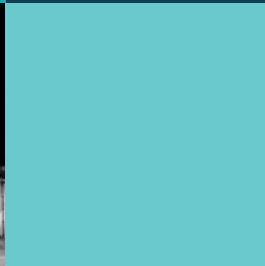
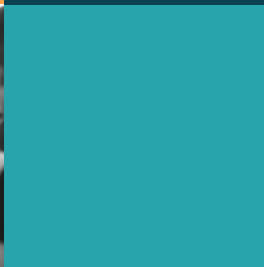
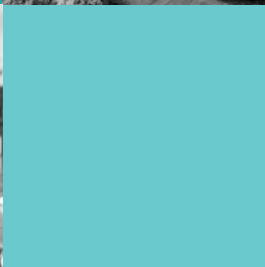




Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru

2021 IN REVIEW



March

- Improving race equality in Wales
- Disabled facilities grants – changing the means test
- WCPP Evidence briefing papers
- Embedding Black and minority ethnic history, identity and culture into Welsh education
- How can subnational governments develop and deliver distinctive policy agendas? (International Review of Administrative Sciences)
- The Motivations for the Adoption of Management Innovation by Local Governments and its Performance Effects (Public Administration Review)
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May

- The role of communities and the use of technology in mitigating loneliness during the pandemic
- Creating an anti-racist Wales
- Zoomshock – is remote working the future of the Welsh economy?
- Improving race equality in Wales

September

- Multi-agency working and outcomes for children looked after
- Well-being briefing for Public Services Boards
- A pandemic called loneliness
- Education recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic

November

- Implementing the Race Equality Action Plan
- The local government response to austerity in a small devolved country: the case of Wales (Local Government Studies)

January

- Achieving a just transition in Wales
- Post-Brexit Migration and Wales: Potential impacts of the new system and recommendations on the priorities for influencing UK immigration policy
- Post-Brexit migration and Wales

July

- What I'd tell the Beatles about loneliness
- Tackling loneliness in Wales through the pandemic and beyond

2021 AT A GLANCE

Supporting the Welsh Lifelong Learning system

December

- Who is lonely in Wales?
- Stakeholders' ideas for tackling loneliness in Wales through the pandemic and beyond
- New insight into loneliness in Wales
- Social Innovation in Preventing Homelessness amongst Young People in Canada and Wales: International Engagement as a Key Driver (European Journal of Homelessness)

October

- Volunteering and well-being in the pandemic: learning from practice
- Why go back to the office?

August

- Volunteering and wellbeing during the Coronavirus pandemic
- The Welsh Government's use of policy tools for mainstreaming equalities
- Improving evidence use in local government
- Collaboration and policy implementation at the local level in Wales
- The future of Wales' farming policy
- Five years on from the Brexit referendum
- Implementing the Socio-economic Duty: learning from experience
- Volunteering lessons from the pandemic
- Education attainment – responding to the Coronavirus pandemic
- Rural Wales Vision

June

- Climate Change – making the transition happen in Wales
- It ain't what you (can) do it's the way that you do it
- Blog: PhD Internships – learning by doing

April

- Remote working
- Education attainment – responding to the Coronavirus pandemic
- Raising the age of participation in education to 18
- Blog: Domiciliary care – what's it really like?
- Blog: Fairer futures – understanding inequality in the Our Future Wales consultation

February

Key

- Blog
- Event
- Podcast
- Report
- Journal Article

Introduction

Welcome to our review of some of the highlights of the Wales Centre for Public Policy's work in 2021.

We enjoyed another productive and prolific year in which we provided evidence to Ministers and public service leaders on a wide range of important policy challenges facing Wales.

Much of our work focused on the impacts of the pandemic including reports on:

- The long-term prospects and implications of remote working;
- How teachers can support students to catch up on missed learning opportunities; and
- The role of community groups and technology in tackling loneliness and social isolation.

But alongside this, we also looked at some of the fundamental challenges that will be with us long after the pandemic:

- Decarbonising the Welsh economy;
- Eliminating race inequality;
- Improving services for vulnerable children and young people; and
- Coping with the impacts of Brexit on farming and on the labour market.

Our reports, policy briefings, commentaries and podcasts on these and other topics are available to download from [our website](#), and we hope that you find them informative, relevant and useful.

We are grateful to the policy makers and public service leaders with whom we worked for their commitment to evidence informed policy and practice.

We thank our Advisory Group and Public Services Reference Groups for their continued support and wise advice, and we acknowledge the vital contributions made by the numerous experts, research organisations and What Works Centres who we had the pleasure of working with in 2021.



In 2021...



Our reports were downloaded **6,603** times, **16.2%** more than in 2020.



Traffic to our website increased by **more than 16%** compared to 2020 figures.



We gained **over 400** new Twitter followers and **268** new newsletter subscribers.

About Us

The Wales Centre for Public Policy helps to improve policy making and public services by supporting ministers and public service leaders to access and apply rigorous independent evidence about what works. We work in partnership with leading researchers and policy experts to synthesise and mobilise existing evidence and identify gaps where there is a need to generate new knowledge.

The Centre is independent of government but works closely with policy makers and practitioners to develop fresh thinking about a wide range of devolved policy areas including how to strengthen the economy and skills; improve health and adult social care; support equalities; tackle loneliness and social isolation; enhance provision for children looked after; and ensure good governance and effective policy implementation.

We:

- Support Welsh Government Ministers to identify, access, and use authoritative evidence and independent expertise that can help inform and improve policy;
- Work with public services to access, generate, evaluate, and apply evidence about what works in addressing key economic and societal challenges; and
- Draw on our work with Ministers and public services, to advance understanding of how evidence can inform and improve policy making and public services and contribute to theories of policy making and implementation.

Through secondments, PhD placements and our Research Apprenticeship programme, the Centre also helps to build capacity among researchers to engage in policy relevant research which has impact.

For further information please visit our website at www.wcpp.org.uk



Education and Skills

Lifelong learning

Ministers asked us to conduct [an evidence review into lifelong learning](#) to inform the implementation of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill which renews the emphasis on lifelong learning in Wales through the establishment of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER).

Our report made recommendations to the Welsh Government based on an examination of a wide range of issues including: the contexts in which lifelong learning takes place; existing strategies for providing it; rights and entitlements to it; the need to strike the balance between targeting and universal provision; barriers to learning; the importance of balancing economic and social objectives; roles, responsibilities and governance structures; effective support for learning institutions; and lifelong learning in Wales compared to other parts of the UK.



Raising the age of participation in education to 18

England raised the compulsory age of participation in education or training to 17 in 2013 and then 18 in 2015. In Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the school leaving age is 16 and there has been growing debate about the case for raising it.

The Welsh Government asked us to consider the implications of doing this and alternative ways to encourage young people to participate in learning beyond the age of 16. Our [review](#) examined the international evidence drawing on the experience of a range of countries which have raised the age of participation in recent years (including a number of USA and Australian states as well as England). We found that policy makers in other countries have assumed raising the age of participation would result in a better qualified workforce and improve economic output and performance. In some cases, it was also motivated by a desire to narrow social and economic inequalities. However, their experience suggests that compulsion is not sufficient on its own. It is also important to have comprehensive careers services and other support for learners.

Embedding BAME history, identity and culture into Welsh education

In [her blog](#) Professor Charlotte Williams (Chair of the Communities, contributions and cynefin: BAME experiences and the new curriculum working group) argued that increasing the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic perspectives, histories and contributions is about much more than filling up content. It will require a culture shift to encourage ‘practitioners to think afresh about what they teach, how they teach, and about what we want young people to be as well as to learn’.

Education Attainment: Responding to the Coronavirus pandemic

The Coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in educational outcomes frustrating attempts to create a fairer education system. [Our briefing note](#) summarises findings drawn from a rapid review of the evidence on the international responses to this challenge and the potential implications for Wales. It recommended:

- Targeted funding to minimise attainment losses.
- Blended learning and assessment that is inclusive of poorer children and those with additional learning or accessibility needs.
- Ways to identify and share best practice in design and delivery of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants.

In our [PEP Talk podcast](#), Becki Bawler (a secondary school teacher in a south Wales comprehensive and a Doctorate in Education student at Cardiff University) and Harry Fletcher-Wood (a former history teacher and now a education researcher) discussed the challenges which the pandemic poses for education system in Wales and the need to focus on blended teaching and learning, and professional development.

Supporting Equalities

Race equality

Research demonstrates that there are persistent racial inequalities in Wales. We conducted six evidence reviews which directly informed the Welsh Government’s Race Equality Action Plan.

We analysed evidence on ways to address race inequality in:

- [Leadership and representation](#)
- [Health and social care](#)
- [Employment and income](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Housing and accommodation](#)
- [Crime and justice](#)

Our report on [implementing the Plan](#) highlights some of the practical steps that will be needed to achieve the ambitions it sets out.

Children Looked After

Multi-agency working

'At risk' children and families interact with multiple agencies and services. It has been a long-held aspiration that these bodies and the services they provide are better coordinated and centred on the people they are seeking to help, and multi-agency working has been much discussed in the academic literature and policy debates.

Wales has an extensive policy framework that seeks to facilitate this (including programmes such as Families First, legislation such as the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, inspection frameworks from Care Inspectorate Wales, and a Ministerial Advisory Group on Improving Outcomes for Children) but there is a recognition that more needs to be done.

Our evidence review identified approaches to increasing the effectiveness of multi-agency working in children's services and examined how greater coordination and coherence improves outcomes for children and their families.

Loneliness and Social Isolation

Loneliness has a significant impact on public health and wellbeing, and tackling it is a priority for the Welsh Government and public services. Most strategies rely on increasing the quality of people's social contacts. Social distancing and shielding restricts these activities and significantly increases the risk of loneliness.

Building on the work we started prior to the pandemic, in 2021 we focused on three main issues.

We explored the role of communities and the use of technology in tackling loneliness, by analysing the impact of the pandemic on community groups and the role technology has played in the absence of in-person activities.

We analysed data from the National Survey for Wales to build a picture of who is lonely in Wales. Our reports highlighted the intersection of key 'risk factors' and identified ways to design and deliver funding and interventions to tackle loneliness effectively.

Volunteering has played a crucial role in supporting communities during the pandemic and there is widespread interest from policymakers and practitioners in maintaining this activity to contribute to a wellbeing-led recovery in Wales. To inform this recovery planning, we conducted two studies on the contribution of volunteering to individual and community wellbeing during the pandemic: a synthesis of 50 practice-based case studies using a case study synthesis method and a rapid evidence review.

Our work on tackling loneliness was showcased in a two day virtual conference in July which examined the issues, priorities, challenges and needs of decision-makers in Wales committed to a wellbeing-led recovery.



Health and Adult Social Care



Well-being briefings

Public Services Boards (PSBs) are required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to produce well-being assessments every five years. We were asked to support this process by providing PSBs with a [series of briefings](#) on:

Equalities: including outcomes for those considered vulnerable or disadvantaged; possessing a protected characteristic; children under 18; young people looked after; people who need care and people who are carers..

Cultural well-being: to provide a definition of cultural well-being, evidence on the impact of cultural activities on community well-being, and recommendations about specific actions to support well-being.

The impact of Covid-19 and Brexit on well-being: including the impact of economic shocks, how this varies by group, economic sectors and geography, and how well-being could be enhanced by policies related to post-Brexit transition and post-pandemic recovery.

The briefings include an analysis of evidence gaps, uncertainties, and areas to explore, as well as how the evidence presented across each of the three areas can be used to support well-being objectives in local areas.

Disabled facilities grant

In 2019 22% of the Welsh population was disabled, with that projected to increase significantly by 2035. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are means-tested and provide disabled people with help towards the costs of making their homes accessible. Our report, requested by Ministers, [Disabled Facilities Grants: Changing the means test](#), assessed the potential impacts on local authorities of removing the means test for small and medium Disabled Facilities Grants in Wales.



The impact of Brexit

Post-Brexit migration and Wales

One of the main concerns of those who voted leave was taking back control of our borders. In February 2020, the Home Office stated that controls on migration would help to create 'a high wage, high-skill, high productivity economy' whilst acknowledging that 'employers will need to adjust' to a reduction in the supply of EU workers. The new system was intended to 'work for the whole of the UK' but Welsh Ministers were concerned that reducing migration could exacerbate the ageing of the population, particularly in rural areas, and create labour shortages in some key sectors.

In a [blog](#) Dr Sarah Kyambi, Director at Migration Policy Scotland, discussed the potential impact the new post-Brexit migration system could have on Wales and Scotland, identified priorities for influencing UK immigration policy.

in our [PEP Talk podcast](#) Dr Kyambi, Jonathan Portes (Professor of Economics at King's College London) and Dr Llyr ap Gareth (former Senior Policy Advisor at the Federation for Small Businesses Wales) discussed the impacts of post-Brexit migration rules and ways in which Welsh Government could respond to the challenges and opportunities they create.

Economy and Skills

Remote working

Remote working has become the new normal for many workers in Wales during the pandemic so analysed [evidence to understand how remote working](#) may affect the economy in the longer term.

In September 2020, the Welsh Government announced a 'long-term ambition to see around 30% of Welsh workers working from home or near from home, including after the threat of Covid-19 lessens', and surveys of businesses and employees suggest that many sectors will see a permanent shift to more blended working from the office and home once the pandemic has ended.

However, compared to other parts of the UK, Wales has a greater proportion of workers in sectors that are unable to operate from home, such as retail, hospitality and social care. So policy makers need to be careful not to overestimate the level of remote working when making decisions about future investments in transport and urban spaces.



Environment and Sustainability



Just transitions

Decarbonisation is a major policy challenge with the Welsh Government stating its ambition for a target of a 95% reduction in emissions by 2050. Our report, ['Towards a Just Transition in Wales'](#) examines ways to achieve decarbonise the Welsh economy in a way that avoids creating or exacerbating inequalities, and ideally narrows them.

The report discusses the relationship between a just transition and the existing Welsh policy framework, and opportunities to integrate the two, and considers the impact of the pandemic and the lessons it might hold for a just transition.

Future of Wales' farming policy

The UK's exit from the European Union will have a significant impact on the agricultural industry in Wales. To mitigate the impacts, the Welsh Government has been developing policy proposals which aim to support farmers in adopting sustainable farming practices, with a focus on payment for the production of public goods.

[Our report](#) used a case-study to explore how one farmer-led group has responded to changing farming policy, through engaging in a participatory approach to developing landscape-scale solutions in north Wales.

You can also listen to our [PEP Talk podcast](#) where Professor Michael Woods and Guto Davies discuss the Rural Wales Vision, a report commissioned by the Welsh Local Government Association Rural Forum to develop a strategic framework which aims to enhance and complement future agricultural policy by addressing a range of challenges, including investing in the skills base and activities to add value to the range of primary products derived from farming activity.



Evidence Use and Effective Policy Making

Improving evidence use in local government

Fostering better links between academia and local government has long been a concern for those interested in promoting evidence-informed practice. While the barriers and enablers of evidence use are well known and there is a growing body of literature on local government practitioners and academics as research partners, less is known about how best to facilitate these partnerships.

To explore this issue, we partnered with Cardiff Council and Social Care Wales to examine ways to strengthen links between the council, public health, and academia.

We convened workshops with representatives from Children's Services, Cardiff University, Social Care Wales, Welsh Government and the third sector, and ran a survey with Children's Services staff on approaches to research use and evidence-informed practice at the council. And [our report](#) examines current good practice, barriers to links and opportunities to strengthen them.



Use of policy tools for mainstreaming equalities

The Welsh Government has a statutory duty to mainstream equality of opportunity in all of its activities and has made significant efforts to do so. In 2019, it announced that it would be enacting Sections 1 and 3 of the Equality Act 2010, known as the 'socio-economic duty' which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio economic disadvantage. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on certain groups has further reinforced the need to embed equality within Welsh Government decision making.

In light of renewed interest, [our report](#) examined the policy tools Welsh Government has used to mainstream equality of opportunity, the effectiveness of these tools, and factors that influence their effectiveness.

Our Advisory Group

The Centre is very grateful for the advice and support provided throughout the 2021 by our Advisory Group of distinguished individuals from academia, government and public services.

Stephen Aldridge is Director for Analysis and Data at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Professor Annette Boaz is a Professor in Health Care Research at the Centre for Health and Social Care Research at St George's University of London and Kingston University.

Professor Alice Brown is Chair of the Scottish Funding Council and Emeritus Professor of Politics at the University of Edinburgh.

Dr Carol Campbell is Director of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research—Réseau d'échange des connaissances pour la recherche appliquée en éducation.

Dr Jane Davidson is a former Welsh Government minister and Pro-Vice Chancellor for External Engagement and Sustainability at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond is the UK's National Statistician and former Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen.

Dr Ruth Hall is a non-executive director of Health Education and Improvement Wales and former Chief Medical Officer for Wales

Professor Gerry Holtham is Hodge Professor of Regional Economy, Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Sir Peter Housden is a former Permanent Secretary of the Scottish Government.

Professor Ruth Hussey was Chief Medical Officer for Wales and chaired the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales

Professor Paul Johnson is Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Abdool Kara is the Executive Leader of the Local Services at the National Audit Office and a former local authority chief executive.

Professor Laura McAllister is Professor of Public Policy and the Governance of Wales at Cardiff University's Wales Governance Centre.

Dr June Milligan is a Civil Service Commissioner and lay member of the governing body of the University of Glasgow and former Chair of the Wales Committee on Equality and Human Rights.

Professor Helen Patterson is the Chief Executive at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Professor Nick Pearce is Director of the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath and a former head of the No. 10 Policy Unit and the Institute for Public Policy Research.

Ceridwen Roberts is a former Senior Research Fellow at the University of Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Intervention.

Dame Dr Jane Roberts is a Research Fellow in Public Leadership at the Open University and the former Leader of the London Borough of Camden.

Michael Trickey is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Cardiff University's Wales Fiscal Analysis team.

Professor Sir Adrian Webb is a former University Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Social Policy and has held numerous public appointments in Wales.



Wales Centre for Public Policy

Cardiff University
Sbarc/Spark
Maindy Road
Cardiff CF24 4HQ



www.wcpp.org.uk



029 2087 5345



info@wcpp.org.uk



@WCfPP