

## **Section 5 – A View of the Vale of Glamorgan – The Well-being Assessment**

In April 2022 the Public Services Board (PSB) published its second Well-being Assessment. [A View of the Vale of Glamorgan](#) builds on the foundations of the first assessment undertaken in 2017 and through the analysis of national, regional and local data, research and engagement findings; has further enhanced the PSB's evidence base and understanding of different areas, communities and people across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Assessment is a study of the complex interaction of economic, social, cultural and environmental experiences of well-being and how these experiences can influence the well-being of people in the Vale of Glamorgan.

A View of the Vale of Glamorgan includes four themed reports which together form the Well-being Assessment. The themed reports provide an in-depth review of each subject theme but, due to the nature of well-being, are interconnected. The four themed reports that make-up the Well-being Assessment are:

[Demographic Report](#) – A detailed analysis of past, current and future population changes and trends.

[Education and Economy Report](#) – An analysis of education and skills, employment and earnings, economic growth and housing.

[Health and Communities Report](#) – An analysis of key health indicators, healthy behaviours, social and cultural well-being.

[Environment and Transport Report](#) – An analysis of the climate and nature emergency, habitats, flooding, transport and energy.

These reports include analysis of well-being at the Vale of Glamorgan at county level, at a local level, through a division of the Vale of Glamorgan into three community areas; Barry, Eastern Vale and Western Vale and where possible, at a geographical level below these community areas.

The findings of the Well-being Assessment are many and varied, it was found that for many, well-being in the Vale of Glamorgan is good. Against a number of key indicators, and compared to other areas across Wales, people in the Vale of Glamorgan have good educational outcomes, earnings above the Welsh national average, live in good health, have lower experiences of crime and disorder, are satisfied with where they live and have access to high quality green and blue spaces. These experiences are not consistent, for some, their well-being continues to be affected by experiences of financial hardship, poorer health, crime and disorder and an unequal exposure to environmental risk. The Covid-19 pandemic placed further pressure on those already experiencing disadvantage and poor well-being, particularly affecting the economic, social, cultural and mental and physical well-being of residents. Some of the changes experienced through the pandemic will help to meet

challenge such as the need to reduce emissions; others have further exposed the unequal nature of the experiences of well-being in the county.

It is these findings (and the interconnected nature of experiences of well-being) that have led the PSB to identify the three Well-being Objectives and priority areas of focus which will help the PSB to respond to this evidence and address the need for action now, and develop a framework for action over the long-term.

## **Section 6 – The Critical Challenges of the Climate and Nature Emergencies and the Cost of Living Crisis**

The Well-being Assessment provides a strong evidence base to inform the work of the PSB and as a partnership we are continuing to strengthen that evidence base, bringing together data, analysis, research and the results of our engagement activity. However, there are two current and potentially long-term challenges that cut across all of our Objectives and are relevant to all of the work that we take forward as a PSB. These are the climate and nature emergencies and the cost of living crisis.

These impact on how we deliver our services and on the day to day lives of our communities. If we are to improve well-being across the Vale then we need to meet these challenges and understand the effect that they have on the lives of everyone living in the Vale today and how if we fail to meet these challenges they will define the lives of future generations.

### **Climate Change and our Natural Resources**

It is now accepted as unequivocal that human activity has warmed the earth's atmosphere, oceans and land. As a result, rapid changes can now be observed across the globe. Wales, and the Vale of Glamorgan is not excluded from these changes, in Wales there has been an average annual temperature increase of 0.9°C from mid-1970s to mid-2010s, similarly average mean rainfall has increased by 2% from mid-1970s to mid-2010s. It is predicted that many of these changes are now embedded in environmental systems and will lead to increased risks both to and from the natural environment. To not recognise and respond to these environmental changes would have serious implications for environmental and community well-being.

The [Environment and Transport Report](#) of the Well-being Assessment has outlined how these heightened risks are and will continue to impact on life in the Vale of Glamorgan. In response to the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale of Glamorgan engagement survey, undertaken to inform the Well-being Assessment, 86% of respondents answered that they are 'fairly' or 'very' concerned about climate change. 70% of respondents answered that they believed that climate change is already having an impact in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The second State of Natural Resources Report ([SoNaRR2020](#)) and its findings were central to the analysis presented in the Well-being Assessment. The key message of SoNaRR2020 is the need for change in the interaction between society and three environmental systems, Food, Energy and Transport. Addressing these systems will enable transformational change. Through these changes it may be possible to adapt, mitigate and reverse the climate and nature emergencies, to ensure a just transition to decarbonisation and improve the health and resilience of ecosystems, pre-empting and preventing disease and avoidable death caused by environmental hazards.

It is vital that we develop a better understanding of the key systems that drive unsustainable practices. The environmental systems, food systems and resource systems that influence environmental well-being often behave in ways that are complex and unpredictable. In areas like land management, waste management, biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, food security and decarbonisation, the cause and effect of arising issues are complex. To address these issues there is a need for system change and we need to explore together how we can influence these systems.

The need to decarbonise our economy and communities will have an impact on our services, workforce, communities, business, and industry in different ways. PSB partners are well placed to consider the best ways forward and how we communicate the decisions and the changes needed.

If we are to successfully respond to the nature emergency then we all need to consider how we safeguard and enhance our stocks of natural resources, how we improve the health of our eco systems and reduce exposure to environmental risks and how we promote a circular economy.

## **The Cost of Living Crisis**

Although the Well-being Assessment found that for many experiences of well-being in the Vale of Glamorgan are good, these experiences are not consistent. For some, their well-being continues to be affected by financial hardship, poorer health, crime and disorder and an unequal exposure to environmental risk. With the current cost of living crisis it is likely that even more people will begin to experience hardship and will see a deterioration in their quality of life.

There are established linkages between these experiences and people living in areas identified as more deprived. In the Vale of Glamorgan, three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are identified through the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 as being in the top-10% most deprived areas in Wales. A further seven LSOAs are included in the 10-20% most deprived areas in Wales. All ten of these LSOAs are located in Barry. Those living in more deprived areas are less likely to engage in healthy behaviours and are most likely to experience poorer health outcomes. Lower vaccination rates are observed in more deprived areas of the Vale of Glamorgan. Significant differences in healthy life expectancy are observed between our least and most deprived areas. More harmful levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) pollutant and a higher risk of flooding incidents are observed in more deprived areas.

This is not to say that all people living in these areas are experiencing poorer well-being and deprivation; similarly, we know that across the Vale of Glamorgan there are areas not identified as more deprived where people will be experiencing hardship and poor well-being.

The Covid-19 pandemic for many further exacerbated these experiences, placing significant pressures on those who were already struggling under the burden of poor well-being. The developing cost of living crisis is further highlighting the existence of societal inequalities. Heightened energy prices, growing inflation, rising transport and food costs are hitting poorer households hardest. Rising energy prices disproportionately hit poorer households, it is estimated that poorest households spend 11% of their total budget on gas and electricity, compared to 4% for the richest households. This impact is worsened by discrepancies in the energy price cap, with those households with pre-payment metres paying more for their energy than households without. There is also an interaction with household energy efficiency and energy prices, Wales has some of the oldest and least thermally efficient housing stock in the UK and Europe. For those living in such housing in the Vale, heating and maintaining a warm home may become increasingly hard. Similarly for households in more rural areas of the Vale, a reliance on oil-based heating systems which are not subject to the energy price cap have left these households exposed to oil-price fluctuations and substantial price rises. The impacts of the energy market on households are further compounded by inflationary pressures causing the prices of goods, and notably food costs to increase. These price increases squeeze wages and income related benefit support, particularly affecting

poorest households who have the least capacity within their budgets to mitigate these increases. There are concerns that as these pressures mount households may be forced into formal and informal debt and be pushed into fuel and food poverty, impacting physical and mental well-being.

While a number of government schemes have been introduced to ease the burden on households from the increases in energy prices, there is concern that growing pressures from increases in the costs of living could further embed inequalities in the Vale of Glamorgan, pushing some residents into new experiences of hardship, while trapping those who are experiencing deprivation and poorer well-being.