

Wales Centre for Public Policy at 10





The Wales Centre for Public Policy has a central place in supporting the way in which Welsh Government policymaking can be designed, delivered and implemented. There are three things the Centre brings to policymaking in Wales.

Firstly, it brings a sense of challenge. As a Minister, you need to assemble as good a collection of evidence and alternative sources of advice as possible, and the Centre has the authority to be able to offer that sense of challenge when needed.

Secondly, the Centre brings advice that is genuinely rooted in evidence, an understanding of the breadth of the evidence and most importantly an ability to analyse and present the evidence and help understand what it is telling us.

Thirdly, the Centre understands the political world that government occupies. The best advice in the world will go nowhere if it doesn't understand the way in which government has to work to deliver effective policy for the people of Wales.

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales



The Wales Centre for Public Policy provides invaluable contributions in supporting the work of organisations like the Welsh Local Government Association and local government policy makers across Wales. The commitment of the WCPP to providing expert evidence has proven instrumental in shaping effective policies that directly benefit our communities.

In an era where informed decision-making is paramount, we recognise the importance of evidence-based approaches. The WCPP's dedication to rigorous research and insightful analyses has significantly enhanced our ability to craft policies that address the unique needs and challenges faced by local authorities in Wales.

Cllr Andrew Morgan OBE
Leader, Welsh Local Government Association



Wales Centre for Public Policy
Canolfan Polisi Cyhoeddus Cymru


Cardiff University, sbarc|spark, Maindy Road, Cardiff CF24 4HQ

 www.wcpp.org.uk

 info@wcpp.org.uk

 029 2087 5345

 @WCfPP

 /company/
wcpp



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Key contacts

James Downe
Acting Director
james.downe@wcpp.org.uk
029 2087 5298

Jude Langdon
Centre Manager
jude.langdon@wcpp.org.uk
029 2087 5345

Liz Clutton
Communications Officer
liz.clutton@wcpp.org.uk
07736 056669

Ash Walker
Administration Officer
asha.walker@wcpp.org.uk
029 2087 5345

Dan Bristow
Director of Policy and Practice
dan.bristow@wcpp.org.uk

Helen Tilley
Environment & Net Zero Lead
helen.tilley@wcpp.org.uk

Amanda Hill-Dixon
Inequalities Lead
amanda.hill-dixon@wcpp.org.uk

Hannah Durrant
Community Wellbeing Lead
hannah.durrant@wcpp.org.uk

Wales Centre for Public Policy at 10

Prof Steve Martin
WCPP Director
steve.martin@
wcpp.org.uk



The Wales Centre for Public Policy has a unique role.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy provides public service leaders and policy makers with authoritative, independent evidence that helps them tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges facing Wales.

Over the last ten years, we have developed trusted relationships with public services and the Welsh Government and because we understand the Welsh context, we can help identify policy responses and practical solutions that will work here.



WCPP has the academic robustness, the independence but also the Welsh identity which really adds to the confidence of working with the Centre. It is so important to have evidence which understands the Welsh context.

Senior Welsh Government Official

The Centre has grown from a small three-person team in 2013 to more than twenty five dedicated staff who bring together experience from a range of backgrounds including academia, national and local government, public bodies, think tanks, consultancies and the voluntary sector.

We have established a global network of leading researchers and policy experts and conducted more than 200 projects that have informed policies from homelessness to childcare, race equality to migration policy, tackling rural poverty to improving outcomes for children looked after, as well as informing policy on combatting loneliness, increasing educational attainment, Covid-recovery, workforce planning, improving air quality, decarbonising the economy, transport planning, bus services, and the skills Wales needs for the jobs of the future.

The outputs from these projects and all of our other work is freely available on our website.



This award-winning approach to mobilising evidence that we have pioneered in Wales has attracted national and international interest and recognition. Drawing on our experience, we have shared our learning about evidence-informed policy making and implementation in peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations, blogs and think pieces. And, we work in partnership with a wide range of other organisations and networks – in Wales and across the UK.

As members of the What Works Network, we provide a strong link between What Works Centres and policy makers in Wales. We helped establish the International Public Policy Observatory, are active participants in the Universities Policy Engagement Network and partners in the PolicyWISE initiative, which promotes learning between policy makers in all four governments in the UK and in Ireland.

None of this would have been possible without the vision and commitment shown by our funders – the Economic and Social Research Council, Welsh Government and Cardiff University – and we thank all three for their support over the last ten years.

We're also immensely grateful to the many hundreds of policy makers and public service leaders who have chosen to work with us – for the trust they have invested in us and their openness to examining the evidence to identify new, and sometimes uniquely Welsh, approaches to some long-standing and complex challenges.

The quality of our work rests on the knowledge brought by the extensive network of researchers and policy experts who have collaborated with us, as well, of course, as the excellence and hard work of the Centre's own staff (past and present).

We also acknowledge with gratitude the support of our Advisory Group which has played an important role in the Centre's success.



As the Centre turns ten, we celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of the last decade and look forward to playing our part in helping national and local government navigate the many challenges that lie ahead. For the next 18 months, we will be focusing in particular on three priorities – environment and net zero, tackling inequalities, and community wellbeing – which we know are important to our funders and vital to the wellbeing of current and future generations in Wales.

This short booklet outlines how we are approaching these issues and offers some examples of how the evidence we generate has been, and is being, used.

We are keen to work with you to harness independent evidence in ways that can benefit the communities that you serve.

So, as well as joining us in celebrating our tenth birthday, please do keep in touch and let us know how we can best support you and your colleagues now and in the future.

info@wcpp.org.uk | www.wcpp.org.uk

Your priorities are our priorities

Dan Bristow
WCPP Director of
Policy and Practice
dan.bristow@
wcpp.org.uk



Our demand-led approach starts by working with local and national policy makers and public sector leaders in Wales to understand the challenges that you are facing.

This means that our work reflects your needs and we can provide evidence at a time and in a format that will be most useful to you.

To decide where to focus our efforts, we have analysed the current wellbeing assessments and plans produced by Public Service Boards, conducted conversations with public service leaders across Wales, and undertaken a survey of PSB coordinators.

This process highlighted three clear priorities where we can add most value and which will, therefore, be our main focus for at least the next 18 months.

Tackling Inequalities

The cost-of-living crisis is at the front of everyone's minds, and, like the Covid-19 pandemic, is hitting hardest those households and communities in which poverty and inequalities have been a long-standing issue.

Environment and Net Zero

The climate and nature emergencies are no longer a future prospect; we are seeing their impacts now. Tackling them is a huge strategic and operational challenge that carries a real risk that the costs will fall disproportionately on communities that are already struggling most.

Community Wellbeing

Community involvement and engagement is beneficial to those who participate, and can have a transformative impact on the most vulnerable and those who feel marginalised. But the impact can reach beyond individuals – and to address many of the most challenging issues facing Wales we need active and engaged communities.

Our work will focus on helping policy makers and public service leaders to respond to these challenges by enabling them to understand the issues and identify what works in tackling them.





How we work

Collaboration is central to our work.

We work with our public and third sector partners to design and deliver projects that can help to ensure that decisions about policies, strategies and service delivery are based on the best available international evidence applied in ways that are tailored to the needs, constraints and opportunities of the specific contexts you are working in.

We work with those who have responsibility for making policy and shaping practice – nationally and locally – to support evidence-informed decisions.

Evidence rarely speaks for itself. In our experience, simply summarising what the research says is not enough. Our work is more effective when we take account of the full range of perspectives. That is why we collaborate with experts from around the world to enable **a dialogue between the issues in Wales and the international evidence and expertise.**

This process enables us to produce outputs that combine state-of-the-art research with local knowledge and intelligence.

How we can help

Our work with public services is funded by Economic and Social Research Council. Some of the ways we help include:

- We specialise in helping leaders in the public sector to **access reliable, relevant and timely evidence.**
- Our team conducts **rapid evidence reviews** and provides concise policy briefings in accessible formats designed for busy policy makers and public service leaders.
- We identify and **work with leading researchers** and policy experts in the UK and internationally, and have a budget to pay for their work with us.
- We **convene conversations** between policy makers, practitioners, researchers and those with lived experience to identify proven ways to tackle pressing policy challenges facing Wales.
- As members of the **What Works Network** and the **International Public Policy Observatory**, we can connect you to sources of evidence and advice in these networks.

Tackling Inequalities

Amanda Hill-Dixon
Senior Research Fellow
amanda.hill-dixon@
wcpp.org.uk



The challenge

Despite sustained efforts to tackle inequalities at local and national levels, **Wales remains one of the poorest parts of the UK**. We have had the highest poverty rate of all UK nations for over a decade: around 31% of children in Wales live in relative income poverty, and 45% of Welsh households never have enough money for anything other than the basics.

The **coronavirus pandemic amplified existing inequalities**, and the **cost-of-living crisis is pushing more households into poverty and destitution**.

Poverty **intersects with other structural inequalities** in ways that heighten the disadvantages faced by particular groups, including Black, Asian and minority ethnic people, disabled people, and LGBTQ+ people, among others. And the adverse impacts of inequalities affect **multiple dimensions of people's lives, including health and wellbeing, education and employment**.

Evidence shows that inequalities are not only bad for those individuals who are themselves socially or financially excluded, but also for society and the economy as a whole, and that efforts to **tackle environmental challenges or improve community wellbeing are unlikely to be successful unless we also tackle the underlying causes of inequalities**.

How we can help

Since the establishment of the Centre a decade ago, we have been working with local governments, public services and the Welsh Government to provide **independent, authoritative evidence and expertise** that helps identify effective policy responses and practical solutions to inequalities in Wales.

Our past work includes:

- **Understanding and tackling poverty in Wales**

We have conducted a range of studies focused on what national and local government can do to reduce indebtedness and support vulnerable debtors; break the cycle of worklessness and low paid, insecure jobs; and tackle rural poverty.

- **Promoting race and ethnic equality**

We have contributed evidence reviews that informed the Welsh Government's Race Equality Action plan and have analysed ways to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in local government public appointments.

- **Promoting gender equality**

We have brought together and presented to local and national government a wide range of international evidence and expertise on gender budgeting and other ways to place gender equality at the heart of policy making.

- **Tackling homelessness**

We have worked with leading international experts to identify ways to prevent youth

homelessness and improve provision for care leavers who are at particular risk of becoming homeless.

Our impact

Race equality

We conducted six evidence reviews that directly informed the Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan. These analysed 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 'Implementing the Race Equality Action Plan' set out practical steps needed to achieve its ambitions.



This work was “crucial to the development of the Race Equality Action Plan”.

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip



Poverty and social exclusion

The Welsh Government commissioned us to conduct a review of international poverty and social exclusion strategies, programmes and interventions to inform their refreshed Child Poverty Strategy. Working with colleagues at the New Policy Institute, LSE's Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, and expert advisors based in Wales, we produced a total of 18 reports that looked at a variety of issues related to poverty and social exclusion including:

- A review of international poverty and social exclusion strategies, concluding with a checklist of what makes an effective anti-poverty strategy.
- Reviews of international evidence on the effectiveness of policies and programmes that aim to tackle poverty and social exclusion.
- Two reports on poverty and social exclusion in Wales, drawing on quantitative data on trends, as well as qualitative lived experience evidence.
- A report outlining the results from four workshops that we conducted across Wales involved people with direct lived experience of poverty and social exclusion.
- An overview report that brings together the significant amount of evidence produced for the project to frame and inform 'A Way Forwards' for tackling poverty in Wales.



Where next?

Tackling poverty stigma

Lived experience evidence repeatedly highlights the mental health dimension of poverty, and in particular the role of stigma in linking poverty and poor mental health. Poverty stigma is important because it is a form of suffering in its own right, and because it affects people's ability or willingness to seek or accept support and to participate in their communities.

WCPP, the International Public Policy Observatory and the Co-production Lab Wales are working together with local policy makers and practitioners, academics and lived experience experts to explore how evidence can support public services to better understand:

- What is poverty stigma and how does it affect people and communities?
- How and where is it generated?
- What works to address it?

Work with us

For more information and to discuss how we can help support your team, please contact **Amanda Hill-Dixon**: amanda.hill-dixon@wcpp.org.uk

Environment and Net Zero

Dr Helen Tilley
Senior Research Fellow
helen.tilley@
wcpp.org.uk



The challenge

It is vital that we achieve a **just transition to net zero** and invest in the skills and technologies that enables Wales to benefit from **new jobs in cleaner, greener industries**.

Our work on decarbonisation and a just transition has directly supported Welsh Government plans to achieve this including the 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales: Net Zero Skill Action Plan'.

The evidence shows that achieving net zero will require government and public services to join together in the search for workable solutions. They will need to **set clear priorities** and confront some difficult **trade-offs**. This in turn calls for reliable evidence about which approaches will work to achieve net zero and how the need to **tackle climate change intersects with other policy challenges**.



How we can help

We are **supporting policy makers at national and local level** to rise to the challenge by providing them with **independent, authoritative evidence and expertise** that can help identify effective policy responses and practical solutions.

Our recent and ongoing work includes:

- **International approaches to a just transition**

We conducted an evidence review of international approaches to a just transition to support a Welsh Government call for evidence on what is meant by a 'just transition' and how to achieve it in Wales.

- **Towards a just transition in Wales**

We produced an evidence review and framework for action that identifies practical steps Wales can take and highlights the importance of listening and responding to communities.

- **Net zero skills**

The Welsh Government commissioned us to support its Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales: Net Zero Skill Action Plan. We produced an overview of the evidence on future skills needs in emissions sectors and provided a series of sector-by-sector recommendations.

- **Skills for a just transition**

We looked at previous transformations to identify the skills that the workforce in Wales will need as we decarbonise, and how institutions responsible for developing



skills can support workers in industries most affected by the move to net zero.

- **Decarbonisation and the Welsh economy**

We considered pathways to decarbonising energy networks, land use, and economic growth and convened a major conference with policy makers, practitioners, researchers and commentators.

- **Housing stock energy modelling: towards a model for Wales**

Our report on carbon modelling in the housing sector looked at the tools and models that can be used to analyse trends and policy options for decarbonising the housing and construction sector.

- **Net zero 2035**

Chaired by Jane Davidson, the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group is exploring potential pathways to net zero by 2035 in the food, energy, transport, housing, and education and skills sectors. We are hosting the secretariat and providing research and analysis.

Our impact

Just transitions

In 2021, we produced an evidence review and framework for action which identified steps Wales could take using the Well-being of Future Generations Act to implement a just transition and highlighted the importance of listening and responding to the views of the public and stakeholder organisations in making the transition happen. This influenced the Welsh Government's approach to implementing a just transition as outlined in *Net Zero Wales: Carbon Budget 2* in 2021. A senior Welsh Government senior official reported that their 'approach to testing the use of existing governance provided by the Well-being for Future Generations Act for just transitions was influenced by WCPP's previous work in this area.'

Net zero skills

In 2022, we undertook research on *Skills for a Just Transition* that explored lessons from previous structural transitions and how investment in skills institutions can support a

transition to a decarbonised economy. This led to a request to support the development of *Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales: Net Zero Skill Action Plan* with a rapid evidence review of future skills needs for the emissions sectors which fed into the recommendations in the Plan.

Our report highlighted the need for better market intelligence in order to improve understanding of skills needs. We also recommended embedding net zero and carbon literacy skills in agriculture qualifications and developing a clearer understanding of new technologies and routes to decarbonisation.

Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group

We have been commissioned by Ministers to provide evidence to support the work of the Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group and to host its secretariat. The Challenge Group, chaired by former minister Jane Davidson, started its work in January 2023 and will run until summer 2024. Its work will cover five challenge areas - food, energy, transport, housing, and education and skills.



We warmly welcome the independent evidence provided by the Wales Centre for Public Policy to help us develop evidence-based action. Our challenge as a Group, which has the wellbeing of future generations at its heart, is to identify pathways to accelerate progress to net zero in Wales by 2035 while ensuring a nature-positive and just transition that safeguards communities. It is essential that these pathways are rooted in the best available evidence, and WCPP's independent work to support the group is therefore a vital contribution.'

Jane Davidson, Chair, Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group



Work with us

For more information and to discuss how we can help support your team, please contact **Dr Helen Tilley: helen.tilley@wcpp.org.uk**

Community Wellbeing

Dr Hannah Durrant
Senior Research Fellow
hannah.durrant@wcpp.org.uk



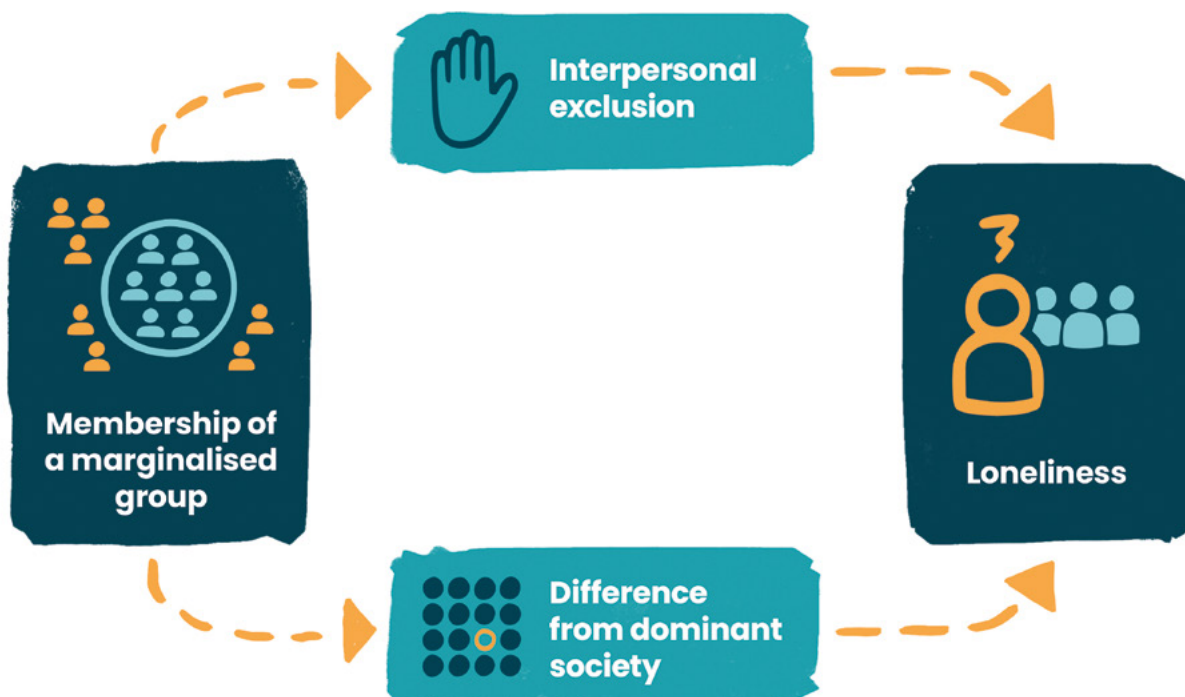
The challenge

Enhancing wellbeing by promoting and supporting connected communities is a priority for Welsh Government and public services across Wales.

The Covid-19 pandemic presented significant challenges for community connection; exacerbating **inequalities in loneliness, isolation and poor mental health** with associated public health and wellbeing implications. However, it also showed the **agility and innovation of communities** to tackle social exclusion, mitigate poverty, enhance places, and improve wellbeing.

Public bodies are under severe pressure to meet the social, economic and environment wellbeing needs of people across Wales with increasingly limited resources. The lesson from the pandemic is they do not need to act alone. The challenge is **how community activity can be supported, sustained and enhanced for the benefit of all**. This requires reliable evidence on how to improve wellbeing through **collaborative community action** and the effective mobilisation of both physical and digital community infrastructure and resources.

Interpersonal exclusion and difference explain inequalities in loneliness



How we can help

We are **supporting local governments, public and community services and the Welsh Government**, by providing them with **independent, authoritative evidence and expertise** that can help identify effective policy responses and practical solutions.

Our recent and ongoing work includes:

- **Loneliness inequalities**

We conducted an intersectional analysis entitled 'Who is lonely in Wales' using National Survey for Wales data, and produced a major international evidence review on loneliness inequality that identifies the interpersonal and structural causes of loneliness disparities.

- **The role of communities in tackling loneliness and enhancing wellbeing**

We conducted research on the role of communities in mitigating loneliness, and designed a workshop for Public Service Boards to advise on what they can do to support community wellbeing.

- **Volunteering and Wellbeing**

We worked with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to examine the contribution of volunteering to individual and community wellbeing during the pandemic. This research contributed to the Third Sector Partnership Council strategy for a wellbeing-led recovery in Wales.

- **Multisectoral collaboration to support community action and wellbeing**

We are working with the Resourceful Communities Partnership in Wales to produce an evidence review on the role of multisectoral collaboration in supporting community action and wellbeing.

- **The role of technology in tackling loneliness and enhancing wellbeing**

We produced a review on what works in loneliness interventions that make use

of technology and have examined the benefits and challenges for community organisations of blended (online and in-person) approaches to service provision. We were asked by the Welsh Government to examine the use of technology to help build social connections and tackle loneliness among older adults during the pandemic.

Our impact

The role of communities in enhancing wellbeing

To support the Welsh Government's expert group on tackling loneliness and isolation, we examined the role of community-led action to enhance social participation, and the significance of partnership working across local government and community organisations to sustain and enhance this provision. The research informed the design of the Welsh Government's Loneliness and Social Isolation Fund.

We held a major two-day conference on tackling loneliness in Wales. Participants from local and national government, public services, and the third sector, co-produced a series of actionable recommendations and shared how they would apply what they learned in their policy and practice.

Our current work with the Resourceful Communities Partnership will support practical actions that can be taken in local areas to build effective partnerships.



Volunteering and wellbeing

Our review of evidence on the relationship between volunteering and individual and community wellbeing was conducted in partnership with the WCVA and WLGA, and funded by the Welsh Government's Coronavirus Recovery Grant for Volunteering. The recommendations supported the work of the Third Sector Partnership Council's Covid recovery sub-group, to inform the Welsh Government's strategy for the voluntary sector and volunteering.



This research shows that volunteering provides a real sense of purpose to individuals and communities alike, and gives those participating an opportunity to build a positive legacy within their community.

Councillor Andrew Morgan, WLGA Leader

Older adults use of technology to tackle loneliness

We were commissioned by the Welsh Government to examine the uses of technology to tackle loneliness among older adults during the pandemic. The research highlights significant differences in digital abilities and technology weariness. Given the health and wellbeing implication of loneliness, there is a need for support to enable older adults to confidently access technology as one way of developing and sustaining social connection.



This research will feed into future policy making on issues affecting older people in Wales.

Welsh Government officials Emma Spear (Deputy Director of Health and Social Care) and Penny Hall (Policy Lead)



Work with us

For more information and to discuss how we can help support your team, please contact **Dr Hannah Durrant: hannah.durrant@wcpp.org.uk**