

Wales Programme for Improvement

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What is Wales Programme for Improvement?

The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty on local authorities to achieve continuous improvement in the way they carry out their functions, so that they can deliver services which meet the needs of the public efficiently, effectively and economically. Wales Programme for Improvement [WPI] is the name given to the process of continuous self-assessment that underpins this improvement process.

National Parks Authorities in Wales are also required to develop and implement an appropriate version of WPI.

WPI does not stand alone. It is part of the new way of working for local authorities which includes Cabinet-style government, responsibility for Community Strategies, Compacts with the Voluntary and Community sectors, Policy Agreements with Wales Assembly Government and the power to promote well-being.

The component parts

The main elements of WPI are

- a whole authority analysis undertaken every 5 years, resulting in a 5 year programme of reviews
- an annual risk analysis, undertaken with the Audit Commission in Wales, and leading to
 - o an Improvement Plan, together with a published summary
 - o reviews and inspections of services
 - o action plans flowing from reviews

WPI in Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire County Council undertook its first whole authority analysis in 2002/03. This resulted in a 5 year programme of both corporate and service reviews, full details of which can be found in the Corporate and Improvement Plan 2004-2005.

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A synopsis of reviews which may be of interest to the Voluntary and Community Sector (*overleaf*):

Improvement Category	2004/2005	2005/2006
Corporate	Contact centres and website New accountability for health	Sheltered Housing Homelessness Opening hours
Social Care and Housing	Joint Review [with Health] Re-provision of facilities Housing voids	Joint Review [with Health]
Education and Community Services	Joint Working Social Services / Health Lifelong Learning	School catchment areas Heavy maintenance
Transportation and Environment	Waste Management Community Transport	Waste Management
Development	Rights of Way Network Customer service centres	Community Regeneration Unit effectiveness
Support and Cultural services	Customer service centres Meet WAG National Library standards	Opening hours
Finance and Leisure	Leisure centres - re-provision of facilities	Leisure centres - re-provision of facilities

How can the Voluntary Sector contribute?

As part of each WPI review local authorities are obliged to obtain external and independent views and evidence on its performance and, where appropriate, to obtain this information from the voluntary sector.

The views of the voluntary Sector are especially valued for their

- rootedness in the community
- experience of consultation with service users and carers
- history of innovation and responsiveness to individual need
- knowledge of the needs of marginalized people / groups
emphasis on quality of life, rather than narrow service led outcomes

The Voluntary Sector may be involved in a variety of ways

- in identifying areas for review alongside the County Council
- scoping individual reviews
- conducting the reviews e.g. by providing evidence, becoming panel members to review presentations made by service managers
- as potential or actual providers of services
- through distributing and obtaining feedback on the Improvement Plan and the outcomes of reviews
- involvement in the delivery of action plans resulting from reviews
helping to monitor the results of reviews

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The involvement of the Voluntary Sector in WPI in Pembrokeshire is being coordinated through the Voluntary Sector Liaison Group. As the VSLG was not in place in its current format at the time WPI started, the Voluntary Sector was not fully engaged. However, WPI is now a regular item on the agenda of VSLG and efforts are being made to strengthen the Voluntary Sector contribution.

A recent example of Voluntary Sector involvement was the WPI review of Learning Pembrokeshire. Pembrokeshire County Council invited Pembrokeshire College, ELWa and PAVS Learning in the Voluntary Sector to be fully involved. Partners joined a panel to receive presentations from senior staff on different aspects of the service e.g. community focus schools. The basis of a more collaborative approach that will continue beyond the life of the WPI review has been established.

Benefits to the Voluntary Sector

- enhanced mutual understanding
- an understanding of the constraints under which local authorities operate
- opportunities to 'showcase' the voluntary sector
- opportunities for enhanced partnership working, including SLAs
- opportunities to have direct involvement in service development, the planning and commissioning of services

Want to know more?

View Pembrokeshire County Council Corporate and Improvement Plan 2004/2005 on the County Council website www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk, in libraries or the PAVS Centre for Voluntary Action in Haverfordwest.

Contact the Corporate Planning Manager at PCC

Contact the Partnership Support Officer at PAVS

Contact a member of the VSLG