



WCPP Update

February 2026



**Wales Centre
for Public Policy**
Canolfan Polisi
Cyhoeddus Cymru

Who are we and what we do

Connecting evidence with decision making to improve policy and public services in Wales

The Wales Centre for Public Policy bridges the gap between research and decision making by making rigorous evidence and expertise accessible, relevant, and actionable for policy makers, practitioners and public service leaders across Wales.

Our vision

A Wales where public policy and practice are consistently shaped by the best available evidence and insight, leading to more effective, equitable, and responsive public services.

Our mission

IDENTIFY

We collaborate with decision makers at national, regional, and local levels to help them to identify their most pressing policy challenges and shape meaningful opportunities for evidence informed solutions.

CONVENE

We analyse and synthesise high-quality research in a timely manner and convene leading international experts

to improve policy decisions and implementation.

ADVANCE

We advance knowledge in the field of evidence informed policy by sharing learning, evaluating impact, and contributing to a growing knowledge base of what works in practice.

We have conducted more than 220 projects, established relationships with a global network of leading researchers and policy experts, and developed an award winning approach to mobilising evidence.

Research and impact

All our work for Welsh policy makers is underpinned by sector-leading academic research on what works to bridge the gap between research and policy making.

As a result, we are frequently consulted by governments around the world, keen to replicate the model we have created.

We provide decision-makers with independent, robust and relevant evidence in a timely manner



Identify

We help decision makers to identify effective policy responses and practical solutions to some of their biggest policy challenges.



Convene

Our role is to bring together authoritative evidence and independent expertise to support evidence-informed decision-making.



Advance

Our own approach is underpinned by academic evidence about what works to support evidence-informed decision-making.

Our work

We have developed three priority areas based on analysis of the biggest policy challenges facing local and national policy makers in Wales:

- Tackling Inequalities
- Environment and Net Zero
- Community Wellbeing

Alongside these, we lead the RCT Health Determinants Research Collaboration ([HDRC](#)) with Rhondda Cynon Taf Council. The RCT HDRC has recently launched its first projects – on child poverty, preventative spend, better access to services and community resilience. The RCT HDRC aims to create a vibrant research culture within the local authority that drives evidence informed decision making to break the cycle of poverty, improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged, and address the wider determinants of health.

With 12 years' experience at the heart of Welsh policy making, supporting decision makers with independent evidence and expertise and informing policy and implementation across a broad range of areas including environment, social justice, governance, health and education, we also retain the agility and expertise to be able to take on other evidence to policy projects in response to policy makers' evidence needs.

Recent highlights

Tackling inequalities

The rising cost of living is continuing to affect many households' ability to make ends meet. Particular groups, such as disabled people, children and young people, and ethnic minority people, are disproportionately likely to experience poverty.



We have been working with the Welsh Government, local government and public services to provide independent and authoritative evidence and expertise to inform the development of effective policy and practice approaches to address poverty and wider inequalities in Wales. Recent work has included:

Poverty stigma

A 2024 [YouGov survey](#) that we commissioned alongside the Bevan Foundation and the International Public Policy Observatory revealed that one in three adults with an annual income of less than £20,000 experience poverty stigma 'always', 'often' or 'sometimes'.

To support public services and policy makers to better understand poverty stigma and what they can do to ensure their services reduce rather than (re-) produce poverty stigma, we are:

- Hosting a [Poverty Stigma Insight Network](#), a UK-wide network of individuals and organisations with lived and learned experience who have the shared aim of seeking to better understand, prevent and address poverty stigma.
- Delivering a rapid evidence review about 'what works' to prevent and address poverty stigma.
- Delivering a place-based programme of work with Swansea Council and Swansea poverty truth commissioners to identify solutions based on local insights and international evidence.

Through this work, we aim to support the Welsh Government and partners to achieve Objective 4 of its Child Poverty Strategy to ‘challenge the stigma of poverty’ and feed into the Communities of Practice which have been developed to help implement the Strategy.

Equity in tertiary education

Household deprivation and socio-economic background are among the most significant factors affecting which post-16 pathways are followed by learners in Wales.

This was the headline from [our research](#) to better understand the inequities in tertiary education in Wales and the policies that might help to tackle them.

The research was commissioned by the Welsh Government to support Medr in its remit to increase equality of opportunity.

We worked with ADR Wales to analyse data and explore which groups are under-represented within tertiary education, and how. We conducted an evidence review of relevant policy and practice approaches used to improve equity in tertiary education in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Finally, we invited leading education academics to reflect on this research and to consider what can be done to improve equity in tertiary education in Wales.

We also supported Medr through a series of workshops to help them to reflect on this research, as well as additional WCPP research on [Implementation-minded policy making](#) to strengthen their equity in tertiary education strategy and operational plans.

‘This work is an important step forward in identifying barriers stopping people from accessing and succeeding in tertiary education. It will also help Medr to increase participation and promote equal access to tertiary education in Wales for those from under-represented groups.’

Welsh Government Minister for Further and Higher Education Vikki Howells

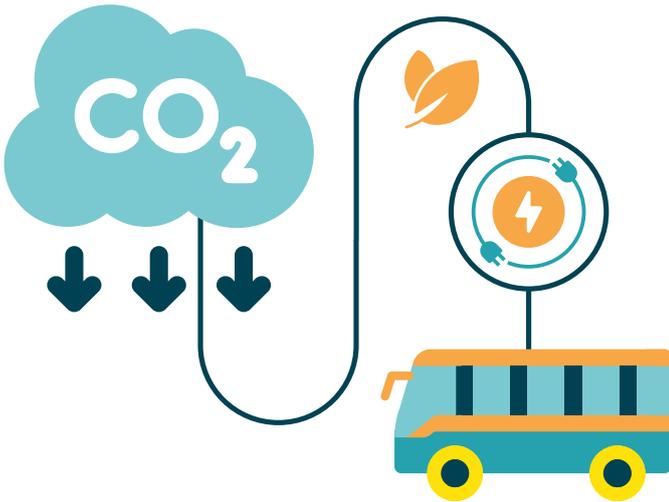
Using evidence to understand and address the temporary accommodation crisis

Homelessness in Wales remains stubbornly high, with the most recent figures showing that the number of households in Wales assessed as homeless and owed a duty to help secure accommodation by local authorities was 13,287. Nested within this crisis is the surge in use of temporary accommodation to house individuals, with 10,941 people housed in temporary accommodation as of July 2025. Temporary accommodation can negatively impact residents’ health and wellbeing, often deepening poverty and inequality. It has also led to unprecedented and unsustainable levels of council spending, with the latest report from Audit Wales revealing that council spending on temporary accommodation in Wales increased from £28 million in 2019 to £172 million by 2023–24.

To share recent insight and analysis on temporary accommodation in Wales, we delivered an Insight Workshop for local authorities. We heard from leading experts and researchers along with housing and homelessness professionals from most Welsh local authorities. It was clear that the challenge of meeting temporary accommodation needs varies from council to council, yet most local authorities are dealing with unprecedented and unsustainable demand and costs in this area. We [launched an ‘open call’](#) to offer local authorities the opportunity to collaborate with us and the Centre for Homelessness Impact to access and apply evidence and insight to help address the challenge of homelessness and the need for and use of temporary accommodation.



Environment and net zero



The climate and nature emergencies are no longer future threats; we are witnessing their impacts now. Addressing them presents a significant strategic and operational challenge for policy makers at all levels as well as the private and third sector, with the risk that costs may fall disproportionately on communities already facing difficulties. Our recent and ongoing work includes:

Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group

We supported the work of the [Challenge Group](#) by providing evidence and hosting its secretariat. We produced evidence reviews in the Group's five challenge areas: food, energy, transport, housing, and education and skills, as well as additional insights through guest blogs and other expertise.

'It was essential that our reports on the pathways to net zero were rooted in the best available evidence, and WCPP's independent work to support the group was therefore a vital contribution.'

Jane Davidson, Chair, Wales Net Zero 2035 Challenge Group

We collaborated with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to explore behaviour change and financing solutions for local authorities in the drive towards net zero. We presented [evidence and case studies](#) on the policies and approaches pursued by local governments and other small countries and devolved regions to reduce public sector emissions.

We provided the Welsh Government with evidence on how other countries have developed relevant policies, schemes and regulations to better govern Voluntary Carbon Markets and how these lessons might be applied in Wales.

We have been working with [Cardiff Council](#) to support initiatives for advancing the net zero agenda.

Community Wellbeing

Communities are a vital asset and partner, alongside national and local government, in achieving our collective social, economic and environmental ambitions for Wales. Their capability for collaboration, innovation and agility was an essential part of our national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of reduced public service capacity, the public sector needs to continue to find ways to more effectively collaborate with the communities it serves to make progress against key challenges such as poverty and social exclusion, and tackling climate change.

We are providing the Welsh Government, local government, and public and community services with effective, evidence-informed, policy and practical solutions to support, sustain and enhance community wellbeing and multi-sector collaboration.

Multisector collaboration to improve community wellbeing

We produced an [evidence review](#) with the Resourceful Communities Partnership on the practical actions that government, public services and communities can take for better collaboration to promote community wellbeing. The review includes evidence from research alongside learning from practice. We also created a [Framework for Action](#) which provides a resource for multisector collaborations in different contexts.

To maximise the value and applicability of this evidence for public and community sector actors, we are now working as part of the RCP with a range of stakeholders to co-create an interactive resource. This will allow people to navigate and consider the evidence base and wider resources in a way which is sensitive to their aims, needs and context. It will be tailored to the Welsh context and aligned with the goals and ways of working of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

‘The very nature of this research from WCPP embraces the spirit of collaboration and cross-sectoral partnerships that are fundamental to the RCP and its members.’

Rhian Bennett, Senior Commissioning Manager, Pembrokeshire County Council

Independent Working Group on Sustainable Local Government for the Future

Together with the WLGA we have been leading a working group to develop a sustainable vision for local government in Wales.

The evidence gathered supports the view that the current model for local government is unsustainable and that a new vision is important for local government to continue to serve its citizens well into the future.

The Independent Working Group on Sustainable Local Government for the Future is chaired by former WCPP Director, Professor Steve Martin, and includes elected members and chief executives from Welsh local authorities and independent members, including Max Caller, former Lead Commissioner at Birmingham City Council.

The working group has published a [position paper](#) outlining the group’s views on how councils can future-proof themselves in the face of increasing demands on public services. The group stressed that the unique value of local government is local democracy. To effectively respond to complex individual needs, there is a need to act in a joined up way that is facilitated by coordination across organisational boundaries and across sectors.

Wales Centre for Public Policy

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