



Briefing paper

September 2016

Programme for Government 2016-2021: A briefing for the third sector in Wales

1. Introduction

On 20 September 2016 Welsh Government launched its five-year Programme for Government, [*Taking Wales Forward*](#). The document sets out how the Government intends to deliver more and better jobs through a stronger, fairer economy, improve and reform our public services, and build a united, connected and sustainable Wales. It makes specific commitments to:

- Supporting business
- Childcare
- Housing
- Prosperity for All
- Successful, sustainable, rural communities
- Environment]community safety and tackling extremism

This briefing paper looks at the commitments of most interest to the third sector in Wales.

2. Programme for Government: third sector interests

The Programme for Government sets out actions under five headings; key areas of interest to third sector organisations are highlighted below:

Prosperity and security

Tackling poverty and climate change and creating cohesive communities are the predominant themes of this section of the Programme for Government. There are plans to help people back into employment by piloting a '*Better Jobs Closer To Home*' project in areas of economic deprivation, while a Ministerial Taskforce will look to improve the

economic development of the South Wales Valleys. 100,000 'high quality, all-age' apprenticeships will be created.

Specific commitments are made to support sustainable rural communities through community led projects, promoting skills development, job creation and entrepreneurship, community energy, rural transport and broadband access.

Regarding climate change, there are plans to support the development of more renewable energy projects, including tidal lagoons and community energy schemes, and to invest in the skills required for the green economy.

There is also a commitment to continuing to enhance the economic, social and community benefits of procurement policy.

Healthy and active

Welsh Government have reiterated their commitment to the Social Services and Wellbeing Wales Act, by promising to ensure its implementation. Also, the sector should keep a look out for the Parliamentary Review into the future of health and social care in Wales, while the promise to move more care services from hospitals to communities is encouraging, but also potentially challenging for the sector in terms of resources. Given this, the commitment to retaining the Intermediate Care Fund is welcome.

All these promises feed into Welsh Government's commitment to work with communities to support the aging population to stay well into later life, for instance through the development of a new national dementia plan. Investment in integrated health and social services centres will presumably contribute towards this, and there are also plans to develop a strategy to address loneliness and isolation.

Mental health is a theme throughout this section, with pledges to prioritise treatment, support, prevention and de-escalation, while piloting a Social Prescription scheme and increasing access to talking therapies. Schools and employers will be encouraged to promote better mental and emotional health, all with the aim of ending mental health discrimination. A new Wales Wellbeing Bond will be introduced which will be aimed at improving mental health, but also physical health, and reducing sedentary lifestyles, poor nutrition and excessive alcohol consumption.

A new public health bill will be introduced, but no further details are offered on this.

Ambitious and learning

The primary cross-sectoral interests in this section would be those under the headings 'Best start for children' and 'looked after children', which commit to:

- Continuing the Flying Start intervention programme

- Extending the Pupil Deprivation grant
- Examining ways to ensure children in care enjoy the same life chances as other children
- Reducing unnecessary use of care, building on the work of the Integrated Family Support Service to support vulnerable children and families
- Continuing and developing positive parenting programmes

Elsewhere, Welsh Government also commit to investing £100 million in school standards and legislating for a new system of Additional Learning Needs support. Also highlighted is the piloting of Community Learning Centres, which offer childcare services, parenting support and community access built around the school day.

, There are also plans to prioritise schools' access to super-fast broadband, and to support a rollout of digital competence in schools.

There is a commitment to use Welsh Government's relationship with universities in Wales to 'help sell Wales to the world' post-Brexit.

United and connected

Importantly, this section makes direct reference to volunteering and the third sector and the Welsh Government promises to:

- Work with partners across all sectors to identify more opportunities for volunteering.
- Renew relationship with the third sector to generate maximum potential for volunteering.
- Work with lottery distributors to investigate the creation of a sustainability fund for voluntary organisations to grow and succeed.

There are also promises to take further action on the living wage, limit the use of zero hours contracts and tackle other rogue and bad practices and to continue to work with all protected groups to counter discrimination and ensure opportunities for all. There is also an aspiration to work towards one million people speaking the Welsh language by 2050, and encouragement for more people to use and speak Welsh in their every day lives.

Digital connectivity remains a theme, with access to Broadband for every property in Wales and an aim to help 95 per cent of people gain at least the basic digital skills needed for the 21st century by 2021.

There are also commitments to community assets, to work with communities to protect local facilities that bring people together, including pubs, libraries, museums, arts centres and leisure centres; introduce measures to prevent unnecessary closures and to help communities take ownership of community assets where appropriate.

This section also provides a steer on the Welsh Government's approach to reforming local government funding to make councils more sustainable and self-sufficient.

Shared challenges and opportunities

This section reiterates the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, promising to *'work across the public sector and with communities to deliver the Wales we want'*. Disappointingly the stated intention *'we will work across the public sector and with communities to deliver the Wales we want'* stops short of making explicit reference to the third sector's vital contribution to the Well-being goals and this is a matter that WCVA will seek to clarify.

3. Some reactions to the Programme for Government

The First Minister, Carwyn Jones, introduced the Programme For Government to the Senedd on Tuesday 20 September. The programme introduces key pledges from Welsh Labour's 2016 manifesto, and incorporates agreements reached with the Welsh Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru following the election in May 2016. He asserted that Welsh Government would develop the Programme's commitments according to the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. Below are some responses to the Programme, from politicians and the third sector.

- **Andrew RT Davies, Welsh Conservatives:** *'While it's difficult to disagree with many of the commitments outlined in the programme for government, it does highlight the many areas in which the Labour Party has let down Wales since the dawn of devolution in 1999'*

"As usual we are left with little by way of detail, and Carwyn Jones' claim that Wales is punching above its weight is delusional.'
- **Rhun Ap Iorwerth, Plaid Cymru:** *'The gulf between Labour's Programme for Government and Plaid Cymru's Programme for Opposition in terms of substance, scope and ambition could hardly be greater. It should come as no surprise that a lacklustre manifesto has led to a lacklustre programme for government.'*
- **Sophie Howe, Future Generations Commissioner:** *'I am encouraged the Welsh Government recognises the need for new ways of working to make the most of its contribution to improving the wellbeing of people - today and in the longer term.'*

More [here](#).

- **Steve Clarke, Welsh Tenants Association:** *'While we welcome the confirmation of 20,000 homes, with at least 14,000 being affordable, we do need to reconsider what is affordable for those on low incomes and in receipt of housing benefit/credit. To be truly affordable we will need a bigger social housing grant pot with specific rental target in mind with the majority falling within the scope of the social rent policy.'*

More [here](#).

- **Stuart Ropke, Community Housing Cymru:** *'We now need to ensure that the Welsh Government matches its ambitions with funding, and creates a policy environment to support delivery, including continuing to provide a fair rent settlement and in the event of reclassification, ensuring that Housing Associations return to the private sector.'*

More [here](#).

- **The Older People's Commissioner for Wales:** *'I particularly welcome the commitments to make Wales a dementia-friendly country, to improve opportunities for older people to remain in or regain employment, to address loneliness and isolation, and to tackle domestic abuse.'*

More [here](#).