Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board – Annual report 23/24

Chairs introduction

The Public Services Board is here to reflect on and respond to the needs of our local communities in the most effective way, and to maximise the impact of the resources we have, guided by the principles of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (2015).

I am proud to be Chair of Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board. In my role as Chief Officer of Flintshire's County Voluntary Council, I have the privilege of promoting the great work that volunteers and community groups carry out in our local communities, working in partnership with and complementing the work of our statutory partners in supporting the residents of North East Wales.

Guided by our well-being plan, we must continually review and adapt our working practices in response to the conversations that public service employees and volunteers are having daily as they support the residents of Flintshire and Wrexham. This first annual report as a joint Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board gives plenty of examples of where we are working together as partners, stakeholders and communities.

As a Public Services Board, I feel we should do more away from the Board room table to effect system change to ensure continuous improvement. This includes reflecting and building on some of the wonderful examples of effective multi-agency working as well as planning for and delivering positive change where needed.

We have two ground-breaking pieces of legislation in Wales – the Well Being of Future Generations Act (2015) and the Social Services and Well Being Act (2014). I am keen to bring the planning, the governance, and the delivery of services within the Acts' requirements more closely together and continue to work with North Wales colleagues on the Regional Partnership Board to do so.

Thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report.

Ann Woods

Chief Officer

Flintshire Local Voluntary Council

Some key headlines

- The PSB believes that all children should have the best start in life, and both local authorities are leading a joined up approach to prevention and early intervention, so that we can identify and tackle the root causes of inequality.

- The PSB partners have worked to co-create new engagement methods, especially with young people through Community Narratives at Sealand and Ty Pawb, developing storytelling techniques through the TEDx events which have focused on mental health and climate change, and working with schools through the Future Leaders programme.

- Partners developed a whole system approach to the healthy weight priority of Eating Well and Being Active in Schools across Wrexham and Flintshire, with the aspiration being to increase the number of children who live within three miles of their school who walk, scoot or cycle there.

- Recognising that taking part in green health opportunities can improve physical and mental health, the PSB has sought to optimise green health opportunities through social prescribing

- The 100 stories programme is a partnership led by BCUHB, working with professionals, parents/carers/guardians and young people to gather stories about the transition from Children to Adult services when it comes to services for neurodiversity.

- The PSB partners have started to become Foster Friendly organisations, in line with the Welsh Governments framework for eliminating profit from children's social care. This will help to support the connected carers and foster families across our communities and provide safe, warm supportive homes for our care experienced young people.

- Led by Wrexham University, partners have worked together to build the North Wales Children's University, so that all children across Flintshire and Wrexham have the opportunity to learn outside the classroom environment.

- Together with the North Wales Insight Partnership and the Co-production Network for Wales, the three PSBs across north Wales have worked hard to build and test new ways to engage with communities, stakeholders and partners, and to ensure seldom heard voices are heard and given the opportunity to shape what we do.

Background

Flintshire and Wrexham PSBs worked closely and effectively during the COVID pandemic, and so came together as a single Public Services Board in January 2023. This has allowed us to continue to build momentum, as we focus on improving community well-being across the two counties. The PSB is delighted that its first Chair is from the Voluntary Sector representing the knowledge, capacity and commitment which this vibrant partner makes to our communities.

We used the evidence and insight in our well-being assessments to develop and publish a Well-being Plan for the area in May 2023, as a statutory requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015). Informed by the four pillars of sustainable development: social, economic, environment and culture, our plan seeks to address the key areas which pose the greatest need or challenge for our communities and describe where the PSB can make the greatest contribution, adding value to existing partnerships and core services.

Our well-being plan is shaped around two well-being objectives and as a partnership we are discussing how we can jointly embed these across our organisations:

- Build flourishing communities by reducing inequalities across environment, education, employment, income and housing.
- Improve community well-being by enabling people of all ages to live safe, healthy and independent lives

What have we achieved so far?

We then spent the remainder of 2023 creating a strong structure, to enable the organisations that make up the PSB to provide faster engagement with their teams to deliver those actions where partnership working can make the biggest impact. We are doing this through three Boards: our Children and young people, our communities, and our workplaces. And then, key to making the magic happen is an Integration Team to align the Boards and ensure the PSB puts the building blocks in place to tackle climate change and the nature emergency and to build good mental health and wellbeing

With sustainable development at our core, we are focused on hearing the rich mix of voices across our communities. By telling stories and sharing experiences, we will be able to work together to shape our future.

Children and Young People Board

In this Board we have prioritised the need to focus on prevention and early help, in order to make a real impact on our two objectives. This is complemented by a wide range of partnership activity, and this report picks out some highlights.

In Wrexham the Prevention and Early Help Partnership meets to lead the delivery of the Prevention and Early Help Strategy. The Partnership has strategic oversight of a range of public services delivered across Wrexham and is able to take time to delve into some of the key challenges and opportunities.

This structure is mirrored in Flintshire, and both partnerships work closely on initiatives such as the Wellbeing Portal which allows people to easily report health and social care issues and have quick access to information and support. The Wrexham Digital Services team were recognised for this work, winning the Digital Achievement Award at the Granicus UK Public Sector Awards.

Under this theme, the Children and young people Board is seeking to add value where partnerships are looking to work with schools to mitigate child poverty. In addition, the partnerships are aiming to identify the out-of-school activities that are available to children and young people, that complement the Curriculum for Wales delivered in schools. Ultimately the aim is to recognise that children's learning opportunities across Flintshire and Wrexham are extensive and their participation in them builds confidence, aspiration and success.

The successful Wrexham and Flintshire Children University pilot was led by Wrexham University in 2022, bringing a diverse range of partners together. From initially working with 176 Children and Young People in 9 settings and with 121 learning destinations, the programme has now been successfully scaled up across North Wales, taking in more than 1100 Children and Young People in 51 schools. Potentially this model can drive transformative change for young people in the future. The culmination of the hard work of the children and young people has been graduation ceremonies held at Bangor University and Wrexham University, with a range of surprise guests and messages of positive support from mentors across Wales.

Coleg Cambria has led on a post 16 transition project across north Wales to share information about young people changing provider at 16 (to new school, 6th form or college). This enables partners to work together to support planning to meet needs, identify young people at risk of early drop off, and to reduce the risk of dropping out of the system.

In Flintshire, an innovative programme called Supportive Steps has engaged with 142 Flintshire learners to ensure they stay on track in education, helping with their progression.

North Wales Fire and Rescue has created a youth engagement role focusing on health called Tan Ffit

Police Liaison Officers have held group sessions with Foundation Learning but also Art, Catering, Hair & Beauty on a variety of subjects from talks on Domestic Violence, Cyberbullying, theft, shoplifting, online safety, and the consequences of drug dealing.

The Chief Officers of Flintshire Local Voluntary Council and Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham have led multi-agency discussions at Ty Pawb in Wrexham as part of the National Future Generations Young Leaders Academy programme. Following a successful pilot programme in 2019 and 2021, the Future Generations Commissioner welcomed the third cohort of the Future Generations Leadership Academy from September 2023 to March 2024. The Academy is for young people aged 18-30 and the programme combines virtual and in person sessions, around 60-70 hours in total. The participants practice and improve their leadership skills, which are called 'Superpowers' in the programme. They also learn good practice around implementing the Well-being of Future Generations Act and its seven well-being goals, as well as the five ways of working required to achieve the goals.

Communities

In this Board we are focusing on how we can build long term resilience, working with communities, to address the effects of long term climate change and the nature emergency on where we live.

The third sector County Voluntary Councils in Flintshire and Wrexham are leading on key developments to support the well-being of the residents of North East Wales, including:

- Bespoke Social Prescribing and Community Connector services
- Key Fund grant programmes through Levelling Up Funds and Shared Prosperity Funds in collaboration with Cadwyn Clwyd

To enable better links and effective partnership working, North Wales Police have held networking events with both AVOW and FLVC. Current initiatives and operations were shared between neighbourhood and preventative policing teams and key staff from the Voluntary Services Councils. This has led to a number of further conversations about how the police and third sector could more effectively work together and support each other, both in general and on specific topics. North Wales Police have worked with Coleg Cambria to raise awareness of Ending Men's Violence Against Women

The 100 Stories project is a BCUHB-led project, in partnership with Wrexham University which sets out to address gaps in local knowledge and understanding with regards to transition in North Wales Health Services (that is the transition from children's services to adults services). Working closely with professionals, parents, carers and (most importantly) children and young people themselves, the project has employed a range of tried and tested leadership, storytelling and evaluation methods, including Public Narrative, Community of Enquiry and Most Significant Change – empowering and giving a voice to those who often feel disconnected from the decisions which impact upon their lives.

Some of the people involved in the project to date, joined PSB members for a participatory workshop session at the June 2024 meeting of the PSB. This looked at their experience of transition, the findings of the project, their alignment with the ambitions and commitments of the Wrexham and Flintshire Wellbeing Plan, and the simple actions which could help to enhance the impacts of the 100 stories project.

Flintshire County Council has developed the Micro-Care project in conjunction with Social Firms Wales, Welsh Government Foundational Economy, and Cadwyn Clwyd. This project supports people to setup as small enterprises (no more than 6 employees) or sole traders to deliver direct personal care and wider wellbeing services in Flintshire.

The Micro-Care project has supported people from an employment aspect, creating an opportunity for people to fit employment in around their lives, where caring responsibilities have been a barrier previously. It also has a strong emphasis on the well-being of those in the community. By being able to purchase services independently or through a direct payment, people have been able to create their own packages of support targeted on the areas that mean most to them, to enable them to remain safe and independent for longer. This includes people who are supported, as well as those who are caring for them.

Funded by donations from organisations such as NWFRS, NWP and private industry, Danger Point is an independent charity that provides interactive activities so that visitors can learn about risk in a safe environment. DangerPoint covers home safety, fire safety, road safety, rail safety, water safety and internet safety to name but a few, and is open to the public and to schools.

This year, North Wales Police has led effective partnership working to provide community support and wrap around services as part of an operation to tackle an established organised crime group which was supplying drugs in the Penycae, Rhosllanerchrugog and surrounding areas. Organisations were brought together to provide support to local residents including housing, substance misuse, employment and other services, once the group were removed from the area. A significant number of arrests were made and joint patrols took place in the aftermath of the action which involved more than 100 officers across a number of days. Sentencing is yet to take place but a significant volume of the suspects have already pleaded guilty and the community support was well received by the local community and its elected representatives.

North Wales Fire and Rescue have established partnership relationships with Natural Resources Wales in relation to Wildfires and Flooding prevention and response, sharing best practice with NRW on a new long term Community Risk Management Plan

A diverse community of practice came together for a Nature Based Social Prescribing Event hosted and held at Wrexham University, looking at the impact of green spaces on mental health and wellbeing. Coleg Cambria has planted over 1000 trees and developed wildflower meadows achieving bee friendly accreditation

The Wrexham Forest Partnership is bringing partners together to facilitate increased trees and green infrastructure for Wrexham. Natural Resources Wales has co-ordinated the partnership to build knowledge and practice, share areas of work and priorities between partners and identify areas of funding, raising awareness and enabling Wrexham to achieve the UK Tree of the Year award.

Workplaces

In this Board we are focusing on what PSB organisations can do to make the biggest impact to their communities through volunteering, active travel and sustainable procurement

There is a real opportunity for the third sector to lead our priority to build workplace volunteering and share best practice, and for PSB organisations to work collectively to discuss how we make volunteering impactful, possibly using some of the system thinking transferrable learning from the Shaping Places for Wales programme. Fire and Rescue has an active approach, so AVOW will help to develop their volunteering policy as a PSB pilot

Coleg Cambria has led the way locally, with a wide range of volunteering with local groups including AVOW and FLVS to date £35k funds raised and 3107 hours of volunteering time to support the community across Wrexham and Flintshire.

The North Wales Healthy Travel Charter has been agreed by the PSBs across the region and will be a step-change in developing active travel. Within our PSB we now have a number of partners who have agreed to work together to share best practice, discuss what support, resource and capacity is needed, how the signatories can work together and how the PSB can support partners who haven't yet got on board.

The isolation of carers and people providing services from home is a worry, particularly after coming back from time out of work. We have sought to identify and develop strong links between carers Micro-Carers so that they are able to build a network of colleagues that can support each other.

Collaboration with Diverse Cymru to raise awareness of BME cultural competency within Coleg Cambria. Additionally, a training programme is being developed with Diverse Cymru's guidance

NWFRS work alongside GoSafe, NWP and other partners on an engagement-focused approach to the new speed limit called Operation Ugain. This programme sees drivers travelling over the speed limit identified by the Police. NWFRS provide an alternative to penalty points or a fine through road safety education and engagement, delivering a free 10-minute presentation to inform people on the change in default speed limit, the reasons behind the change, and how they can identify the roads it applies to.

PSB Magic

Our North Wales regional partnership work is increasingly interconnected, with a strong focus on how we can ensure everything that we do is led by and shaped by our communities. Working through a regional lens helps PSB organisations add value to all well-being outcomes and shape lasting change across our region and Wales.

Through the North Wales Insight Partnership, we have worked together to align well-being assessments and connect well-being plans. This was supplemented by a programme of Climate change data analysis focused on how we in public services work alongside citizens to analyse and understand data. Led by Wrexham University this pilot of a public involvement method background, involved citizens across the region working to analyse data, and this work then informed and shaped the well-being priorities. Citizens were paid for their time and expertise and work is now continuing to evolve around deliberative democracy and working with partners to explore a toolkit for using different approaches to engage and involve citizens.

The Insight Partnership manages the PSB regional support funding from Welsh government. This support is to encourage collaboration and innovation between the three PSBs, and since the success of working as a regional partnership to produce rich well-being assessments, there have been a range of innovative learning projects.

The following projects have been developed in North East Wales with the intention of sharing the learning across the region as we scale up our best practice:

Future Leaders programme. On the principle of nothing about us, without us, the project team worked with Ysgol Clywedog in Wrexham to develop a way for young people to talk directly about well-being with PSB leaders. This is part of the challenge to engage Children and Young People with the WBFGA and to shift the power balance onto the needs of the future generations and how we feed this insight into public services priorities, planning and delivery. Guided by the Wales Co-production Network, the first session was held in November 2022, and enabled rich conversations between young leaders with colleagues from Betsi Cadwaladr, Wrexham County Borough Council and Wrexham University.

The intention of the project is to continue to scale this concept up across the region, and share the model across Wales. Going forward, there will be a number of key outcomes: the views of young people can feed quickly and directly into well-being planning, a regular dialogue and open accountability will be established and the confidence and experience of the young people involved will be enhanced

Flintshire and Wrexham Public Services Board is committed to sharing power and responsibility where it can. Through our regional Co-producing Community Narratives project

we have been using creative engagement methods in Sealand, Flintshire and Ty Pawb in Wrexham. Led by Wrexham University, the project means working together honestly as friends and equal partners to discuss how communities, stakeholders and public organisations will be able to improve our well-being.

During the year we have worked with different partners across our region on a number of innovative projects that are informed by the well-being plans, priorities and with a key focus to work with communities. The New Futures programme has been working with six communities (Larynx, Eagles and Dragons, Learning Disability, Ty Pawb Multicultural hub, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Community book, Solocode) to enable rich conversations around well-being, and to equip those communities with the skills to help to participate and shape the action planning phase. The key learning was brought together in a film and a launch event in April 2023 at Ty Pawb, Wrexham, and the team is looking at how the project can be replicated in West Wales.

- EYST Wrexham engages with a group of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority youths in Wrexham, and is supporting them to design and decorate the EYST Eagles Meadow Hub, in order to express their diverse identities, their cultural heritage, and what the space means to them. The bi-weekly sessions dedicated to project delivery also facilitate discussions on new ways for EYST Wrexham to share their wellbeing needs, develop new wellbeing activities, and interact with other youth groups and relevant local/regional organisations.
- EYST Flint engages with a group of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority youths in Flintshire, and is supporting them to organise and participate in a Multi-Cultural Sports Programme at a local cricket club. In addition to this event, the group is also being supported to attend three engagement sessions with Campfire Cymru at Halkyn Woods – these sessions will deliver a programme of outdoor activities, and facilitate discussions on wellbeing, youth leadership and cultural exchange.
- Mind Our Future works with a group of young people with identified mental health and wellbeing challenges in Wrexham, and is supporting them to organise and host a podcast to discuss their wellbeing needs and lead a conversation on new ideas for delivering wellbeing support in North Wales. In addition to the podcast session, the group is also being supported to utilise mobile recording equipment to document bite size wellbeing conversations at selected locations in Wrexham to raise awareness of local sources of wellbeing support.
- Wrexham Pride engages with a group of LGBTQ+ community organisers in Wrexham, in partnership with VIVA, a third sector organisation supporting LGBTQ+ youths in North Wales. This project is supporting the group to connect with LGBTQ+ youths via group discussions hosted at Coleg Cambria and Wrexham University, in order to develop new ideas to counteract discrimination.
- Creating and supporting the growth of a multicultural hub, led by the Welsh Government community Cohesion Team. The key challenge is how we stop consulting and have continual conversations. A collection of diverse leaders from across black, ethnic and minority communities created a group to lead conversations with public services so that we can work together to shape the future. This is growing and developing, and we are working to host a Festival of communities in 2025 for communities across Wales focused on health, music, arts, and food, with a vast range of partners.

As a region we are combining our efforts through the North Wales Insight Partnership to focus on building systems leadership and change maker capacity and capability where it is needed, whether in organisations or in community groups, coming together to share and learn. Our next big challenge will be working together through the Climate Change Risk assessment process to identify the risks that our communities will face in the future.

This will support the next well-being assessments and well informed adaptation plans that connect communities, partners and the PSBs will help to build resilience. This work will be challenging but we can learn from other areas in north Wales who have started on their journey.

Community Safety

Flintshire's People Are Safe Board have now agreed the following priorities for 2024/2025:

- Working in partnership to address Violence Against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- Prevent and deter anti-social behaviour and crime in our neighbourhoods
- Developing partnerships to tackle serious and organised crime.
- Protecting our communities
- To support each of these priorities, a partnership approach will be taken to address the part played by the misuse of illicit drugs and alcohol. Substances misuse will often exacerbate offending behaviour or be a significant causal factor.

Wrexham Community Safety priorities were also reviewed in its Community Safety Plan 2023 – 2026:

- Work in Partnership to Reduce Crime and Disorder
- Work in Partnership to tackle Violence against Women and Girls, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.
- Tackle Violent and Serious Organised Crime
- Protect and build resilient communities and maintain public safety.

Flintshire's People are Safe Board and Wrexham Community Safety Partnership have been given £57,000 and £60,000 respectively by the Police and Crime Commissioner as part of the Serious Violence Duty to work with third sector partners and statutory agencies on key areas such as VAWDASV, Community Cohesion, Youth Anti-Social Behaviour, knife crime and exploitation. Flintshire and Wrexham are represented on the regional Serious Violence Steering Group and have been contributing to the development of the North Wales Serious Violence Strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence. The strategy was launched in June.

Coleg Cambria has been looking at Knife Crime and emerging substance misuse issues across the counties. The group is formed of Wrexham and Flintshire Councils together with Police, Education and other local partners. As a legacy of the Knife Angel's visit Coleg Cambria with support from North Wales Police and Wrexham Council are also building a Knife Dragon, from knives collected from regional knife amnesties. Completion is planned for December 2024 and the sculpture will be used to raise awareness of the devastating impact of knife crime.

Wrexham Council were recently awarded funding through the Home Office Preventing Radicalisation Fund, which will enable the delivery of regional workshops for young people age 16+ and for professionals working with young people. Wrexham has also been involved in raising awareness of domestic violence through various events and launched their Keep your Heart campaign in 2023. Red hearts have been distributed throughout the county, they are printed with a QR code which links to domestic violence support service information.

Reflections

Since the publication of our well-being plan over a year ago, we have increasingly focused on what has been the impact of our strategic partnership, and how can PSBs act as catalysts to enable communities, partners, stakeholders and businesses to innovate, discuss their well-being and build their resilience. Partnership landscapes can be complex, enabling a dispersed form of social innovation that can help to connect citizens and communities.

However, there are a number of challenges:

- There are increasing demands on PSBs, who as strategic partnerships are thinly resourced, and enabling systemic change across their organisations will take time.
- The Climate Change Risk assessment and similar programmes of work that require both expertise and officer time to complete. We need to tackle climate change urgently and regionally, harnessing the collective wisdom of the other North Wales PSBs, the Regional Partnership Board and our diverse communities.
- Whilst the PSB presents an excellent opportunity to bring the right people round the table, and to connect with other partnerships, there is an inherent risk in not broadening participation across organisations. So, when we lose an energetic colleague it takes time for their successor to get up to speed.
- As budget pressures continue, that we keep a long term focus on improving well-being and delivering our objectives. The PSB has to be seen as a safe space for public sector bodies to discuss issues and work together – it is more important than ever that we collaborate. With a consistent and dedicated commitment to protecting prevention and help services, this will also alleviate pressure on costly statutory interventions.
- There is an awareness gap of what PSBs are and what they are able to achieve. At best they will be a catalyst for communities and partners to innovate and co-produce solutions. This is why we have held back from having a traditional top down website and a traditional logo so that in the future we can co-produce better engagement and data sharing and insight to support the well-being plans and the regional partnership work across North Wales. The North Wales Insight partnership is developing a platform for regional engagement. Led by Wrexham University, this project will include workshops with the communities and creating opportunities for local designers and creatives to get involved, and will align with the Data Cymru objective to develop clear data portals for PSBs
- PSBs need to involve the people they serve and hear the diverse mix of voices in their communities. As a region we are increasingly trying new ways to involve our communities. And as a direct result of this engagement we are working with the Future Generations Office to directly link the Young Leaders Alumni with Flintshire and Wrexham PSB as critical friends. Future Generations Leadership Academy 3.0 – The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
- In the last year we have realised that there is a concentration of regional alliances for change/social movements and new ways of working but it is emergent and growing with little resource.
- As strategic partnerships, Public Services Boards must operate as a place for leaders, colleagues and communities to listen and to have honest discussions. And then challenge, change and support their organisations, through research, data and insight, enabling organisations to practically use the five ways of working in everything they do

Our next steps

We need to ensure that our PSB focuses on what we have learned on our journey so far. As a strategic partnership we will continue to look to the long term, way beyond the lifespan of individual well-being plans, as we work together to build the prosperity, well-being and resilience of our communities.

Our key next steps are to:

- Continue to support the North Wales Insight Partnership as colleagues develop, test and use rich ways to work with communities and share what PSBs are doing to promote and encourage community investment in our well-being plan.

- Support continued sharing and connecting across our region. It is by building strong communities of practice through events like the North Wales C4C or by sharing data and insight that we will enable real involvement and innovation.

- Use a systems leadership approach to change how we deliver the services that communities need. The new Shaping Places for Wales programme will be a significant way we build capacity and continue to innovate and be prepared for the big societal challenges facing our region.

- Deliver change. At the end of the day, impact matters more than innovation on its own. As a strategic partnership Flintshire and Wrexham PSB can be the catalyst to a whole civic society approach with business, citizens and public institutions identifying issues and working together to fix them. The children's university is a great template for this.

Edited by Michael Cantwell and Nicola McCann

June 2024

Flintshire and Wrexham PSB Members

- Association of Voluntary Organisations Wrexham - Dawn Roberts McCabe
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board - Michelle Greene, Ceriann Tunnah
- Coleg Cambria - Sue Price, Steve Jackson
- Department of Work and Pensions - Tony Potter
- Flintshire County Council - Cllr Ian Roberts, Neal Cockerton, Neil Ayling
- Flintshire Local Voluntary Council - Ann Woods
- Natural Resources Wales - Lyndsey Rawlinson, Mark Hughes
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service - Justin Evans, Anthony Jones
- North Wales Police - Jonathan Bowcott, Emma Cater
- Welsh Government - Steven McGregor
- Wrexham County Borough Council - Cllr Paul Roberts, Ian Bancroft, Karen Evans
- Wrexham University - Nina Ruddle