

Wrexham Public Services Board

Annual Report 2021/2022



[Introduction from Sue Price, Chair of Wrexham Public Services Board](#)

Wrexham has a good track record of partnership working, both locally and across North Wales. The communities we serve expect our public services and their third sector partners to work together to manage shared priorities through collaboration and to focus our energy, effort and resources on co-producing efficient and effective services.

We have now been working together for more than six years as the Wrexham Public Services Board. We have continued to build our relationships, to enable us to have the greatest impact as strategic leaders. This has been set against the significant challenges our communities have faced over the last two years, as well as the long term impacts of COVID, the cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine.

Since June 2020, we have been working closely with our colleagues from Flintshire PSB on what we need to do to enable our communities to recover from the impact of COVID and to adapt to the new normal of living with the virus. Our progress is highlighted in this report. All of the work that Wrexham PSB had been previously focusing on prior to the pandemic was shifted into this joint work. Our one exception has been to continue to focus on how we build children's rights as an outcome for our children and young people, and this will continue to be the basis of everything we do as a partnership.

We have all faced significant challenges during the lockdown, and we will need to learn and recover from them. The experiences of the last few years show that if we work together, we

can build strong resilient communities with healthy engaged citizens and responsive public services.

The key piece of work we have produced during 21/22 is the assessment of well-being for our area. This rich report is full of evidence which we will use to have many conversations with our communities to co-produce a plan to improve our long term well-being

We are in extraordinary times. This year's report will reflect on our first well-being plan, the lessons we have learned through working together, and our plans for a resilient and fairer future.

I hope you find this annual report useful. Please work with us as we continue to build our relationships with our young people, our communities and each other, so that we can refresh and renew our spirits and recover better than before.

As I enter my final year as chair, I would also like to reflect on those of us who have lost loved ones, friends and colleagues over the last few years.

Sue Price, Coleg Cambria, Chair of Wrexham Public Services Board

Sept 2022

Looking back

The COVID pandemic has completely changed how we all live - every citizen, or local business or public service has been affected as we rose to meet the global challenge.

This has meant the PSB working in three different ways:

Partners have come together with communities to respond to the crisis. From the brilliant job that our health colleagues have led to the lead role that the third sector took in coordinating partners together to ensure children, families and other individuals were fed during the pandemic, we have had to be strong and sometimes show real depths of resilience. The challenge for us now is to shape our future with communities so that we are a fairer, happier and healthier place.

Our partnership with Flintshire PSB has meant building our understanding of what communities will need in the future from public services to build their resilience, and how we will co-produce well-being plans that tackle inequality. It will need a massive effort from everyone to tackle issues such as climate change, poverty and our mental health crisis, and the key to moving forward will be ensuring that our residents are central to shaping and leading the way.

We continued to work on projects that will enable our communities to recover strongly, and make sure that future generations will be able to flourish. During 21/22, we continued to

develop a children's university for Wrexham and Flintshire and the first cohort of young people graduated in July 2022. This will mean that children and young people will be able to build up their life skills and get accredited for everything from sport to volunteering with the longer term aim to raise aspirations and improve their future prospects.

Building community resilience – our joint work with Flintshire

When we were first faced with COVID, we quickly realised that by joining forces with Flintshire PSB to work on how we will build long term resilience to enable communities to recover, we could share experiences and resources, and develop solutions together, around four themes:

- Tackling poverty and Inequality
- Building mental health and well-being
- Environment and carbon reduction
- Improving outcomes for children and young people

Working closely together over the last two years has meant that we have been able to achieve more, identifying where our systems need to change to enable people to live healthy and independent lives.

Our joint recovery planning has led to honest conversations between partners about how future systems need to change, how resources need to be allocated better, how services need to be built around citizens and everyone needs to feel that they have a stake in where they live.

This section gives a progress update of where we have got to so far. By the time of our next annual report in 2024, we will have co-produced a well-being plan that is informed by the evidence, data and insight needed to build our long term resilience.

Tackling poverty and inequality

Despite decades of work to address poverty and inequality, both are deeply entrenched, and have significantly worsened in our sub-region during the Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences of living in poverty and experiencing systemic inequality impact everyone in society. Our joint community resilience work and our well-being assessments have helped us to understand the root causes of this. The next steps now will be to design services that enable people, communities and society to thrive not just survive.

So, what do we want to achieve together?

Our goals and focus are to work together so that people have the tools they need to enable them to navigate through life, and are supported by a kinder, more compassionate public services and society. This means:

- Deepening joint working across Wrexham and Flintshire

- Focusing our efforts to switch to develop the sustainability of successful key projects, such as the Warm Wales Fuel Poverty project as we tackle inequality and the cost of living crisis.
- Developing an approach to explore and share assets in our organisations and across our communities.
- Working with public services to embed the socio economic duty in the most effective way

Employment

- Using the inward investment into North Wales through Ambition North Wales and local procurement strategies to drive jobs, growth and employment and training opportunities

Community

- Understanding lived experiences from the perspective of people in our communities, and creating space for working and thinking together with communities, ensuring opportunities are open to all for all
- Focusing on how food can bring communities together, through community kitchens and community gardens, using green spaces to grow food, reduce Co2 emissions and reduce food wastage, building a love of healthy food and cooking for pleasure.
- Connecting new skills and learning opportunities in these green spaces to build well-being and health through new skills.
- Using arts and creativity as a means of hearing new voices and tackling poverty.
- Education and learning is key. We want to scale up the Children’s University as means to connect family learning and aspiration for children and young people

The well-being assessment has identified tackling inequality as a key issue for the Public Services Boards to co-shape with our communities, especially as we face the cost of living crisis together.

Mental Health and Well-being

Data from the Welsh Health Survey shows that the number of adults in North Wales with a common mental health disorder is around 93,800 and is expected to increase to around 99,000 by 2035.

Our well-being assessments have shown us that people living in Wrexham suffer from poorer mental health when compared with other areas in North Wales.

So, what do we want to achieve together?

- The impact of Covid and restrictions has particularly hit the younger members of our communities who struggle to access necessary support. We are building a Good Mental Health social movement across Wrexham and Flintshire, with a third sector chair and wide engagement with our communities, and working towards becoming a Trauma Informed Society.

Environment and Carbon Reduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic and especially during the lockdown period there was a number of positive impacts on our environment, with a greater appreciation and understanding of the fragility of our planet.

We have seen a reduction in travel due to people homeworking more and communities exploring their local environment for physical and mental well-being benefits. This has resulted in an improvement to local air quality from fewer vehicles on the road and less traffic congestion, and also from people flying less.

More people using the natural environment, whether locally or well-known beauty spots has brought about increased challenges and pressures, including accessibility to available green spaces. This has led to increased pressures on our countryside such as parking, littering, wild camping, forest fires and fly tipping, and so we'll need to learn to love, respect and nurture nature.

If we all work together, as PSB organisations, stakeholders and communities we will value more what is around us - the biodiversity of our environments and greenspaces, local food and gardening and places to play and relax, and we will be able to tackle the wicked issues of climate change and poor mental health together.

So, what do we want to achieve together?

The response to the Covid-19 pandemic was a once in a generation opportunity to reset our values and priorities. We have the opportunity to create a sustainable long term future, which restores nature and decarbonises our economy whilst creating new opportunities for growth in the Green economy, bringing new skills and jobs to our area as well as bringing benefits to health and well-being.

A wide range of groups from PSB organisations including Flintshire County Council, Wrexham County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales, Welsh Government, Flintshire Volunteer Council, AONB, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Transport for Wales, Ambulance Services, North Wales Fire and Police Estates have come together across Wrexham and Flintshire to focus on Green Spaces and Carbon Reduction, looking at where working collaboratively could bring health and wellbeing benefit to our communities whilst also restoring nature and tackling decarbonisation.

During 21/22 the Environment group has focused on delivering outcomes through Lead, Inform and Participate.

Lead

- Work is continuing to look at mapping of public land and how we continue to identify future projects and identify opportunities to enhance spaces.
- Reviews are being carried out by organisations to understand the land that it holds and the potential carbon sequestration of that land.

Inform

Green Social Prescribing

Social prescribing and community-based support enable GPs, other health and care practitioners and local agencies to refer people to someone who can offer time and focuses on what matters to the individual. For some this will be green social prescribing, which links them to nature-based interventions and activities, such as local walking for health schemes, community gardening and food-growing projects. This also supports environmental improvement projects locally, connects people with local projects and spaces.

The group has collaborated with Public Health Wales in understanding social prescribing across Wrexham and Flintshire. This has led to a review being carried out across North Wales into what and how social prescribing is being delivered and how green social prescribing is being used.

Participate

- Supported Public Health Wales in developing the North Wales Healthy Travel Charter which emphasises active travel and decarbonisation of travel within our organisations.
- As a joint group it has provided opportunities to share work that we do and that others are doing and identify links to work collaboratively and share best practice.
- Developed a partnership group to create the vision for Wrexham Forests to support increase of green infrastructure and woodland cover. This can provide learning opportunities for Flintshire. The partnership now includes Woodland Trust, Wrexham CBC, NRW, National Trust, Llais y Goedwig, North Wales Wildlife Trust, Glyndwr University and Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board

[Improving outcomes for children and young people](#)

Before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 1 in 4 children in Wales were living in poverty, with people from certain ethnic groups, children, disabled people, single parents, carers, those living in private rented housing or working in certain sectors particularly affected.

Many children and their families locally have found their situations considerably worsened as a direct result of the economic impact of COVID, Brexit and now the cost of living emergency, with the period of the well-being plan seeing increasing pre-existing inequalities because of the pandemic. This will require us to work differently to support mental health concerns, children's wellbeing and the challenge of some children falling behind because of

poverty, the educational attainment gap or where opportunities to flourish have been scarce.

So what do we want to achieve together?

Many of our organisations have been established over long periods of time. To an individual who needs to access services, it can sometimes feel confusing, repetitive and slow; with the need to provide similar information more than once.

The pandemic and the joint PSB has created the opportunity to work better across our numerous systems and co-create strong, long term communities for and around our children, young people and their families.

The opportunity to establish systems to access services and support in a simple and practical way will ensure that support is timely, appropriate and easily available.

Working together across Wrexham and Flintshire, we are building a network to bring the public sector and third sector organisations together. This network is starting to challenge existing practices and exchange ideas to improve local well-being, with the ones we are focusing on being:

- developing a confident culture of social prescribing
- generating a dependable system of advice, information and guidance that meets the needs of young people
- making sure that our workforce is trained and resilient, and know how to access the same information, advice and guidance so that they are able to support those people who might struggle to access it themselves

This report takes the story for Wrexham PSB up to March 2022. Hopefully, by the time of the next annual report in 2024 there will be a positive story to tell, as we recover from COVID, and are able to once again focus fully on what our children and young people need to build their resilience and enhance their well-being.

Wrexham PSB during 21/22

In spite of the pandemic, the organisations that make up Wrexham's PSB felt it was critical to maintain our commitment on children's rights, so that this could feed into the well-being assessments and the community resilience work happening jointly with Flintshire PSB.

Following a pilot project between the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales and Wrexham County Borough Council in 2019 on how to embed children's rights across a public sector organisation, PSB partners have continued to share best practice and learning, promoting the work to increase the number of foster carers locally, supporting the Welsh Government Early Years Integration programme and producing evidence for how Covid has impacted on the mental health and resilience of our children and young people.

Since the start of the Well-being Plan process we have fostered a special relationship with the Senedd Yr Ifanc (Wrexham Youth Parliament). We have actively encouraged participation and engagement with these young people and the wider cohort of young people that they represent. This group has actively shaped our consultation and engagement with young people and the actions and work of the PSB and how it looks today.

We are working with the Children's University to develop opportunities for Wrexham. This is already a proven way to raise aspiration, tackle inequality and increase the number of opportunities available to children and their families. Giving credit and recognition to activities such as volunteering, sport and understanding of nature helps to reinforce a broader set of life skills that will complement traditional qualifications to produce well-rounded, healthy and confident young people.

We have worked intensively on our well-being assessment during 21/22, both locally and regionally with the other PSBs across north Wales. At the same time we ensured that the joint community resilience work continues to build momentum, so that our pandemic learning will inform our future well-being planning.

Our assessments have identified opportunities from huge challenges such as climate change and mental health and drill down to three emerging local issues for us to focus on – inequality, social determinants of health and adverse childhood experiences. These assessments will be key to how partners, stakeholders and communities come together to shape our well-being plans.

Wrexham Well-being Assessment 2022

<https://www.wrexhampsb.org/well-being-assessment/>

What have we achieved?

- This report gives a flavour of the journey Wrexham PSB partners, our communities and stakeholders are on together, and how we are starting to contribute more to the bigger picture regionally, nationally and globally. There still a hard road ahead, but we're focused and with our well-being assessments we know where we need to go.
- Before Covid 19, we had recognised the importance of effective partnerships and had been working hard to build this. This will now need a greater commitment to building community resilience and be flexible enough to deliver local, regional, and national solutions to the issues that matter most.
- We've got a committed group of individuals on board who are collectively taking responsibility to get things done, and since the pandemic this group is getting bigger and bigger. We care about getting this right with the people of Wrexham, so that we can build a future for our place; that we can all be proud of.

WCBC scrutiny overview

Due to the reduced number of scrutiny committee meetings during the pandemic, and the pre-election period of the local government elections in May 2022, the reporting of the Annual Report for 2020/21 was delayed. The Annual Reports for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will

be considered at the meeting of the Customers, Performance, Resources & Governance Scrutiny Committee in September 2022.

Two key pieces of reflection have emerged through our partnership with Scrutiny, and these will help to inform the new well-being plan:

Firstly, the well-being assessment published in April 2022 was a collaborative partnership effort, both locally and regionally, and so has been able to identify cross cutting themes that are relevant to our communities through rich conversations, compared to the previous assessment which was a commissioned piece of research, which was informative in terms of raw data but lacked analysis and insight.

Secondly, the well-being plan (2018) was too ambitious, containing fifteen objectives, covering the scope of all of the partner organisations. The PSB is a strategic partnership and not a delivery body. This has meant that it proved difficult to demonstrate the added value of the partnership – the key is changing how the partners work and engage with stakeholders.

The accelerated pace of working between organisations and stakeholders over the response period of the pandemic has shown where systems change is possible and necessary, the PSB can be the strategic body to make this happen. The future well-being plan will need to focus on a smaller number of measurable actions that lead to a bigger impact for our communities.

What did we learn during 21/22?

- That when push comes to shove, our communities, our people and our services have been able to do what was needed, quietly and impressively getting on with things.
- Our work on the well-being assessments has aligned strategic partnerships and communities at a regional and local level and we need to build on this to work together with a shared purpose to recover from the Covid-19 crisis and build our well-being plan.
- Without any core funding, PSBs will continue to struggle in the crowded partnerships landscape.
- The organisations around the table need to do more at all levels to work in partnership with each other, and involve everyone in the work.
- The PSB is becoming a successful strategic partnership. But delivery of what communities need will involve sustained behavioural change across the public sector, so that we co-produce well-being plans with our communities, involving as many people and new voices and ideas as possible.

Our next steps

Doing things differently will mean that we continue to strengthen our relationships across North Wales. By learning from each other and sharing experiences across our region, we will be able to build a fairer society where everyone can get involved.

Working with children and young people throughout the year shows that genuinely involving communities and stakeholders to shape the decisions made about their lives is crucial and the right thing to do, so taking a joined up approach to how we do things is how we will continue to work. We still have work to do as public sector organisations to ensure we work in this way and ensure we deliver what the Future Generations Act requires.

We need to broaden understanding across the community of what our next Well-Being plan will do from 2023, and get more people to join us on the journey. We are working with the Co-production for Wales network, so that we seek out new voices and shape our future together, through conversations, evidence and community plans.

We will make sure that we bring our resources and talents together so that we are stronger in the future than we were before the pandemic. This will need a commitment at all levels for greater transparency of decision making, co-production of community plans, and a big role for the public sector to empower communities with capacity, time and funding.

Finally, we will have to be more preventative in how we do things so that we build strong, healthy and resilient communities together, putting our environmental priorities at the heart of what we do. Next year's well-being plan will have to embed the five ways of working, and the PSB's role will be to make sure that this happens, challenging organisations to work together to build long term outcomes.

We are focused on doing the right thing for the people of Wrexham, so if you would like to know more about our work or offer your help then please email:

sustainability@wrexham.gov.uk