

Describe the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and consider how it might aspire to improve the social and cultural well-being of Wales

Wellbeing is not spoken about very often when in a social situation, yet it is a crucial part of everyday life. There are certain needs that must be achieved in order to have a good wellbeing. Maslow (1943) created the “hierarchy of needs”. He stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs, and that some are more important than others. The most basic need is physical survival, and this is the first thing that motivates behaviour. After this is achieved, the next level up in the hierarchy is what motivates us. Psychological needs are present on Maslow’s original hierarchy of needs, these needs for example are food, sleep, shelter, warmth etc. If these needs are not met, the body will not function, and therefore Maslow considered psychological needs the most important as the needs that follow become secondary. The needs that follow are, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation. With Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it allowed others to create their own ideas of wellbeing.

The Beveridge Report in 1942 set the outline of welfare in the UK. The report, written by Sir William Beveridge, provided a summary of principles necessary to abolish poverty and “want” in Britain. It led to the establishment of social security and the National Health service after the war. It is said that the Beveridge Report is still the foundations of welfare in Britain. Therefore, without the Beveridge Report it may be possible that the welfare and wellbeing of Britain may not be as successful. In Wales, The Well Being of Future Generations Act (2015), has outlined the ways in which society must change in order to promote and achieve better wellbeing.

The Well Being of Future Generations Act was first introduced to Wales in 2015. The aim of the act is to improve and develop the wellbeing of the future generations of Wales. The act has varying factors which are all believed to move towards a brighter future for the population for Wales. The act requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact that their decisions have (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015). These long-term factors include, health inequalities, climate change, poverty and many others. The act has seven main well-being goals; These include, a prosperous Wales, a resilient Wales, a more equal Wales, a healthier Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, a Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh language, and finally a globally responsible Wales (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015),

These seven well-being goals are an important factor if the well-being of Wales is to be improved. The first goal “A Prosperous Wales”, mainly focuses on the innovative, productivity and low carbon use of society. This goal states that society should recognise the limits and the global environment and the use of resources. The usage of resources must be efficient and used proportionately. It also states that developed skills and a well-educated population will result in an economy which will provide wealth for the community and greater employment opportunities (The Well Being of Future

Generations Act,2015). This goal would inspire the young people of Wales to strive for more in life. It was recorded that in 2017, only 36.4 per cent of 16 to 18-year olds were in full time employment (The Welsh Government,2017). This number could increase, with better opportunities that may become available in the future. The expectation to meet this goal, is the suggestion that communities must maximise the opportunities for apprenticeships. Another suggestion was that it would be beneficial to consider opportunities to second staff within organisations to share knowledge and develop transferable skills (The Well Being of Future Generations Act,2015). By trying to achieve this, Wales could be able to develop and to rise its employment levels, with more younger people doing beneficial jobs.

Alongside the first goal of a more prosperous Wales, the second goal “A Resilient Wales”, encourages the maintenance and enhancement, of the biodiverse natural environment and healthy functioning ecosystems; which will then therefore support social, economic and ecological resilience. These changes will then mean that as a society, there is a capability to change. (The Well Being of Future Generations Act,2015). The suggested way in which this goal should be achieved is to plant native trees and shrubs, adopt a single use plastic policy, and to reduce the use of pesticides. To try and cut the use of plastic bags, Wales was the first country to use the “5p charge”. Yet recently, a new law was introduced, that states that bathroom products containing plastic microbeads will be banned from being put on sale (Wales Online, 2018). By doing this, the future of Wales will be eco-friendlier and therefore will result in a more sustainable and developed place to live.

A “More Equal Wales”, focuses on society enabling people to fulfil their protentional, no matter their background or their circumstances (The Future Generations Act, 2015). The way in which this goal should be met is to make public information accessible on all types of formats, for example using braille, jargon free texts and British sign language. This simple change will allow those who do have barriers of communication feel more empowered and less degraded in society. Another way of achieving this goal is to recruit those who are underrepresented in your workplace. This will allow those who are in the minority to achieve employment and allow them to reach potentials they never thought they could have. Therefore, this will show that the organisation will reflect the diversity in communities. This goal also links in with “A Healthier Wales”.

“A Healthier Wales” reflects on the physical and mental well-being of society (The Future Generations Act, 2015). It is suggested that taking stock of mental health in the workplace is an important factor to reach this goal. By doing this, organisations will be more understanding of the factors that affect their staff in the workplace, as well as identifying ways on how to support their workers. Jack Sargent AM (2018), who Is an advocate for ensuring that all workplaces are equipped to support mental health is encouraging public bodies to be more aware of mental health in the workplace. Another vital factor is that staff should be provided mental health and suicide awareness

training. It has been suggested that 49 per cent of “sick days” are down to stress, anxiety and depression (The Health and Safety Executive, nd). A survey recently done by Mind showed that one in five people felt that they could not tell their boss that they felt pressure or were stressed at work. It is important that staff recognise poor mental health and suicidal behaviour, for themselves and for others. This could mean raising concern for those who are in charge, arranging a visit to their GP or being able to suggest agencies or people who are able to help on a more professional scale (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015).

As most of these goals interlink with each other, “A Wales of Cohesive Communities” depicts an attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities across Wales (The Future Generations Act, 2015). A definition of community cohesion is the “ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict.” (Wrexham County Borough Council, no date.) Therefore, people in the communities will feel more comfortable and confident around each other, providing a better quality of life for those in the community. A suggestion is that communities should publicise opportunities to volunteer locally. This means that volunteers will be matched to local projects, which will therefore show positive community behaviour. This will then celebrate the contribution the volunteers make in the community. Another suggestion is to play a part in local communities coming together and build social networks with others. It is important for local bodies to create conditions where residents can come together to build friendships and social networks as these are vital in creating social capital and to build cohesive communities (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015). By doing these simple things, it will allow communities to thrive and may provide a safer environment for those who do not feel as if they belong in their community. It will also provide a community who will project culture, as this links in with the sixth goal “A Wales of Vibrant Culture”.

“A Wales of Vibrant Culture” reflects on a society that promotes culture, heritage, the Welsh language and encourages people to participate in the arts, sport and recreation (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015). It is well known that the culture and heritage of Wales is important to the population. This can be seen when supporting sport, music and other various factors. Yet the main point that stands out is the Welsh national anthem. It appears it brings the whole of Wales together when any sporting event is taking place, especially rugby. A suggestion to promote Wales and its culture and heritage is that communities should consider opportunities for the developing clubs that support sport. Being part of a club shows that it supports social bonds, and cultural well-being, as well as helping health. It is important that there are equal opportunities for everyone in the community, and therefore this will help bring people together. An example of this would be Disability Sport Wales, which gives opportunities for those who have a disability. This organisation runs clubs throughout Wales, providing workshops, learning resources and being able to take part in the sports that are provided. As well as sport, studies have suggested that old people find it more difficult to engage in cultural events. Age

Cymru therefore facilitates the annual Gwanwyn Festival which runs throughout May. This festival allows the older generations to participate in creative activities across Wales. By holding this festival, it allows older people to take part and to meet new people, which therefore allows them to create friendships and gives the opportunity to celebrate their creativity with each other.

The final goal is “A Globally Responsible Wales”, which states “a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being” (The Well Being of Future Generations Act, 2015). This goal is a summary of the other goals in this act. However, it does focus on everyone's carbon footprint, including organisations. The Welsh Government aim to reduce greenhouse gas by 2020 seems to be unachievable. However, by using carbon calculators, it will be easier to measure carbon footprints, and will allow everyone to try and reduce it. It suggests using LED lightbulbs and using electric vehicles to try and reduce the amount of carbon being used.

As well as these goals, The Future Generations Act has “five ways of working”. These five ways will ensure Wales of having the best future possible. The first way being “long-term”. This means recognising the importance of balancing short-term needs with the ability to meet the goals of safeguarding, whilst also trying to achieve the long-term goals that have been put forward (The Well Being of Future Generations, 2015). Another way to ensure the best future for Wales is by “integration”. This means that the public body's objectives for wellbeing may impact on other people's wellbeing goals. Therefore, public body's must be able to integrate their ideas into society and think about how and what they believe may help others (The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, 2015). This interlinks with the next way of working, “involvement”. This way of working states the importance that everybody has the same interest of achieving the wellbeing goals, and those people can reflect on the diversity of the area that the body serves. Therefore, acting in collaboration, which is the fourth way of working, could help the body achieve these goals. Finally, the fifth way of working is “prevention”. This means acting to prevent problems occurring or worsening, therefore this will help bodies meet their objectives (The Well Being of Future Generations, 2015).

The Art of the Possible is one of the Commissioners main programmes of work. It is a partnership that tries to promote and encourage the work that has happened in order to achieve wellbeing in the communities of Wales. It sets out a positive vision, of what a potential Wales may look like if public bodies respond to opportunities that the legislation provides in order to create better decisions for future generations.

The current wellbeing of Wales has changed over the years, due to the Well Being of Future Generations Act being introduced. Since the act was put in place, the Welsh Government has collected data that shows the improvements and declines in the goals that were expected to be reached. It was found by the Welsh Government (2018), that over the past two years that life expectancy has been increasing

over the long-term, however, there have been signs that this is slowing down and even stopping. The amount of time that has been spent in good health has risen, however everyone has different circumstances and inequalities which are affecting this. General health such as dental, has had good progress, however child obesity is still rife, and it has increased. With regards to a “more equal Wales”, the gender pay gap has continued to narrow and is now the lowest it has ever been in Wales. However, it is suspected that men are still favourable in good quality employment than women (Welsh Government,2018). More young people are in education, employment or training. Although, socio-economic disadvantages still play a part in low attainment levels in some areas. There has been an increase on greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2016, and air pollution continues to be a major health issue. The environment shows that overall biological diversity is declining, and there are no eco systems in Wales that can be said to have all the attributes for resilience. The figures also show that one in five people can now speak Welsh, and this has been stable for years, and there has been an increase for being able to speak a few words.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act provides good indicators as to how we should improve as a country in order to achieve the best possible future for Wales. Although it seems that some of the goals are now hard to reach, such as “a globally responsible Wales” there has been some improvements on others, such as a more “culturally vibrant” Wales. It is important that as a country, society tries to achieve these goals in order to achieve a better wellbeing, and a better future for the future generations to come.

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