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Well-being of Future Generations:  
An examination of the step 'We will  
work with partners to ensure that we  
target support to those children at  
risk of adverse childhood  
experiences in the first 1,000 days of  
their lives' – **Neath Port Talbot  
County Borough Council**

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This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Colin Davies, Alison Lewis and Richard Hayward under the direction of Jane Holownia.

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# Summary report

## Summary

### Why we undertook the Examination

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

The Act defines the sustainable development principle as acting in a manner: ‘...which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.
- 2 The Auditor General must provide a report on his examinations to the National Assembly for Wales at least a year before each Assembly election. The first such report must be published by 2020, before the 2021 Assembly election.
- 3 During 2018-19 the Auditor General is undertaking examinations across the 44 bodies covered by the Act to inform his report to the National Assembly.
- 4 In May 2018, the Auditor General published his report, **Reflecting on Year One – How have public bodies responded to the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)**. He concluded that public bodies support the principles of the Act and are taking steps to change how they work.
- 5 In developing our approach to undertaking the examinations during 2018-19 we engaged with a range of stakeholders including through our pilot work during 2017-18. We also worked closely with the Future Generations Commissioner.
- 6 As the preliminary work in year one included a consideration of how public bodies had set their wellbeing objectives, the principal focus of this work is the way in which public bodies are taking steps to meet their wellbeing objectives.
- 7 The findings in this report are based on fieldwork that we undertook during the period November 2018 to February 2019.
- 8 This report sets out our findings from our examination of the step, ‘We will work with partners to ensure that we target support to those children at risk of adverse childhood experience in the first 1,000 days of their lives’. This step is supporting the Council’s wellbeing objective 1, ‘To improve the well-being of children and young people.’
- 9 It also sets out the Council’s initial response to our findings.

## What we examined

- 10 We examined the extent to which the Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in its work with partners to ensure support is targeted to those children at risk of adverse childhood experience in the first 1,000 days of their lives.
- 11 In order to act in accordance with the sustainable development principle public bodies must take account of the following 'ways of working'.

### Exhibit 1: the 'five ways of working'

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

The Five Ways of Working
<b>Long term</b> The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
<b>Prevention</b> How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
<b>Integration</b> Considering how the public body's wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the wellbeing goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
<b>Collaboration</b> Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its wellbeing objectives.
<b>Involvement</b> The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the wellbeing goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

- 12 Our examination found that: **The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing the step but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working.**

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

# Detailed report

## Part One: Examination Findings

The Council is acting in accordance with the sustainable development principle in developing the step but there are opportunities to further embed the five ways of working

The Council has considered the long-term benefits in setting this step and recognises the need to develop outcome measures

### What we looked for

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

### What we found

- 15 We identified the following strengths:
- the Council has a clear understanding of the potential long-term benefits this step can make to an individual's life;
  - there is a strong evidence base for the need to undertake this step, including national research which shows more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) correlate to worse health and economic outcomes for individuals;
  - the Council has significant concerns regarding the school readiness of some children and understands how the step will help address this; and
  - the Council recognises the need to develop outcome-focused measures to evidence impact.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1

- 16 We identified the following areas for improvement:
- the Council needs to collect data so it can:
    - understand the issues in sufficient detail;
    - establish what success looks like (based on outcomes); and
    - know how it is going to measure outcomes.
  - the Council to consider how it will evaluate the impact of working with families in a more collaborative way in the short, medium and long term to inform the re-modelling of services and any potential shift in patterns of investment.

## Prevention is fundamental to the approach the Council is taking in developing the step

### What we looked for

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

### What we found

- 19 We identified the following strengths:
- the step is heavily focused on prevention, as the actions will help mitigate the likelihood of children being exposed to ACEs;
  - there is a clear understanding that the step is aiming to break the negative cycle of dysfunctional family behavioural patterns and its consequent impacts;
  - the step has the potential to deliver cost efficiencies through the early prevention of problems, before they become more complex and long term; and
  - resources have been allocated to progress the Children's Community Pilot in Sandfields West and this work will support delivery of the step.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1

20 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- consider how improving data and holistic understanding about communities could:
  - improve knowledge of root causes;
  - provide better understanding of the outcomes of different interventions to help the Council build on successful practice;
  - enable more targeted and tailored approaches to addressing the issues; and
  - improve understanding of community assets and how these can be developed and drawn upon to support people, families and communities;
- explore the use of data analytics in supporting this work, for example establishing profiles for families where ACEs are more likely to occur.

## The Council recognises the need for an integrated approach to maximise benefits from the step and is supporting this through the Public Services Board

### What we looked for

21 We looked for evidence of consideration of:

- how this step could contribute to the seven national wellbeing goals;
- how delivery of this step will impact on the Council's wellbeing objectives and wider priorities; and
- how delivery of this step will impact on other public bodies' wellbeing objectives.

22 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'integration' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>4</sup>

### What we found

23 We identified the following strengths:

- there is clear alignment between the Council's wellbeing plan and that of the Public Services Board (PSB);
- this step is directly aligned to the early years objective and the safe resilient communities objective in the PSB's wellbeing plan;

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 1

- the Council has considered how this step integrates with other existing initiatives in the Council, for example the Children’s Community Pilot in Sandfields West; and
- ACEs is a national initiative, initiated by Public Health Wales, and this shared agenda is helping ensure more effective integration between partners.

24 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- for the Council to consider how it further embeds an integrated approach across services to ensure that all staff are thinking about how benefits from their service can be maximised and any potential conflicts identified and managed.

## The Council is collaborating with partners in designing and developing the step

### What we looked for

25 We looked for evidence that the Council:

- has considered how it could work with others to deliver the step (to meet its wellbeing objectives, or assist another body to meet its wellbeing objectives);
- is collaborating effectively to deliver the step; and
- is monitoring and reviewing whether the collaboration is helping it or its stakeholders meet wellbeing objectives.

26 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for ‘collaboration’ that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>5</sup>

### What we found

27 We identified the following strengths:

- the Council is actively promoting collaboration in developing its approach to this complex step;
- there was excellent attendance from partners at the first engagement workshop and a very strong will in the room to change the current system to improve partnership working to better support communities; and
- the PSB has recently been invited to become a pathfinder for the Welsh Government’s partnership project for Early Years Transformation, which will help support this step.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1

28 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- with limited and time bound additional resources currently identified to deliver this step, the Council, with its partners, will need to think about how the delivery of the action plan will be resourced. Consideration will need to be given to changing the way things are currently delivered including potentially re-prioritising spend to preventative initiatives.
- establish ways to help monitor and review whether collaborations with partners on ACEs are being effective.

## The Council is involving key partners in developing the step and going forward needs to ensure it effectively involves the full diversity of its communities

### What we looked for

29 We looked for evidence that the Council has:

- identified who it needs to involve in designing and delivering the step;
- effectively involved key stakeholders in designing and delivering the step;
- used the results of involvement to shape the development and delivery of the step; and
- sought to learn lessons and improve its approach to involvement.

30 Our examination was also informed by the positive indicators for 'involvement' that we have identified and used as part of this examination.<sup>6</sup>

### What we found

31 We identified the following strengths:

- in the first engagement workshop, in November 2018, key partners helped develop key themes for the step. A follow-up session will be arranged in April/May 2019 to share the action plan.
- a key principle underpinning the step is to understand what individual communities need and how universal support, as well as tailored support, is continually evaluated and adapted; to be able to 'step up' and 'step down' support services as necessary.
- the Council is planning to hold an engagement session with parents and carers to share the action plan and get their views on it.
- results from engagement with parents and children, as part of establishing the Children's Community Pilot, helped identify the two main themes of the

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1

programme: education readiness and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

32 We identified the following areas for improvement:

- to meaningfully engage with communities in the development of the action plan, the Council needs to look at different ways in which it can facilitate community involvement and build trust to enable the work to be effective. An example is the Council's proposal to work with individual communities to develop a narrative of 'what does good look like?' for school readiness.
- in involving communities on the action plan, be sure to include the full diversity of the community.

## Part Two: Council's response

33 Following the conclusion of our fieldwork we presented our findings to senior officers of the Council and from Health at a workshop in February 2019. At this workshop the Council began to consider its response to our findings. The following actions represent the Council's thoughts on the actions it might take in response to the opportunities identified through the review work. The Council will further consider these alongside the actions that it is developing with partners to take forward the work on ACEs and will aim to integrate the two emerging action plans into one action plan.

### Exhibit 2: council actions

<b>Council actions identified at the feedback workshop held on 26 February 2019 and reviewed and amended by the Council in June 2019</b>	
1.	Develop a more systematic approach to understanding communities and the vulnerabilities of families, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introducing/embedding a new model of leadership that supports a more joined-up approach across services (including joint goals) and better shared understanding; and</li><li>• engaging with communities to develop a narrative of school readiness.</li></ul>
2.	The Council to help drive a fundamental change in working with partners and explore how to measure outcomes – to deliver sustainable change. This could include: trying different methodologies, including the possible use of case studies and learning from practice in a systematic way to facilitate ongoing learning and help professional practice to evolve.
3.	Develop an understanding of community assets across the Council and how these might be utilised/developed to support communities.
4.	Participate in the Early Action Together programme initiated by South Wales Police. Introduce a pilot in Sandfields West to focus on ACEs to consider how agencies work together more effectively to support communities.

**Council actions identified at the feedback workshop held on 26 February 2019 and reviewed and amended by the Council in June 2019**

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 5. | To look at adjusting service models to re-balance budgets and resources towards spending on the preventative agenda. |
| 6. | Commit IT and corporate policy resource to develop data analytics and intelligence.                                  |

- 34 We will continue to monitor the Council's progress in implementing these actions, and the extent to which they address the issues we have identified in our findings.

# Appendix 1

## Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

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

### Exhibit 3: Positive Indicators of the Five Ways of Working

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

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

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

#### **What would show a body is collaborating effectively?**

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

#### **What would show a body is involving people effectively?**

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



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