



Assessment of Local Well-being 2022: Summary

Introduction

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires each Public Services Board in Wales to prepare and publish an Assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being in its area once every five years.

The second Assessment of Local Well-being has been produced by Swansea Public Services Board (PSB), a partnership of public agencies working together to improve local services. It aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the well-being of people and communities in Swansea, and to capture the main economic, social, environmental and cultural factors that shape people's lives.

The main purpose of the assessment is to provide the evidence base to inform a Well-being Plan for Swansea in 2023 which aims to make a real difference for citizens, including a set of local objectives and steps to address them. Further information about the Plan is at www.swansea.gov.uk/psb.

The 2022 Assessment is structured around the four 'dimensions' of well-being in the Act: social, economic, environmental and cultural. The assessment has been produced in two stages; firstly a draft document was produced and shared in a public consultation during February and March 2022, with the feedback carefully considered by a multi-agency group and agreed changes included in a revised document in May 2022. We have listed all of the consultation proposals received, along with how we responded to each, in a separate *Consultation Feedback Report*.

This assessment is based primarily on statistical and research-based evidence but the perspective of citizens and lived experience helps to provide a more balanced and meaningful document. To this end, a survey of the people of Swansea's views on well-being in autumn 2021 aimed to help us understand what matters most to individuals in Swansea and what this means for our economy, our society, our environment and our culture. Further information about this survey is included in the full assessment and annexes.

Before the four dimension-based chapters, the *Swansea Profile* provides a range of contextual information about Swansea and its people. It includes the latest statistics (as at May 2022) on Swansea's six identified Community Areas, population density, age structure, demographic change, projections, households and population characteristics. However, local information from the 2021 Census emerging later in 2022 may change parts of this picture.

The full Assessment of Local Well-being for Swansea 2022, and its annexes, is available at www.swansea.gov.uk/psbassessment2022. Whilst the full document contains considerable detail on multiple aspects or topics related to well-being in Swansea, this summary aims to bring out the key issues within each of the four main chapters.

Social well-being

Social well-being is perhaps the most complex and wide-ranging of the four dimensions of well-being, and not easy to define. In a straightforward sense, it can relate most directly to society and to people's lives in general.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant pressures on citizens, staff and services. These have impacted some groups more than others, including children and young people, older people, ethnic minority communities and people with disabilities.

The main issues highlighted in the chapter are:

The population in Swansea is changing, with a growing number of older adults. Demand for adult social care is increasing. There is a relatively small but significant cohort of children, young people and families who require statutory support from Social Services. There are significant difficulties related to the recruitment and retention of the social care workforce. There are a significant number of unpaid carers (including young carers).

There have been good outcomes for children in their early years through strengthened multi-agency working. Exemplar long standing arrangements in relation to the engagement of children and young people are now being extended to older people.

There are growing inequalities (differences in opportunities, rights, status and money) across different communities in Swansea which impacts on a range of areas such as access to education, type of employment, poverty, access to services and other resources, and a range of health outcomes.

Poverty and the cost of living crisis is a major issue, with increases in the demand for food banks, support with energy costs and debt advice, for example. Average income and earnings in Swansea are below national averages, with increases in living costs affecting those on the lowest incomes the most. Digital exclusion, through a lack of access to or affordability of devices and/or broadband, will impact access to services and the level of connection that communities in Swansea experience.

Demand for social housing remains high relative to supply (especially 1-bed units) with long waiting lists and increasing future need. Many people are unable to secure social housing and the number of people renting in the private sector has trebled in the last 30 years. Private rents are often much higher than rents for social housing, and conditions tend to be worse, including poor energy efficiency.

There is a significant increase in reports of Domestic Violence (especially during the pandemic). Drug and alcohol misuse are also increasing, and Swansea has the highest level of fatal drug poisonings in Wales.

The Evening and Night Time Economy is a significant contributor to the local economy and regeneration. There is good multi-agency and cross sector management locally, but concerns about perceptions of safety, violence and young women's safety in the city centre.

The growing divide and inequality between affluent communities and those who live in more deprived communities manifests itself in a number of ways, including increasing levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and community unrest. Levels of recorded Hate Crime are low, but incidents are increasing. There is a mixed picture in terms Community Cohesion; Swansea is a City of Sanctuary and committed to becoming a Human Rights City, but there is also some hostility to initiatives, pockets of extremism and recent local incidents.

The importance of good mental health and well-being was emphasised in the assessment in a number of areas. The pandemic led to significant levels of social isolation, loneliness and concern over financial worries which all impacted negatively on people's mental wellbeing. The importance of supporting families during pregnancy and early years with mental health support was highlighted. There was also recognition of the need to address factors leading to unhealthy weight, smoking and increased rates of breastfeeding. Connecting and engaging with people to support good mental health and well-being has been more challenging during the pandemic.

Economic well-being

To facilitate aspects of a resilient and sustainable economy for its residents, it is necessary to ensure Swansea has the right infrastructure in place; a strong, varied and growing business base that creates job opportunities; and people with the right skills to take advantage of these opportunities and ensure that households have sufficient income.

The main issues highlighted in the chapter are:

Gross Value Added (GVA) per head lags behind the UK and Swansea risks falling further behind the UK in terms of economic growth. Swansea has a strong business base and healthy level of new business formations but this is offset by poor business survival rates and underperforming growth in GVA.

Swansea has particularly poor representation in professional, scientific and technical sectors where jobs are more likely to be both better paid and higher skilled. Therefore, growth within this sector would provide benefit to the wider economy and help raise people's income and wellbeing.

Swansea's office space is dated and poor quality. Due to the low rents and property prices in Swansea there is a viability gap that prevents developments coming forward from the private sector.

Key workplaces need to be better connected to active and sustainable travel routes with timetabling to accommodate shift patterns. This will help unemployed people access job opportunities and increase well-being. More cross city routes are also needed.

The last five years have seen an increasing number of people with improved qualification levels, and Swansea now stands above the Welsh average. Evidence shows that lack of skills and experience prevents people from gaining higher skilled jobs and keeps people in low paid work or unemployment. It is therefore important to continue upskilling the local workforce to enable more people to be lifted out of poverty and improve their economic wellbeing.

Skill shortages exist in a number of industries including care, construction and hospitality. In addition digital skills for the fourth industrial revolution are needed and skills/training required for green infrastructure development and maintenance.

Educational attainment data is available up to 2019, but the effect of the pandemic and the new Curriculum for Wales means that there will be little data in future for primary schools, and changed data available for secondary schools. Pupils in Swansea schools are making good progress overall, with results comparing favourably to national figures. However, there are pupils who typically lag behind their peers, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

An area of concern not focussed on in the past is the increasing incidence of mental health issues amongst unemployed and economically inactive people. The pandemic has changed outlooks for many people and there remains a legacy of fear for many in interacting within the workplace. Without the necessary support in place, future economic prospects could be affected. There is also a gap in employability support for younger people and the over 55s.

Although statistics have suggested that the standard of living in Swansea has improved, Swansea is falling below Wales and UK averages. Growth in Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) per head in Swansea has not kept pace with Wales and the UK over the past 5 years (2014-19).

Much of the income and earnings data available for the assessment predates the pandemic and is also limited in terms of highlighting the differences between local areas in Swansea. There are pockets of deprivation across the county.

Environmental well-being

Climate change and loss of nature are the most significant issues for Swansea. The declaration of climate and nature emergencies along with national and local 'net zero' policy commitments, illustrate the multiple and urgent challenges facing Swansea's environment. Underpinning this are existing patterns of unsustainable consumption and production, which are degrading our natural environment and impacting human health and well-being. It is imperative that the transition to a net zero and regenerative economy is one that is both equitable and fair.

The main issues highlighted in the chapter are:

The resilience of Swansea's ecosystems is a mixed picture. Several pressures continue to threaten fragmented and isolated habitats and species. Habitats across the county need to be restored and connected to function effectively and provide well-being benefits.

Of the 23 water bodies in Swansea just 26% are at 'good ecological status', indicating low resilience. Reasons include combined sewage overflow, pollution from farming and industry, physical modifications, barriers to fish migration, invasive and non-native wildlife, and lack of access to, understanding of, and care for natural water environments.

Around 12,000 properties are at risk of flooding. Future number of properties, services and infrastructure at risk in Swansea is almost certain to grow as a result of climate change, and costs to maintain flood defences will also increase.

Land use change to increase tree cover, improve soil health, restore peatlands, and increase energy generation have been identified in decarbonisation policies, nature recovery, flood and drought mitigation, and supply of clean air and water. Responding to the climate and nature emergencies will likely lead to trade-offs between these and other competing land uses, e.g. food production, housing, development.

Green infrastructure (GI) has multiple benefits and enhances health and well-being; work should continue with developers to deliver healthy, distinctive, quality places, supported by a skilled and knowledgeable local economy to deliver and maintain GI.

For several years in Swansea NO₂ concentrations have decreased, whilst particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) have generally plateaued. Wildfire incidents and resultant poor air quality may increase due to climate change.

Car use remains the dominant mode of transport with low levels of cycling and public transport use. Supporting Active Travel will bring multiple environmental, community and health benefits. Improvements to the quality, accessibility and affordability of public transport may require major reform.

Swansea Council's overall recycling performance continues to meet Welsh Government's targets. Recycling and composting rates of household waste continue to rise, and total waste arisings and levels of residual waste in Swansea continue to fall.

The public sector in Swansea is leading on the decarbonisation agenda, the reduction in energy use and the switch to low-carbon and renewable technologies.

Lack of data and resources are compounding issues as better evidence and understanding of the condition of local natural resources and systems is needed to ensure optimal management decisions are made.

The national State of Our Natural Resources report tells us that urgent and wide-ranging transformation is needed in the food, energy and transport systems, requiring each of us to make changes to the way we live and how we plan our economic future - root causes must be addressed, not just the arising issues, and will require adequate resourcing and collaboration across public services and wider society.

Cultural well-being

Cultural well-being is seen as a holistic term covering a multitude of topics including tourism, sport and health, Welsh Language volunteering and community participation.

As a legacy of the current regeneration, social, economic, educational, and environmental priorities, and building upon the work completed for the City of Culture bid, a shared vision and new, refreshed cultural strategy for the city - within the regional boundaries - would help coordinate and direct a new action plan for culture.

The main issues highlighted in the chapter are:

Due to its profound effects on all facets of well-being, from the physical aspects in relation to sport and health to the social with access to learning in cultural venues, a programme of cultural activities that is accessible and affordable and available to an increasingly diverse customer base is essential. In addition, focusing activities on vulnerable groups supports equity throughout the city and prevents anyone from having a cultural deficiency depending on their circumstances. To make best efforts in ensuring that protected qualities are represented in the city's cultural offerings, diversity has been factored into project planning through a new Pledge to represent all our communities. The World Reimagined project is one current example.

The Coronavirus epidemic and the travel restrictions had a significant negative impact on the tourism industry. Although recovery from this has started and is being assisted by many organisations, it will take time to return to pre-pandemic levels. Visitors spend locally, that spend supports primary sectoral employment as well as in secondary sectors – the tourism sector therefore plays a significant role in Swansea's economy. Major events act as a significant driver for tourism. The challenge for sustainable tourism is three-pronged:

- Seasonality – extend the season and grow off peak tourism during the shoulder months
- Spend – encourage visitors to stay longer and spend more in Swansea
- Spread – encourage visitors to explore other parts of Swansea.

To lessen disparities in formal and informal physical activity participation, an ongoing programme to develop and enhance existing infrastructure is required. This will be facilitated through engaging in both preventative and intervention-based activities, as well as an early introduction to physical activity and capacity building with community partners. To increase and maintain participation as a key part of a healthy lifestyle, targeted programmes that focus on statistically under-represented groups will be a priority.

Swansea will need more readily accessible Welsh Language services as the number of Welsh Speakers grows. The public sector in Wales may be seen as being English-centric. Action on the part of public bodies is needed to solve this issue in a way that is consistent with the Welsh Language Standards, which will benefit both current users of Welsh and those who might be interested in learning the language in the future.

Swansea has a strong volunteer community that participates in a variety of organisations, from local sports clubs to Friends of Parks, although it is ageing. With a focus on community involvement, there is a need to increase the number of volunteers and consider encouraging young people to participate actively on committees. Volunteer positions provide locals an activity and goal while also enhancing Wales' social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being.