

# Using Evidence to Improve Policy

The Public Policy Institute  
for Wales one year on



Public Policy Institute for Wales  
Sefydliad Polisi Cyhoeddusi Gymru

# Foreword

We are delighted to present this overview of the contribution made by the Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) in what has proved to be a highly productive first year.

The PPIW's mission is to support Welsh Ministers to access world leading independent expert analysis and advice to assist them in delivering better outcomes for the people of Wales. The Institute is committed to providing robust evidence that can help inform the tough decisions which policy makers have to make. Its independence means it can offer challenge and fresh thinking and its extensive expert network means that it can highlight policies that work elsewhere which Wales can draw on and adapt.

We have been encouraged by the very high level of interest and encouragement for the Institute. We are especially grateful for the strong support of the First Minister and his colleagues, officials, our network of experts and the Economic and Social Research Council.

We are pleased that the PPIW has been able to encourage collaboration among the research intensive universities in Wales. It has already commissioned expertise from Swansea and Cardiff and senior staff from Aberystwyth, Bangor and the University of South Wales have all made valued contributions as members of the PPIW steering group.

We also want to thank our colleagues on the Board of Governors for their commitment to what is a new way of working in Wales which complements the activities of the civil service, universities, independent research organisations and think tanks.

The Institute is now firmly established and has a strong platform to build on. We have an ambitious programme of work planned in the coming months and we are looking forward to the PPIW playing an important role in the UK-wide What Works Network. All of this will help the Institute to continue to deliver to the highest standards and make a real difference in Wales.



**Professor Sir Adrian Webb**  
*Chair*



**Dr Ruth Hall CB**  
*Vice Chair*

# Our Funders

## The Welsh Government

When we committed ourselves in our 2011 manifesto (and subsequently in our Programme for Government) to establish a Public Policy Institute for Wales, we did so because we wanted expertise, challenge and fresh thinking to help us as a government to better identify priorities and create more robust policy.

When I had the pleasure of launching the Institute formally a year ago, I looked forward to seeing its work helping to shape Welsh Government policy so we can deliver for the people of Wales.

In its first year, the PPIW has already delivered on these aspirations. Working with an impressive network of independent experts, it has taken on 25 assignments for Ministers. It has provided verbal briefings, expert workshops and policy seminars, and published think pieces, rapid reviews and expert advice setting out the latest evidence on issues ranging from the location of our overseas offices to the development of transport models and the impact of indebtedness in Wales.

The Institute's work plan for the next few months, which I have recently agreed, will see a new tranche of projects commissioned by individual Ministers as well as analysis and advice on how to sustain high quality public services and tackle poverty, which are priorities for the government as a whole. This is building into a substantial body of work.

We are using this advice to inform our decisions, to focus our interventions, to target our policies. It is early days, but I've seen enough to be confident that this growing body of work will have a very real impact in the years to come.

I welcome the success that the Institute has had in attracting additional resources. Its role within the UK-wide network of What Works Centres complements its work for the Welsh Government, by bringing the best available evidence to bear on Welsh issues and by bringing Welsh priorities and experience to the attention of the wider research community.

The Public Policy Institute for Wales has already established itself as an important part of the policy 'landscape' here in Wales, and I look forward to its continuing success in the coming year.



**Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM**  
*First Minister for Wales*

## Economic and Social Research Council

As the UK's leading public funder of social science research, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is delighted to be involved in the work of the Public Policy Institute for Wales and would like to congratulate it on an impressive first year in terms of both the quality and quantity of material it has been able to produce with relatively limited resources.

The ESRC, of course, has a longstanding commitment to the use of high quality social science research to inform public policy and professional practice and we are currently a leading player in the 'what works' network. We take our UK wide role very seriously and in addition to supporting the PPIW we are also co-funding What Works Scotland with the Scottish Government – it is crucial that this agenda is not seen as being the sole preserve of Whitehall.

More specifically, we have provided funding to allow the PPIW team led by Professor Steve Martin to link up with the other What Works Centres, such as the Early Intervention Foundation, and to support four projects to analyse what works in tackling poverty which I expect to be of value not only to the Welsh Government but to policy makers more widely. We also hope to be able to support some new work related to the current debates around devolution and constitutional change as they affect Wales. I will be taking a close personal interest in how this work progresses not only in my ESRC capacity but also as I have the privilege of serving as a member of the PPIW Board of Governors in which role I hope to be able to continue to provide the team with support and advice in the coming year.



**Phil Sooben**  
*Director of Policy, Resources  
and Communications and Deputy  
Chief Executive, Economic  
and Social Research Council*

# Our Mission

The Public Policy Institute for Wales (PPIW) is a unique collaboration between the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Welsh Government, and a consortium of universities and independent research organisations in Wales.

Our mission is to improve policy making and delivery by working with experts from across the UK and beyond to generate independent authoritative analysis and advice on the key challenges facing policy makers in Wales. The Institute:

- Works directly with Ministers to identify their evidence needs, make links between the Welsh Government’s in-house research, and commission external analysis and advice from authoritative independent experts;
- Assists researchers to increase the impact of their work by developing stronger links with the Welsh Government; and
- Facilitates cross-jurisdictional learning between Wales and the rest of the UK.

The Institute is independent of government and was established through a process of open competition. Its work is overseen by a Board of Governors of distinguished individuals who safeguard the Institute’s independence and ensure the quality of its work. An Executive Group, comprising senior staff from the Universities of Aberystwyth, Bangor Cardiff, Liverpool, South Wales and Swansea, Wales the Bevan Foundation and Public Services 2025, advises on the PPIW’s work programme and the expertise which is available in their organisations.

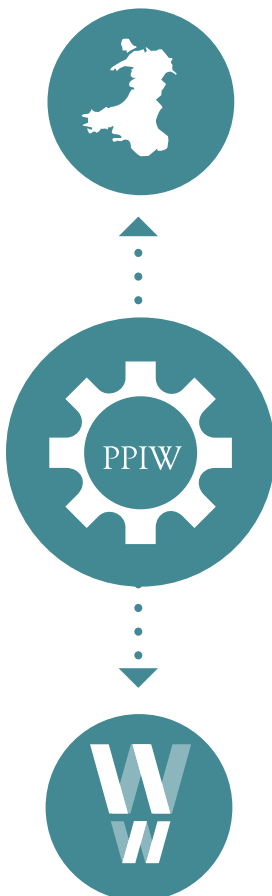
The institute is part of the What Works Network and acts as a link between Wales and What Works Centres. This enables it to:

- Help the What Works Centres take account of Welsh problems and priorities; and
- Ensure that Welsh Ministers are aware of the results of their systematic assessments of what works in promoting local economic growth, boosting education attainment, crime reduction, effective early intervention, ageing well, and encouraging wellbeing.

We have already undertaken joint work for Welsh Ministers with the Early Intervention Foundation and look forward to similar collaborations with other What Works Centres in the coming months.

Other members of the What Works Network:

- The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
- The Early Intervention Foundation
- The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth
- What Works Scotland
- The Education Endowment Foundation
- The College of Policing
- The What Works Centre for Wellbeing
- The Centre for Ageing Better



# Our Work

The Institute works in two main modes: bespoke analysis and advice commissioned by individual Ministers; and longer-term research on strategic cross-cutting challenges that face the Welsh Government as a whole as well as policy makers in other parts of the UK. The latter quickly began to emerge from the pattern of ministerial requests and in our first year we have developed programmes of research and knowledge exchange on two of the most pressing: how to sustain the quality of public services at a time of increasing demand and declining public spending, and how to combat poverty. First steps in this work include the publication of a review of the approaches to demand management earlier this month and the launch of a programme of research which is analysing approaches to tackling in-work poverty, poverty among young people and alternatives to pay day loans.

We are working to increase understanding of the contribution of different levels of government and the role which non-state actors (including businesses and the voluntary sector) can play in tackling these issues. We are also encouraging cross-jurisdictional learning through our role as part of the What Works Network and by working with the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services and with universities, independent research institutes and think tanks across the UK. In addition to the What Works Centres, in our first year we have developed links with, among others, the Alliance for Useful Evidence, Nesta, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020 Public Services Trust at the Royal Society of Arts, Bevan Foundation, Wales Public Services 2025, Bevan Commission, and the Institute for Welsh Affairs. We look forward to developing our relationship with these and other organisations over the coming months.

We work with policy makers and others in a variety of ways including expert briefings with Ministers, Special Advisers and/or officials, data analysis, rapid reviews, think pieces, literature reviews, and policy seminars. We publish our work through reports, blogs, press releases and via social media.

In our first year we have undertaken 25 bespoke assignments for Welsh Ministers spanning a wide range of topics including:

- Closing the gap in educational attainment
- Conditional entitlement to healthcare
- Alternative approaches to elective surgery
- Early intervention
- Enterprise zones
- Housing supply
- Making the most of EU structural funding
- Increasing the representativeness of local councillors
- Strategic transport planning
- Approaches to encouraging active lifestyles.

Much of this work is already having an impact. Some of the projects that have been undertaken this year are shown on the following page.

# Highlights



## Promoting Wales Overseas

The First Minister asked us to provide expert advice on how the Welsh Government should determine the best locations to locate offices overseas to encourage trade links and boost export business. We analysed the numbers and locations of offices supported by other similar sized countries to Wales and commissioned Professor Max Munday from the Wales Economy Research Unit to identify the key factors that Ministers need to take into account in deciding which locations offer the best opportunities for boosting the Welsh economy. The two reports, which we published in September, are helping to inform the development of the Government's international strategy.



## Invest to Save

The Minister for Finance and Government Business asked us to advise her on ways of encouraging councils and health boards to share the learning from the Government's multi-million pound Invest to Save fund. We worked with local government expert Dr James Downe who identified a range of ways in which councils, health boards, the Wales Audit Office, Wales Local Government Association and Welsh Government could work together to promote good practice. We organised a half day conference, attended by the Minister for Finance and the Deputy Minister for Health, to discuss his recommendations with more than 50 senior public service leaders including chief executives and senior officers from health boards, councils, the police, further and higher education and Assembly Sponsored Bodies.



### **Financing Bus Services**

The Institute's work hit the headlines in November when we published a report which concluded that bus operators in Wales may be making as much as £22 million in supernormal profits. The analysis by Professor John Preston, Head of the Civil, Maritime and Environmental Engineering and Science Unit at Southampton University, was used by the Minister for Economy, Science and Technology in her evidence to the Assembly Enterprise and Business Committee.



### **Increasing Diversity in Local Government**

Dame Jane Roberts, a member of the PPIW's Board of Governors and Chair of the New Local Government Network, ran a workshop with officials and met with the Minister for Public Services to discuss ways of increasing diversity among local councillors. Dame Jane's advice has directly influenced provisions in the Local Government (Wales) Act that will be brought forward later this year and her views featured in a debate on diversity that we hosted on our website.



### **Indebtedness in Wales**

The Minister for Tackling Poverty asked us to provide expert advice on the causes and impact of indebtedness in Wales. We commissioned a report on the scale of the problem from Dr Victoria Winckler, Director of the Bevan Foundation, which was published in July. Victoria briefed the Minister on her findings and he quoted her analysis in a plenary debate in the Assembly.

# Our Experts

The Institute aims to make world class independent expertise available to policy makers in Wales. In our first year we have made a good start in developing our expert network and we will continue to grow this over the coming months. To date we have worked with experts drawn from a range of organisations from across the UK including universities, independent research institutes and think tanks including:

**1:** Swansea Centre for Health Economics

**2:** College of Engineering, Swansea University

**3:** Cardiff Business School

**4:** WISERD Education, Cardiff University

**5:** Bevan Foundation, Methyr

**6:** School of Management and Business, Aberystwyth University

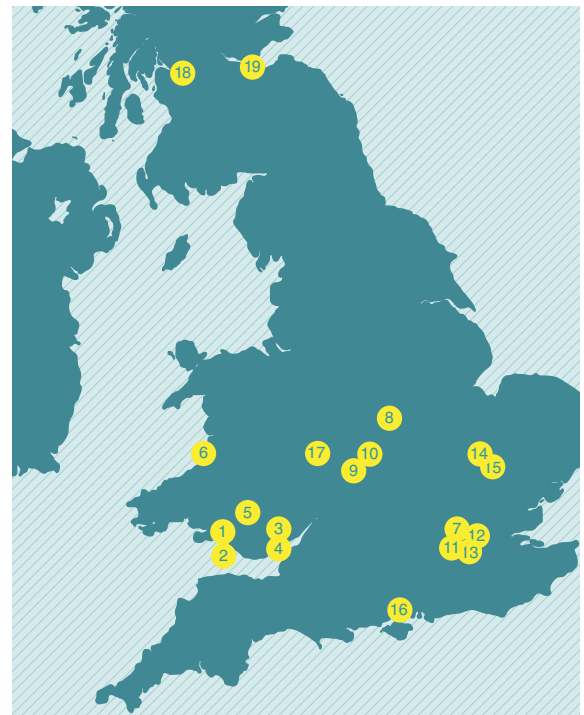
**7:** The Young Foundation, London

**8:** School of Education, Nottingham University

**9:** Institute of Employment Research, Warwick University

**10:** Centre for Business in Society, Coventry University

**11:** Spatial Economics Research Centre, London School of Economics



**12:** Department of Geography and Environment, London School of Economics

**13:** Early Intervention Foundation, London

**14:** Centre for Housing and Planning Research, Cambridge University

**15:** Department of Land Economy, Cambridge University

**16:** Civil, Maritime and Environmental Engineering and Science Unit, Southampton University

**17:** Oldbell3 Research and Consulting, Ludlow

**18:** What Works Scotland, University of Glasgow

**19:** What Works Scotland, University of Edinburgh



# Next Steps

Looking ahead, we have an ambitious programme of new work for the coming months. This has been developed in consultation with Ministers and our Board of Governors and agreed by the First Minister.

Full details of our current programme of work are published on our website at [www.ppiw.org.uk](http://www.ppiw.org.uk). Key projects include:



The design of sustainable development indicators



The future of leisure and cultural services



The role of the private rented housing sector in Wales



Not-for-profit companies and rail service provision



Best practice in the delivery of arts education



Maximising the economic impact of regional airports



The impact of welfare reforms on housing policy



Analysis of the resilience of the market for nursing homes



Approaches to tackling homelessness



Increasing the role of social enterprises in the provision of social care



The impact of ageing population on housing needs



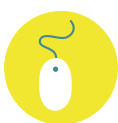
Food policy



Effectiveness in further education curricula



Measuring local government performance



Public adoption of digital public services

# Governance

The Institute's work is overseen by an independent board of governors of distinguished individuals from across the UK who have worked at the highest levels in universities, think tanks, the civil service and ESRC. Board members safeguard the Institute's independence and ensure the quality of its work. Members of the board are:

**Professor Sir Adrian Webb**  
*Former Vice-Chancellor, Glamorgan University (Chair)*

**Richard Parry-Jones CBE**  
*Chairman Network Rail*

**Dr Ruth Hall**  
*Former Chief Medical Officer for Wales (Deputy Chair)*

**Phil Sooben**  
*Director of Policy, Resources and Communications and Deputy Chief Executive at the Economic and Social Research Council*

**Professor George Boyne**  
*Pro-Vice Chancellor Cardiff University*

**Ceridwen Roberts OBE**  
*Department of Social Policy and Intervention, Oxford University*

**Professor Alice Brown CBE**  
*General Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*

**Dame Jane Roberts DBE**  
*Former leader of Camden Council and Chair of the Councillor's Commission*

**Professor Gerry Holtham**  
*Former Director of the Institute for Public Policy Research*

**Will Hutton**  
*Principal, Hertford College Oxford and Chair of the Big Innovation Centre*

The Institute's Executive Group comprises representatives from its founding institutions. They provide advice on the composition of the work programme and sources of expertise. Its members are:

**Professor Catherine Farrell**  
*University of South Wales*

**Dr Catherine Robinson**  
*Head of the School of Social Sciences, Bangor University*

**Professor Philip Murphy**  
*Department of Labour Economics, Swansea University*

**Dr Victoria Winckler**  
*Director, the Bevan Foundation*

**Professor Laura McAllister**  
*Co-Director, the Heseltine Institute of Public Policy and Practice, Liverpool University*

**Professor Mike Woods**  
*Co-Director of the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods, Aberystwyth University*

**Professor Gareth Rees**  
*Research Professor at the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD)*