

Cwmpas

Cwmpas x ColegauCymru

Case Study

A commercial project
conducted by Business
Growth and Consultancy.



Cwmpas has been supporting Colegau Cymru, a Welsh education charity which promotes the public benefit of further education, on their social value journey.

Sarah Evans, Director of Business Growth and Consultancy at Cwmpas, worked closely with Rachel Cable, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Colegau Cymru, on a research project to establish and understand the social value of the Welsh further education (FE) sector in Wales. CLES, the national organisation for local economies, also supported the social value research as a partner on the project.

The research has been shared with all 60 Senedd Members, the Cabinet Secretary and Welsh Government officials.



Dr Sarah Evans

Director of Business Growth and Consultancy, Cwmpas

Sarah is the Director of Business Growth and Consultancy at Cwmpas and has previously worked as a principal manager in Local Government and a Senior Lecturer/Researcher at Wrexham University.

What is Social Value?

Social value is about creating value beyond profit – value that helps Wales thrive.

The Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Act gives us the ambition, and the legal obligation, to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being as a nation. Wales has everything to gain by taking the letter and the spirit of the Act on board.

Cwmpas' aim is to put social value at the heart of every business and organisation in Wales with help that's practical and pragmatic to business needs.



Our work with ColegauCymru

ColegauCymru also undertakes research and policy development, providing practical support to the FE community. Working closely with Welsh Government, their agencies and other stakeholders, the charity helps to shape policies affecting the FE sector, their learners and staff.

Collaborating with 13 FE colleges across Wales, Rachel wanted to, “highlight the strategic drivers in the FE sector, including the role of colleges as anchor institutions which make a significant contribution to their local economies and communities”. Rachel explains that as they have been rooted in their local communities for so long, the aim of the social value research project, with funding from Welsh Government, was to, “better understand how FE colleges in Wales contribute to societal well-being beyond their traditional educational roles.” As Cwmpas had a demonstrable understanding of both the FE sector specifically, but also of the wider policy landscape and social value in Wales, Cwmpas was brought on board to support the project. As an education charity, Rachel explains:

“ColegauCymru believes that all learners have the right to world-class education, delivered in a safe, diverse and inclusive setting and within a sector which supports the wider community, employers and the economy.”

The social value project involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods which Cwmpas supported, including:

- Conducting an online workshop
- Scoping out a framework for social value
- Shaping the interviews and focus groups
- Conducting the data analysis
- Designing the methodology
- Collating the case studies

The interviews involved principals from the 13 FE colleges who were interviewed by Cwmpas to clarify their understanding of social value in the sector, what they wanted from the project and what their well-being goals were. From the research, Sarah and the Cwmpas team found that within the FE sector in Wales, it was understood that social value is at the heart of everything the colleges do, but it wasn't labelled as that.

Rachel explains: “The case studies have been especially impactful, giving each Senedd Member the opportunity to learn more about their local colleges and understand the benefits they provide to their respective communities.” Sarah adds:

“We looked at social value through the lens of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which a lot of the FE colleges in Wales use as a basis for their work.”



Impact

Once the data had been gathered, a clear finding stood out; the vital role colleges play within the local community and shaping the future Welsh economy. The social value research will now be used by ColegauCymru and the FE sector going forward to:



Inform the ColegauCymru Board and the Principals' Forum's thinking and decision-making moving forward.



Inform future policy thinking and development, particularly around social value and how each college is contributing to the seven Well-being Goals to help jointly articulate the social value of the sector.

Highlighting the key relationship between the college and business communities, the data evidenced the importance of championing social enterprise for students to support local businesses. Looking at different training opportunities and qualifications that the college can provide allows opportunities for communities to essentially build their own workforce through young people staying in the local area and working with businesses.

Advice for other businesses looking to adopt social value into the workplace

Rachel believes that the social value research has provided solid evidence to understand the importance of the role the FE sector plays in the wider Welsh community and economy: "The successful delivery of the mixed method approach utilised existing quantitative data and qualitative data, leading to a report that gave richer context to the data sets."

This finding has been reflected by the FE colleges across Wales. Sarah elaborates that there was one local case study that really stood out and impressed her:

"The college could see that the High Street in Brecon wasn't doing very well, some of the pubs and other shops were closing down. So, they bought one of the pubs and they're now making it into a place where their hospitality students can come and cook, be front-of-house staff and help inform the menu."



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