



Llunio Lleuedd
ar gyfer Llesiant yng Nghymru
Shaping Places
for Well-being in Wales

Proposal for establishing a Shaping Places for Well- being in Wales programme

Summary of proposal to the Health
Foundation for an award under the
Shaping Places programmes

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Plain English Summary of Proposal

We propose establishing a national systems support to help Public Services Boards (PSB) in Wales apply systems approaches to influencing wider determinants of health (WDoH), to learn from their collective experiences and to share learning.

PSBs are where public bodies work together and with others at a local level to influence WDoH. PSBs we engaged with wish to apply systems approaches; with some on this journey already. They want to learn from each other's experience. Despite the theoretical basis for systems approaches, real-world learning from applying these approaches to WDoH is lacking.

We will support PSBs by developing Applied Systems Learning Cohorts, involving leaders and technical officers, who will apply a flexible systems framework across three themes relating to WDoH. Applied learning agreements with PSB will support translation into practice.

Participants will capture, reflect on, and share their learning. Using mixed methods approaches we will explore the influence of the programme on participants, PSB and outcomes.

With this support, we hope PSB can be more effective in influencing WDoH, and ultimately health and health equity. If successful, the approach could have lasting effects on ways of working, evident in the next round of well-being assessments and plans. The learning will add to our understanding of the benefits and challenges of applied systems approaches in a WDoH context.

The resource will be hosted by Public Health Wales, supported by procured expertise. This bid is supported by the seven Health Board Executive Directors of Public Health.

1. What is our idea and what do we hope to achieve?

We want to support Public Services Boards (PSB) in Wales to apply theory and evidence informed systems approaches to influencing WDoH, learn from this application and share their learning.

The WDoH are the economic, social and environmental factors that form the building blocks for good health and well-being. Differences in these factors drive health inequalities. WDoH have a stark legacy in Wales, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of living crisis.

There are 13 PSB in Wales. Executive Directors of Public Health and their teams in health boards work with local authorities and others through PSB.

We propose establishing national systems support for PSB, hosted by Public Health Wales, with employed staff and commissioned systems expertise.

Our theory of change is that this system support facilitates development of Applied System Learning Cohorts (ASLCs); who apply and learn systems tools and methods to three themes relevant to WDoH. Working with their local PSB partnerships they apply and integrate these approaches into PSB activities to maximise the impact of PSB action on determinants related to that theme.

The funded system support would:

- Develop resources for PSB
- Work with PSB to agree three themes, informed by commonality across Well-being Plans objectives
- Establish an ASLC for each theme, involving strategic PSB members, policy officers and technical staff
- Work with the Future Generations Office and Welsh Government to add value to existing PSB support
- Convene regular ASLC meetings and annual cross-theme learning events, applying principles of collaboration and knowledge generated through action and reflexive practice
- Support flexible application of a system framework using the experience of the ASLCs to work through challenges, including:
 - Mapping the system
 - Exploring the system, gap mapping and network building
 - Developing a theory of change
 - Reviewing learning
 - Local application and integration with PSB activities throughout
- Support participants to capture, reflect on, apply and share their learning in their PSB and beyond
- Develop a legacy plan and resources for embedding systems thinking and practice in PSB
- Share programme learning across Wales and UK nations

By the end of the programme we hope to see evidence of positive change in:

- the application of systems approaches to WDoH areas aligned to PSB Well-being Plans
- knowledge, skills and confidence in using systems approaches in PSB
- use of system behaviours by PSB, complementing WCFG Act's five ways of working

We hope that after the programme we would see:

- An established community of interest for PSB on systems approaches
- System approaches embedded in PSB ways of working and reflected in 2028-2032 Well-being Assessments and Plans

2. What is the need we will be addressing?

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) (WCFG Act) established PSB to improve economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area, contributing to seven well-being goals, including a healthier and fairer Wales.

PSB have undertaken local well-being assessments to inform Well-being Plans; these will determine partnership activity for the next five years. PSB must demonstrate five ways of working (collaboration / integration / involvement / long-term / prevention) outlined in the WCFG Act.

Supported by a design phase Health Foundation award, we have worked with PSB, Welsh Government and others across Wales to shape this programme. We have also reviewed case studies and evidence on the application of systems approaches demonstrating that engaged leadership, time to build trusted relationships and a clear narrative on systems approaches will be essential.

Extensive engagement has demonstrated:

- An appetite for increasing understanding of complex adaptive systems and approaches to influence WDoH in delivery of Well-being Plans
- Aspects of systems approaches are already underway across Wales (e.g. whole system approach to obesity); we can build on these
- A strong appetite for sharing learning across PSB in Wales
- A desire for flexibility to meet the needs of different PSB depending on their ways of working and Well-being Plan objectives
- A desire for PSB members and support team representatives from different PSB to come together to develop system thinking capability, share experiences of applying methods and work on common challenges

A review of draft Well-being Plans include many areas of WDoH for action; however, little reference to systems approaches. Research suggests PSB need to

enhance dialogue, create horizontal decision making and shared power¹. Systems approaches can support PSB members to see their part in the system, the interrelationship between goals of their organisation and their partners', and to collaborate for lasting change.

3. How will the programme be governed?

The programme will be hosted by the WDoH Unit of Public Health Wales, who will be responsible for the successful delivery and monitoring of activities. The unit is accountable to the Public Health Wales Board through usual mechanisms, including the integrated performance mechanisms covering work delivery, financial and corporate responsibilities.

A Programme Advisory Board will be established to guide the work and inform the decisions of the programme delivery lead and team. This board will include systems expertise and representatives from across the PSB system in Wales, including the Future Generations Office and Welsh Government.

The programme will report its progress to the all-Wales Public Health Directors Leadership Group, who are the sponsors of this group within Wales, on a six-monthly basis. It will also report to the Health Foundation, as funders of the work, through agreed mechanisms.

The ASLCs are established to support delivery of the business PSB through applied systems approaches. Those involved in the ASLCs will be accountable to their PSB via the normal local accountability mechanisms in place.

Determining the themes for the ASLC will be informed by priorities of Well-being plans across Wales, which have been established through local governance arrangements.

Members of the ASLC and their PSB chair will be asked to sign applied learning agreements. This will clarify expectations on both those participating in the ASLCs, the PSB and the delivery team. It is intended to ensure that learning translates into practice for the PSB, that it is reflected on, captured and shared.

4. How will we know success?

Our theory of change describes inputs, activities, outputs and anticipated impacts. This is supported by a learning and evaluation framework with indicators. These were developed through workshops with PSB members and officers, Welsh Government, Future Generations Commissioner's Office, and public health teams. They were validated and developed further by the Design Phase Project Oversight Group.

¹ Woodcock, E. (2022). *Cross-sector collaboration for Wales' national well-being*. PhD thesis. Bangor University.

Evaluation methods will be developed with support of the contracted systems expertise during the initial phase. The delivery team will support collection of qualitative and quantitative data. The aim of the evaluation is likely to be:

- To understand whether the Shaping Places programme has been successful in supporting the application of complex systems approaches at a local level to influence the WDoH.

This will use a mixed methods approach, triangulating indicator data, document analysis, survey data, a checklist of system behaviours and semi-structured interviews/focus groups. Evaluation questions are likely to include:

1. How programme participants feel that exploring systems approaches within their ASLCs have influenced their mind-set and working practices, and those of their PSB.
2. Is the application of complex systems approaches resulting from the Shaping Places programme, at local level likely to contribute to intended, emergent and unintended outcomes (i.e. WDoH)
3. What key factors (internal and external e.g. barriers, context) influence implementation of complex systems approaches resulting from the Shaping Places programme, at a local level

Within available resources, the focus will be learning from participants during the process, including through reflective logs, surveys and learning identified with ASLCs themselves.

If resources allow, then further data would be collected and this could inform Ripple Effects Mapping workshops with a sample of PSB. These would add detail of causes behind outcomes and map broader impacts, support understanding of the application of systems approaches to influence WDoH.

5. What are the proposed programme phases?

Following initial recruitment of programme staff and expert consultants, the programme will have three phases:

a) Set-up (6-months)

A Programme Advisory Board and Delivery Group will be established. The Delivery Group will use agile methodology to develop, monitor and adapt programme activities and outputs to ensure the programme meets the needs of PSB and their support teams and continues to add value throughout the programme lifecycle.

We will take stock of PSB developments since submitting the proposal and will bring together PSB representatives to agree the theme for each of the ASLC, review the proposed approach and agree working arrangements. Following agreeing themes, we will recruit to ASLCs, establish governance arrangements, and develop applied learning agreements with PSB chairs and ASLC members.

We will begin developing systems approach resources which can be used by ASLC members and other PSB members to embed systems thinking and practice in their work.

b) Delivery (2-years)

Each of the three ASLC will undertake a series of virtual and in-person sessions which will guide members through the system framework including providing 'hands on support' in applying systems methods and tools within the context of PSB. Time will also be allocated to share learning and allowing members to trouble shoot and problem solve. At the end of each year a cross-theme learning event will bring together the three ASLCs.

Data for learning and evaluation will be collected through this period.

c) Exit and sustaining learning (6-months)

A learning and evaluation report will be produced by Public Health Wales and we will engage with PSB system leaders to develop a legacy plan which identifies how PSB will take the learning from the programme forward. We will share the learning from the evaluation with stakeholders and the Health Foundation.