those public bodies who use them to ensure that:
- they are undertaken from the start, rather than towards the end of the process;
 - there is a good quality evidence base, which includes quantitative and qualitative information (underpinned by effective involvement);
 - they draw on the skills and knowledge of a range of individuals;
 - they are designed to support genuine reflection and they are seen as a means of generating ideas for improvement, as well as mitigating negative impacts;

- there is challenge or quality assurance;
- they are genuinely taken into account as part of decision making and scrutiny; and
- the results and mitigations are monitored.²¹

CASE STUDY

Developing a Well-being Impact Assessment at Denbighshire County Council

Denbighshire Council has developed an online and interactive Well-being Impact Assessment that links research to evidence. The approach consists of a series of questions that challenge people to reflect on their approach and find ways to embed the sustainable development principle. Next, people are asked to consider what the impact is likely to be across a range of themes and issues. People are encouraged to complete it as a group, involving staff at different levels from different services and even partners.

What have you learned?

As a result of the new approach, we are seeing a more thorough approach to impact assessments. Members have better quality and more balanced information and residents have transparent and detailed information to challenge us on our decisions. This has led to proposals changing course; with a renewed focus on community involvement. The new approach is leading to culture change in our organisation: we are growing in awareness of the impact of what we do.

How do you intend to continue developing the Well-being Impact Assessment?

We are continuing to take an action-learning approach as our Well-being Impact Assessment matures. We are planning to share the website by making it freely available for communities to use.

²¹ Further information and transferrable learning points can be found on the [NHS Equality Impact Assessment Practice Hub](#)

- 61 Other governance changes included updating decision or committee report templates and business plan templates or updating documents such as the Constitution, Code of Corporate Governance or Code of Conduct.
- 62 Very few bodies made explicit reference to the seven areas 'where the change needs to happen' that are set out in statutory guidance.²² However, there were references to changes to planning, performance or risk management, as well as workforce planning (see relevant paragraphs on culture and behaviour change).
- 63 Some bodies have sought to incorporate the requirements of the Act into their service and business planning by, for example, changing templates or guidance and updating self-evaluation processes. A few bodies also referred to updating risk management strategies and risk registers to reflect the well-being goals.
- 64 In addition, there were a small number of references to reflecting the well-being goals and five ways of working in:
- grants, procurement and commissioning arrangements
 - transformation/ change programmes
 - capital bidding and business cases for investment.
- 65 Most bodies gave practical examples of how they were applying the five ways of working in project or service delivery. In general, these examples predated the Act, but the bodies felt they were nonetheless a good representation of how the Act could be put into practice. There were a few examples where bodies had explicitly considered the goals and five ways of working.

CASE STUDY

National Parks Wales: Together for health and well-being

The three national parks in Wales describe themselves as 'health assets' in recognition of how they can help individuals and communities maintain or improve their health and well-being. They are working together and with other partners to raise awareness of the health and well-being benefits of the parks, develop evidence-based policy and practice and maximise opportunities for people to access the natural environment. Further information and details on projects can be found on the national parks' [website](#)

²² The seven areas are corporate planning, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, assets, risk management and performance management. Welsh Government, **Shared Purpose: Shared Future Statutory Guidance on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**, 2016

CASE STUDY

Arts Council of Wales, Ideas: People: Places

The Arts Council has set up the 'Ideas: People: Places' programme, which comprises seven place-based projects across, funding a local consortium of organisations (including organisations they have not worked with before such as Housing Associations and commercial developers) to work with local communities to re-imagine their local area over a three-year period. They have sought to challenge their usual methodologies and have seen outcomes change as a result.

How has applying the five ways of working helped you?

The programme was about working in localities to build on communities' assets. The five ways of working provided the perfect legislative framework for this. It encouraged us to be bold and test out a pioneering approach and made it possible for us to approach other public bodies to become partners.

What have you learned?

We want to go beyond working 'with' communities to supporting work 'by' communities. This is a key theme for us – opening up from the top down, patriarchal, bureaucratic approach to be more inclusive and representative.

We learned we need to resist the urge to achieve outcomes quickly by defining them ourselves and then throwing money at them. Making funding available over a three-year period without defining outcomes and processes helped achieve unanticipated outcomes and cost a lot less than something planned in the usual way.

Working with new partners highlighted that we have built institutional processes and procedures that do not make partnership working easy. However these kinds of issues are ultimately helpful when they surface as they can be addressed and designed out in the future.

Creativity is very important in regeneration work. So often we are missing opportunities to design out our current issues and problems for future generations and involve residents in creating the spaces that they want to [live, work and play in.](#)

- 66 A few bodies told us that they have put arrangements in place to develop, oversee and implement their approach to the Act. This includes measures such as identifying a senior level champion, establishing a board or steering group, assessing their 'preparedness' and developing action plans.
- 67 Some bodies were open about the fact that they still had work to do to continue developing and improving their approach to implementing the Act. Others went further, explaining that the work they had done to date had been about putting the building blocks in place and their next steps would focus on culture change and service delivery.
- 68 A few bodies referred to the lack of time and space to reflect, given pressures on capacity and the Act's planning timetable. Some view the planning and reporting requirements as traditional and as being at odds with the policy intention. Some think the legislation could drive a compliance focus, rather than stimulating the innovative and outcome-focused response that is hoped for. There is also some concern that external review, whether undertaken by the Wales Audit Office, the Commissioner or other inspection and regulation bodies could drive a compliance focus (see also [paragraph 89](#)).
- 69 The Auditor General recognises and appreciates the range of internal and external challenges which make implementing new legislation difficult. However, there is a risk that for some, the Act is perceived as 'another thing to do'. Unless those bodies and individuals adopt a mindset where they see sustainable development as an approach that can help them address major budget and service challenges, rather than an additional burden, they will be unable to make the most of the opportunity the Act affords.

The Auditor General has been clear that it will take time for public bodies to fully apply the principles of the Act. The Wales Audit Office welcomes honest self-reflection on progress and will take account of the fact that it will take time for bodies to thoroughly consider how to apply the Act and deliver real and meaningful change. Over the medium and long term, the Wales Audit Office will expect public bodies to be able to demonstrate how the Act is shaping what they do.

The Auditor General's future examination work will assess the extent to which public bodies are applying the sustainable development principle. It will focus on how public are applying the ways of working and will not focus on the application of specific processes or on compliance with the planning and reporting timetable.

CASE STUDY

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's 'Wellbeing Project'

Cardiff and Vale UHB are establishing a Bee Garden in the Orchard at University Hospital Llandough (UHL) with multiple benefits. The project will be developed in collaboration with staff, patients, carers, school children, and academics in health to support the UHB's approach to developing sustainable futures.

The landscape, design, and planting of specific flowers will enable local researchers to test for the link with antibacterial strength honey, building on the work of Professor Les Bailleand and his colleagues from the School of Pharmacy, College of Biomedical and Life Sciences, Cardiff University. They have identified a number of novel plant-derived antibacterial compounds in honey that killed antibiotic resistant hospital super bugs, such as MRSA. With the largest NHS Research & Development team in Wales, there may also be opportunities for trials of the potential therapeutics across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

The project will enhance the biodiversity of the Orchard and support the pollination of the trees. Bees are an essential aspect of a healthy orchard, ensuring everyone on the UHL site and the local community have access to space that will enhance the benefits of health and well-being, while supporting patients on their journey of recovery and rehabilitation.

CASE STUDY

Natural Resources Wales: Coordinating collaboration and engagement on the Gavenny River

The Gavenny River is a short river in South East Wales flowing from its source through Abergavenny and into the Usk Special Area of Conservation. Evidence suggests the river is failing to achieve its required GOOD status as set out by the Water Framework Directive. Natural Resources Wales collaborated and engaged with the local community who showed a significant interest and willingness to be involved in finding solutions to environmental pressures. The opportunities that emerged were not limited to water quality improvements alone, with people showing an interest in developing and managing adjoining habitats for conservation and amenity value.

Bringing a wide range of stakeholders together broadened the outputs and added significant value. Stakeholder-led sustainable land management options were incorporated into Natural Resources Wales' Flood Risk Management maintenance schedules. The project delivered multiple benefits, such as the sustainable management of an area of urban greenspace, donation of felled timber to the local woodland group and local forest school for woodland craft and resale as well as improving the resilience of the ecosystem.

CASE STUDY

Social Prescribing in Torfaen

Social prescribing provides an intervention that seeks to address patients' requirements for non-medical support in the community. Torfaen's model of social prescribing was developed in response to a need to better connect primary care with a range of services that exist across the community and public sector to tackle the underlying causes of ill health and promote self-help. It is a partnership between the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Torfaen County Borough Council.

The service is based in GP surgeries so it is positioned as a viable alternative to medical intervention. There are 'social prescribers' based within each participating practice for half a day a week. They receive referrals from anyone based in primary care or from patients themselves. The referral criteria covers anyone experiencing a social issue that is impacting on their physical and / or mental health. Referrals are then made to community services and broadly fall into the following categories:

- healthy lifestyle
- family and early years
- health protection and personal safety
- welfare
- self-care and independent living
- work, learning and skills
- community development and leisure

Many of the individuals accessing the service are vulnerable with complex circumstances. Underlying needs are identified through a reciprocal conversation, the outcomes they want are co-produced and they are helped to understand how they, with support, can take action to achieve them.

Public bodies need to set out how they will continue developing their approach to the Act so that they can deliver on the ambition and maximise the opportunities it affords

Public bodies have identified some actions to continue embedding the Act but they are unclear about how they will measure changes in culture and ways of working

- 70 While recognising it will take time to effect meaningful change, we were keen to understand what public bodies plan to do to continue embedding the sustainable development principle.
- 71 We asked them to describe what success would look like. This question was interpreted in a variety of ways and elicited a range of responses. Some bodies referred to formal performance monitoring. They tended to suggest that fully embedding the sustainable development principle would result in improvements in outcomes, which would be the main measure of success. They referenced the measures they have put in place for their well-being objectives or existing measures, such as the national indicators or Public Health Outcomes Framework.^{23 24 25}
- 72 Others chose to describe what the organisation would look and feel like and how they would work differently. Their examples included:
- different types of questions and challenge at board, cabinet, scrutiny and committee meetings;
 - improved understanding of sustainable development and the sustainable development principle across the organisation, demonstrated by widespread application as part of people's day-to-day roles;
 - better relationships with communities and improved community resilience;
 - more sustainable services, workforce and finances;
 - changing to service models that are more person-centred and preventative; and
 - increased integration with partners, including through shared assets, pooled resources and joint initiatives.

23 See also the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far 2018** and the Commissioner's expectations of how public bodies will measure and report on progress towards well-being objectives and the effectiveness of steps to meet them.

24 [Information on the national indicators.](#)

25 [More information on the Public Health Outcomes Framework.](#)

73 In general, public bodies did not provide a specific description of how they would assess their progress in applying the sustainable development principle. Public bodies did not, by and large, describe how they intended to measure change in behaviours and working. However, there were a few examples and references to plans to capture narratives and case studies. Measuring behaviour change is difficult, but it will be important for bodies to obtain some insight into how much progress they are making in applying the sustainable development principle. An example of how Aneurin Bevan University Health Board is seeking to understand how staff are applying the sustainable development principle is given below.

CASE STUDY

Aneurin Bevan UHB's Well-being of Future Generations Act Self Assessment Tool

As part of its overarching Well-being of Future Generations Act Embedding Programme, ABUHB has developed a self-assessment process to help it embed the Act across its work. It has set out 'ambition statements' that describe how each division and function should apply the five ways of working over the long term. Divisions and functions then use the self-assessment to help them understand where they are in relation to these statements so that can identify what they can do, individually and collectively, to make progress.

The self-assessment process is underpinned by a number of important design principles including:

- the ambition statements will be co-created and owned by NHS professionals;
- the process is not intended to be an assessment of performance or compliance;
- the self-assessment will be a mechanism for teams and individuals to explore best practice, opportunities and barriers;
- the whole process should add value and become embedded into routine planning;
- the process will be an important mechanism to raise awareness and understanding of the Act; and
- it should not be a one-off exercise but used as a way to encourage continuous improvement.

ABUHB focused the self-assessment on its enabling divisions, such as Finance, Workforce and Organisational Development and Facilities, for the first phase. Patient-facing divisions and other functions are part of phases 2 and 3, scheduled for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

- 74 When asked how they were going to deliver the change needed, most public bodies' answers related to the categories previously identified; culture and behaviour change, governance, strategic planning, performance and risk management or project/ service delivery.
- 75 Some bodies stated that they intended to continue progressing work in these areas. For example, they plan to continue:
- improving their impact assessments and updating report templates;
 - embedding the Act into service planning and performance management frameworks and guidance;
 - training and awareness raising, including extending training to new groups of elected members, board members or staff; or
 - developing key strategic documents; a few bodies referenced their intention to develop shared objectives.

Similarly, other bodies stated that they would commence work in these areas.

- 76 A few bodies gave examples of projects or initiatives they planned to take forward, which they felt reflected the Act.
- 77 There were also some specific references to the five ways of working. A few bodies described how they intended to change their relationships with communities and improve community resilience. Smaller sponsored bodies tended to provide actions relating to improving or developing mechanisms that support collaboration or involvement. This included finding an effective means of engaging with public services boards. While they recognise the opportunity, there are significant constraints on their capacity to engage with all 19 (see [paragraph 83](#)).
- 78 A few bodies provided more detail on future plans or emphasised priority areas and activities.
- 79 Given the challenges that have already been outlined, the general lack of clarity and detail on how public bodies will drive this work forward and assess their progress might be expected. However, they will need to give more consideration to these questions if they are to use the Act to 'transform how they work' (see [paragraph 33](#)).

There are challenges to implementing the Act and stakeholders have a role in helping to address them

- 80 Public bodies identified a number of external barriers, which other stakeholders should take account of or look to address. Short term funding was, emphatically, the most common barrier they identified. Public bodies were clear that it hampers their ability to plan effectively over the long term. Some sponsored bodies stated that the annual remit letter poses the same challenge. Linked to this, they cited a lack of flexibility over how grant funding can be spent and disproportionate monitoring requirements as inhibiting long term planning and a focus on outcomes.
- 81 Some bodies also described the challenge of legislative complexity and the difficulty of joining-up statutory requirements in practice. Specifically, they referred to the need to find a practical means of meeting the requirements of the Act whilst also meeting the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2015, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 or planning legislation. A few suggested that legislative complexity and the 'burden' of meeting multiple requirements could result in a compliance-based response.
- 82 There were some concerns about existing national reporting requirements and a focus on indicators, which were considered to detract from a focus on long term outcomes and preventative benefits. In addition, a few bodies expressed concerns that audit and regulatory requirements could drive a focus on compliance with a process, rather than promoting the spirit of the Act (see [paragraphs 68, 88 and 89](#)).
- 83 Public bodies were mostly positive about the opportunity afforded by public services boards. However, they also highlighted some challenges that need to be overcome if they are to be as effective as intended. These included:
- the complexity of the partnership governance environment. This has resource implications for bodies that need to support multiple partnerships, including multiple public services boards and Regional Partnership Boards. Being represented at or influencing each Public Services Board is resource intensive or, for some, not possible.²⁶
 - some potentially influential partners are not yet engaged in public services boards.

²⁶ In April 2016, seven statutory regional partnerships came into being under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Their purpose is to drive the strategic regional delivery of social services in close collaboration with health.

- the different levels of commitment from different members of public services boards.
 - public services boards have different ways of working, which can be difficult for bodies that are members of multiple public services boards.
- 84 Furthermore, a number of bodies stressed that these challenges are amplified by diminished and diminishing resources, pressure on leadership capacity and reductions in capacity across organisations.
- 85 Public bodies said that they would value the following external support to help them further embed the Act:
- practice sharing, including on how the five ways of working are being applied, sharing of examples with demonstrable benefits or return on investment and more sharing at a national level and across sectors;
 - training, including on behaviour change techniques and applying the five ways of working;
 - guidance on ‘the areas where change needs to happen’; corporate planning, financial planning, workforce planning, procurement, assets, risk management and performance management (as set out in statutory guidance);
 - more focused support and advice to public bodies on their well-being objectives, similar to that which public services boards receive; and
 - facilitation of wider engagement and more joint learning across Public Services Board members.
- 86 The Act gives public bodies in Wales a common purpose and requires a collective effort. Public bodies will need to develop a long term approach if they are to effect the level of change the Act requires and they say they recognise. Furthermore, external stakeholders, Wales Audit Office included, will need to consider how they can play their part in removing barriers and providing the necessary support.
- 87 One way that external stakeholders can do this is by creating space for innovation, allowing for ‘failure’ and recognising learning. The Auditor General has continued to emphasise the importance of well-managed risk taking.

‘So long as they [public bodies] go into developing services and trying new things understanding the risks; having identified them and taken steps to manage them as well as they can, then I as Auditor General will not be seeking to cast blame. Rather, I will be seeking to find ways that we can learn from both failure and success.’

Auditor General for Wales
Risk taking in the public sector, 2017²⁷

- 88 The Commissioner has already provided challenge and support to Welsh Government on a number of national policy areas in order to help give public bodies ‘more freedom to apply the Act’.²⁸ Examples of this are included in **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far**.
- 89 The Auditor General has worked collaboratively with public bodies to develop a proportionate and meaningful approach to his examinations which adds value and promotes learning. He has continued to reinforce that his examinations will not be about complying with a checklist. They will instead seek to understand ways of working, reflecting his duty and the spirit of the Act.
- 90 The Auditor General will undertake examinations across the 44 bodies in 2018-19 and 2019-20. This work will focus on the steps that public bodies are taking to meet their well-being objectives. It will explore how bodies are applying sustainable development principle in this context. The examinations will inform the Auditor General’s first statutory report under the Act, which will be laid before the National Assembly for Wales in 2020.

²⁷ Auditor General for Wales, Risk taking in public sector, 2017 www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRhT_ppMenbM

²⁸ Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, **Well-being in Wales: The journey so far**, 2018

It is a journey in which I'm engaged, you're engaged and Sophie is engaged...

... We're needing to find our way as auditors as well, to develop an approach that makes sense and which helps the whole of the public sector. So, I am with you, I am not working outside and looking in.

Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales, 2016²⁹

So it is trust; trust that we are working together on that journey and, from us, a verification that that journey is taking place and that we are sharing with you.

Huw Vaughan Thomas
Auditor General for Wales, 2016³⁰

²⁹ Auditor General for Wales, Shaping Accountability for Future Generations conference speech, 2016.

³⁰ Auditor General for Wales, Shaping Accountability for Future Generations conference speech, 2016.

Appendix 1: Year one commentary: call for evidence questions

Question 1: The Well-being of Future Generations Act became law in 2015 and the main provisions, including the well-being duty, came into force from April 2016.

1a How would you describe the Act and what it means for your organisation? Please tick as many boxes as you consider relevant.		
A	A distraction	The Act will not help us address the major challenges facing the organisation.
		We will need to devote time and resources meaning there is a cost and an opportunity cost to the organisation.
B	Unnecessary	The Act doesn't offer a new or useful way of viewing what we do or how we work.
		Much of the Act is sensible and valuable but it legislates for things we were already seeking to do.
		Much of the Act is sensible and valuable but it legislates for things we were already doing.
C	Opportunity	The Act can help us address some of the major challenges facing our organisation.
		The Act has the potential to improve our strategic planning and decision-making.
		The Act has the potential to help us deliver more sustainable services and better outcomes for citizens.
		The Act has the potential to drive positive change in culture and behaviour.
D	Necessity	We need the Act to help us address some of the major challenges facing our organisation.
		We need the Act to improve our strategic planning and decision-making.
		We need the Act to help us deliver more sustainable services and better outcomes for citizens.
		We need the Act to enable us to deliver the right culture and behaviours.
E	None of the above	

1a Please provide any explanatory comments on the above.

Answer 1a

<p>1b How would you describe the change you intend to make to deliver the Act? Please tick as many boxes as you consider relevant.</p>		
A	Compliance	We will ensure we meet key statutory requirements and that we can demonstrate we have done so.
B	Realignment	We will ensure the changes we were/are planning to make are aligned to the Act.
C	Adaptation	We will use the Act to help us reconsider how we work and what we are seeking to achieve.
		We will use the Act as a means of helping us make progress in areas where we need to make improvements.
D	Transformation	We will use the Act to help us address some of the major challenges facing our organisation.
		We will use the Act to improve our strategic planning and decision-making.
		We will use the Act to deliver more sustainable services and better outcomes for citizens.
		We will use the Act as a means of driving culture and behaviour change.
E	None of the above	

1b Please provide any explanatory comments on the above.

Answer 1b	

Question 2a: Your organisation has set, or is in the process of setting, well-being objectives. How different was the process compared to the process for setting corporate objectives in the past?		
A	The process was the same.	The process was the same as the process for setting corporate objectives in previous years in your organisation.
B	We did some things differently.	We will ensure the changes we were/are planning to make are aligned to the Act.
		We made some changes to better reflect the five ways of working.
C	We did several things differently.	We made some notable improvements as a result of the Act, applying the five ways of working.
D	We made significant changes.	We applied the five ways of working to a far greater degree as a result of the Act.
		Having made significant changes, we feel the process for setting well-being objectives was much improved on the process for setting corporate objectives in previous years.
E	None of the above	

Question 2b:

If you answered A or E, please explain why.

If you answered B-D, please describe what was/is different about this process compared to the process for setting corporate objectives in the past and what impact it had. Please make reference to how you applied the five ways of working.

Answer 2b

Question 3: Other than applying the sustainable development principle when setting your well-being objectives, what other key actions have you taken to embed the sustainable development principle in how you work and what impact are they having? Please focus on the key actions you would like to bring to our attention.

Answer 3

Question 4a: What are the key actions you intend to take to continue embedding the sustainable development principle in how you work? Please focus on the key actions you would like to bring to our attention.

Answer 4a

Question 4b: How will you know that you have embedded the sustainable development principle in how you work? Please describe this in terms of the impact you would expect to see.

Answer 4b

Question 5: Are there any internal barriers to implementing the Act and embedding the sustainable development principle, and if so, what are they? Please make reference to the main internal barriers.

Answer 5

Question 6: Are there any external barriers to implementing the Act and embedding the sustainable development principle, and if so, what are they? Please make reference to the main external barriers.

Answer 6

Question 7: What external support would help you further embed the sustainable development principle?

Answer 7

Question 8: Are there any examples of practice you would like to share with us that have not already been referenced? These could relate to service or project delivery or to governance and corporate processes. They could relate to your own organisation or to a collaborative project.

Please feel free to attach any relevant documents or case studies.

Answer 8

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