

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad i [Gydlyniant Cymdeithasol](#)

This response was submitted to the [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) on the [inquiry into Social Cohesion](#)

SC 18

Ymateb gan: Grŵp Rhanddeiliaid Mentrau Cymdeithasol (SESG)

Response from: Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group (SESG)

The Social Enterprise Stakeholder Group (SESG) is passionate about the potential of social enterprise to transform the Welsh economy. Our members are Cwmpas, Social Firms Wales, DTA Wales, UnLtd and WCVA.

In 2020, the SESG published its ten-year Vision and Action Plan, [Transforming Wales through Social Enterprise](#), which seeks to make social enterprise the business model of choice in Wales by 2030. The SESG has come together as a consortium to deliver Social Business Wales, the Welsh Government's flagship specialist support service for social businesses, and is working strategically to make Wales the best place to start and grow a social enterprise. We recently published a [progress report](#).

Social enterprises across Wales deliver community-based activities that bring people together and provide opportunities for people to improve wellbeing. They do this in many different, innovative ways – building financially-sustainable organisations while ensuring all profit is re-invested in the social purpose of the business. These organisations are key assets in re-balancing communities in a way that empowers individuals and communities as a whole to build social cohesion in a bottom-up way. Here are two inspiring case studies:

Get The Boys A Lift

GTBAL (Get The Boys A Lift), based in Haverfordwest, is a dynamic community-focused organisation launched by a group of friends which provides free mental health support to the people of Pembrokeshire while promoting open discussions about mental wellbeing. The team run a clothing and coffee shop in Haverfordwest called 'Our Place', offering a unique café experience where visitors can chat to counsellors and make new friends. The project has gone from strength to strength since 2016, now offering a mix of in-person and online counselling services to anyone over 17.

At the heart of GTBAL's work is a focus on community-based activities that bring people together, regardless of background or circumstance. Recognising the challenges faced by marginalised groups, the organisation provides targeted support in key areas such as health and well-being, employment readiness, and social integration.

GTBAL operates as a social enterprise, reinvesting resources into community projects that foster inclusion and long-term change. By blending enterprise with social impact, they provide opportunities for people to engage in meaningful work, build valuable networks, and contribute to a more cohesive society.

A core pillar of GTBAL's mission is to uplift disadvantaged communities by breaking down barriers to participation. Whether through educational workshops, employability programs, or well-being initiatives, the organisation ensures that everyone, regardless of their starting point, has access to the tools they need to thrive.

Vibe Youth

Vibe Youth is a social enterprise that supports the emotional, social and personal development of children & young people. They aim to empower future generations to better understand themselves and navigate a fulfilling life, regardless of background. They support positive decision making, building self-belief, encouraging social responsibility and building stronger individuals and communities. Founded through personal lived experiences to ignite transformational change in the lives of individuals who have been systematically overlooked, underserved and underestimated.

Vibe challenges the status quo through innovative, evidence based approaches enabling individuals to rise up, take ownership of their futures, creating a sense of hope and purpose.

The impact of Vibe Youth CIC's model is measurable in terms of improved emotional resilience, re-engagement in education, increased participation in community activities and reduction in risky behaviours. Their holistic approach—combining lived experience, NLP, coaching, and youth work—allows them to focus on the adverse experiences, and emotional root causes of behaviours, resulting in profound and lasting positive changes in the lives of people.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Increased engagement: Participants show improved attendance in school or vocational training programs,
- Emotional resilience: Our emotional well-being projects, grounded in lived experience help people explore, reflect and evaluate their circumstances in a safe environment.
- Positive decision-making : Through NLP and coaching, we help people understand impulses, reduce involvement in disruptive behaviours, and foster positive decision-making.

Vibe Youth CIC has recently been awarded funding from the National Lottery, Awards For ALL Fund to bring their Bridging Communities Project to life. This support will enable them to strengthen connections, foster inclusivity, and create meaningful opportunities for young people across communities.

The Bridging Communities Project is designed to bring diverse groups together, encouraging collaboration and understanding while empowering young people to take the lead in building stronger, more cohesive communities. Through workshops, mentorship, and community activities, they aim to tackle barriers, promote equity, and inspire a shared sense of belonging.

Barriers for the sector

Social enterprises are pivotal to creating sustainable services that can bring people together and foster social cohesion. However, at a time of ever-increasing demand for these services, the financial context they are operating in is challenging. The impact of the recent increase in national insurance contributions on these small-scale organisations that provide invaluable services that take pressure off public services in the long-run is indicative of the pressure they are under.

In addition, the nature of many of these organisations – providing essential services to people in immediate need – means there can sometimes be limited capacity for engaging in complex commissioning processes. Public bodies should be proactive in engaging with these organisations as key partners in building cohesive communities as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, reforming commissioning processes to empower these types of organisations to engage.

These social enterprises should be seen as key partners in implementing social cohesion strategies. If at an early stage they are engaged and commissioned to provide community engagement, this will help to ensure they are financially sustainable as well as ensuring policy implementation is done in bottom-up way, rather than top-down. As trusted deliverers of local services, these organisations are best placed to do this.

It is also vital that these organisations are able to access spaces and buildings in communities, where people actually live. At a time when publicly-owned community assets are at risk of being sold off, and without the same level of rights for communities with regards to privately-owned assets in Wales as in Scotland, it is more important than ever that there is a step change in Wales that sees communities empowered to take on vital public assets to use them as key, inclusive community spaces that foster community cohesion.