

Civic Mission Annual Report

2024-2025

Working together to tackle social inequality across North Wales.

Introduction

Over the past seven years, we have significantly evolved our Civic Mission to respond to the real needs of our communities and partners. Using direct engagement and connection to build trusted relationships that enable us, as a systems convener, to deeply understand the people and places we serve as an anchor institution - focusing on one of the region's most pressing challenges: tackling social inequality in North Wales.

Over the past year, our work has developed and evolved, with our team, our partnerships and our scope of projects growing significantly. We worked on over 35 projects, with hundreds of partners and engaged with thousands of people within the community.

We have seen the successful completion of the North Wales Children's University pilot project, developed our TrACE work inside and outside of the University, launched the North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership, and much more.

In June 2024, we launched our new Civic Mission Partnership Strategy alongside partners, and have developed a series of podcasts to reflect our journey and engage more partners and communities in the work we do.

This report highlights some of the progress and impact that we've made through working together over the last 12 months and sets out our priorities for the future.

If you'd like to talk to us about our Civic Mission and how we can work together, please do get in touch.

Nina Ruddle,

Head of Public Policy Engagement

Our Focus

As set out by Wrexham University's Vision 2030, our goal is to be a world leading, modern civic institution, regionally and globally engaged, delivering skills and impactful research which drive economic growth and innovation for the well-being of current and future generations. Over the last seven years our Civic Mission has evolved to meet the needs of partners and communities to tackle key societal challenges. Our focus has been leading communities through co-creation and social innovation to mobilise change. We are at the forefront of enabling this change, acting as a systems convener and enabler of actions across a complex partnership landscape.

Our work has been a real catalyst for change on a regional level and is at the heart and forefront of implementing the Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. The work is regionally and nationally leading and has been featured as a QAA case study, as a Bevan Commission Exemplar and as an OECD global case study- alongside being presented at a number of national and international conferences.

Through a Civic Mission programme of over 35 projects, we work collaboratively to deliver meaningful change across our four key themes:

- Leadership, Governance and Whole Systems Working
- Building Community Resilience
- Keeping Well
- Strategic Partnerships and Research

Meet the Team

Here in the Civic Mission team, we value inclusivity and diversity! Our team comes from a range of professional and personal backgrounds, and we bring our variety of skills and experience together to most effectively tackle social inequality. All with a positive attitude and a smile on our faces!



Our Highlights

Across the 2024-2025 period, we have worked with a number of key partners, on a wide range of events, to help support our local communities. Here are some of the key statistics that highlight the work we have done over this period.

- 2912 young people engaged
- 4814 adults engaged
- 67 schools engaged
- 92 events/workshops organised (or contributed to)
- 68+ partners collaborated with

**these numbers are based off of data from January 2024 to August 2025*

Leadership, Governance and Whole Systems Working

North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership (NWCEP)

In May 2025, we launched the North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership (NWCEP) in partnership with Bangor University and supported by Medr. This partnership brings together change makers and leaders from across the region to discuss challenges and develop a plan of action to align priorities, facilitate regional collaboration, build capacity and maximise resources across the landscape.

The NWCEP is a nationally leading, innovative regional partnership, and is the first of its kind in Wales. Following the first two meetings of the NWCEP, we have developed four key areas of challenge across the region:

- lack of citizen involvement in public services
- lack of individual place ambition
- child poverty
- lack of engagement in environmental protection/ climate change

North Wales Public Service Lab (NWPSL)

A physical and virtual space to bring leaders together to work differently. Building capacity and capability to drive innovation around collective challenges.

Delivered a programme of master classes to partners, on topics and skills such as systems leadership, public narrative and relationship building.

Delivered a conference on Systems Leadership in February 2025 alongside Do Well, to over 70 attendees from across the region.

Hosted the 'A Healthier, Wealthier and Fairer Wales- Working Together to Tackle Child Poverty' conference, in partnership with the 2025 Movement, Public Health Wales, Audit Wales, Welsh Government, Well-being Economy Cymru, Future Generations Commissioner, Wales Centre for Public Policy and North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership.

Worked with Xplore! and the Public Service Boards (PSBs) to deliver Future Leaders sessions to 353 learners from 15 schools across the 6 counties in North Wales.

2025 Movement

Social movement for change to tackle inequalities in North Wales- bringing together organisations from across the region to facilitate whole system thinking and change. Nina Ruddle is Chair of the 2025 Movement.

We held the annual 2025 Movement conference in July 2024, with 70 attendees from across Wales. During this conference, we launched the 'Year of Belonging' for the year 2025, which has framed much of our work throughout 2025.

We hosted a 'Supporting Autistic People in the Workplace and Beyond' Conference in partnership with Clwyd Alyn.

North Wales Insight Partnership (NWIP)

A partnership of people and organisations developing and delivering innovative projects across the region, centred around the 3 key areas of research, innovation and systems change. We have achieved international recognition for our North Wales Insight Partnership work, as part of an OECD global case study.

The North Wales Insight Partnership will be launching a new bilingual, easy-to-use website. The site will share useful information such as well-being data, reports, events, and news, and will include a secure area where partners can work together. It will help people across North Wales access clear, up-to-date insight and make it easier for organisations to collaborate for the benefit of our communities.

To read the OECD Global Case Study click [here](#).

Building Community Resilience

North Wales Children's University (NWCU)

The North Wales Children's University aims to encourage children and young people to actively engage in extracurricular activities, with the aim of building confidence, aspirations and achievement.

Within the NWCU 2023/24 pilot, a total of 1,272 children and young people engaged in the programme of activities. Overall, 51 schools and 9 community groups across 6 local authority areas participated in the programme.

Young people participated in activities such as music, dance, sewing, drama, cooking, art, photography. These activities were facilitated through after school clubs, extracurricular clubs, independent learning, external activity providers and events

delivered by the Civic Mission team. Through the project, we facilitated over 27,108 hours of extracurricular learning hours across the region.

When CYP had completed 30 hours of extracurricular activity, they achieved a bronze award and became eligible for certification at a graduation ceremony. Furthermore, higher-level CU Silver and Gold certificates were awarded to CYP who completed 65 hours (Silver) and 100 hours (Gold) of validated CU activity. A total of 669 children and young people achieved certification across five university graduation ceremonies.

Below are links to videos capturing some of the Graduation ceremonies from the project, showcasing the impact the NWCU had on young people, teachers and families.

Through thorough research analysis, we have begun to use recommendations to further develop the NWCU for future years.

To view the Wrexham and Flintshire graduation ceremony video click [here](#)

To view the Conwy and Denbighshire graduation ceremony video click [here](#)

To view the Gwynedd and Anglesey graduation ceremony video click [here](#)

Project in a Box

We developed a number of 'Projects in a Box' which were delivered throughout the community, and provided resources and activities on a variety of topics:

- Eisteddfod
- Gresford Colliery Disaster
- TrACE- Navigating the Storm
- Making Medicine
- Space Pizza

25 schools engaged (so far).

3 care homes engaged.

Gresford project featured on Heno.

Bob Talks

The Bob Talks project supports CYP in developing public speaking skills and confidence through the delivery of 'Public Narrative' training and support from the Civic Mission team.

In 2024, we supported 7 schools to deliver TEDx-style talks ('Bob Talks') on the topic of mental health and well-being.

In April 2025 we supported 5 schools and 1 community group to deliver Bob Talks on the topic of 'Belonging'.

[2024 Talks Playlist](#)

[2025 Talks Playlist](#)

The actions and asks of the young people during their Bob Talks are shared with leaders across the region, and have direct impact on the future projects we and our partners run. For example, Ysgol Eirias (2024) were also asked to deliver their Bob Talk at a Children's Commissioner for Wales event on the Rights of the Child.

Big Conversation Flintshire

We worked in partnership with the charity WeMindTheGap to engage hundreds of young people aged 18-21 across Flintshire in a 'Big Conversation' to discuss their thoughts on the local area, and what can be done to make it better for them.

Find out more about the Big Conversation Flintshire [here](#).

Tomorrow's Changemakers Programme

We have worked with South-Wales based organisation, Cymbrogi, to develop and pilot the 'Tomorrows Changemakers Project' (TCM) in North Wales. We have piloted the project across 2 Welsh-medium secondary schools in 2025.

TCM focuses on Year 8 pupils- encouraging them to explore ideas about the circular economy and sustainability within a project-based learning model. After completing a number of key modules on these topics, learners were provided with a choice of areas in which to build a business and develop an innovative idea to support their local area.

The ideas developed by the young people involved in the 2025 TCM pilot will be showcased at a celebration event in Autumn 2025. Research has been embedded throughout this project, to find out more about its impact on young people's future subject choices for GCSE.

Storytelling Projects

Wales Innovation Network

We secured funding from the Wales Innovation Network (WIN) to develop our storytelling approach across public services as a method to engage citizens voices.

Alongside partners from Swansea University, Cardiff University (SPARK) and Durham University, we hosted a storytelling sandpit for over 60 attendees- learning, networking and storyboarding to develop new ideas around how storytelling can be used as a method for progress and change in health, care and well-being services in Wales.

100 Stories

We worked in partnership with BCUHB on the Bevan Commission exemplar, 100 Stories project- which supported young people to tell their stories of transitioning from children's to adult health services. We delivered an impact report and championed the findings of this work to develop and change the ways we engage with citizens voices within the Wrexham and Flintshire PSB.

We held a showcase event for over 60 attendees to celebrate the hard work and contributions of the young people involved in the project.

Read more about the 100 stories project [here](#).

Young Writers

Aspiring writers from 15 schools across Wrexham and Flintshire were invited to participate in a writing workshop at Wrexham University, hosted by author Simon Hunt. Young people were then tasked with documenting their thoughts, ideas and writing within a very special writing journal.

They were then invited back to the University for a very special event to showcase the ideas they had developed in their journal over the previous few months to parents, guardians and the Civic Mission team.

Keeping Well

Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (TrACE)

In every element — from classrooms to communities, from student voice to research innovation — Wrexham University is building a culture of equity, compassion and impact. Our TrACE journey is not a single project, but a movement for lasting change.

55 students, including 6 Alumni have become registered TrACE champions. Champions have actively supported several events as well as TrACE stalls across other campuses to engage with students and visitors.

In partnership with the Trauma-Informed Design (TiD) Society in the USA, and alongside staff and students from across the university, we are developing the first trauma-informed environmental assessment tool tailored for higher education.

We have extended the TrACE approach to major civic mission initiatives - providing trauma informed training and practice within the North Wales Children's University (NWCU) and the £4.6m AHRC, Public Map Platform research project, co-led by Wrexham University.

Our TrACE work was featured as a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) case study in its Professional Development resource in the summer of 2024.

Read our impact/ evaluation report [here](#).

Arts in Health and Well-being Project

We ran two Environmental Arts Therapy Experiential Workshops at the Xplore! Nature site on Wrexham University's Northop campus, in collaboration with Manuela Niemetscheck from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB).

These sessions were delivered to over 20 attendees from a wide range of organisations across the region, and explored the benefits of Environmental Arts Therapy within BCUHB and the positive impact it can have on health and well-being.

"I will share the practices with staff. Using a piece of nature to reflect a feeling or emotion." – Feedback from attendee

This work was shared at the National Eisteddfod 2025 during a creative activity and panel discussion on arts and health projects across North Wales. We will be continuing to grow and develop this work into 2026, facilitating new workshops and further learning on the power of environmental arts therapy and its impact on health and well-being.

Strategic Partnerships and Research

Over the 2024-2025 period, we have developed strategic partnerships with a number of individuals and organisations, whilst strengthening our ties with those we have worked with previously. We have worked on a number of joint projects and events, such as the 'Supporting Autism in the Workplace and Beyond' conference, the 'A Healthier,

Wealthier and Fairer Wales- Working Together to Tackle Child Poverty’ conference and the North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership, to name a few.

We have also worked on a number of collaborative funding bids alongside partners. Such as our successful Wales Innovation Network bid to explore storytelling as a method for change in health, care and well-being services in Wales. Our commitment to working collaboratively aligns closely with the Wrexham University 2030 Vision, supporting the university in becoming a hub for North East Wales, and building partnership across the region. The partnerships we have developed and maintained further allow us to continue supporting the Well-being of Future Generations (2015) Act Wales, in the most effective, impactful way.

Over the 2024-2025 period, we have also significantly developed our approach to embedding research throughout our work. We have appointed a researcher who is leading our research and impact work across the region; this important work supports Wrexham University’s Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 submission.

We are agile and responsive to research needs, in particular leading the Wrexham Town Board engagement with over 4000 members of the Wrexham community and 35 schools, to find out what is most important to the local community, and their thoughts and ideas on how to improve well-being and lives in the local area. Alongside this, engaging practitioners in developing a ‘Book for Wrexham’ as part of the 10-year programme of investment across the city.

Furthermore, the North Wales Children’s University 2023/24 Pilot Research Report was produced to provide deeper understanding of the impact of the project on young people and their love of learning, the members of the community most likely to engage in the project, and the recommendations we can take forward to mould and shape the project to best suit the communities we serve.

Wrexham University is also working in partnership with Cambridge University and Cardiff University to develop a community mapping platform on Ynys Mon- working directly with communities to make places better for the people who live there, using research and community engagement to directly influence recommendations.

Next Steps

Leadership, governance and whole system working

Priority Actions:

- To enable and provide an innovation hub, creating space for expertise and energy to enable collective understanding and action, with different partners and communities.

- To innovate, co-create and test new approaches and ways of working to collectively tackle social inequality.

Building community resilience

Priority Actions:

- To support our communities and partners, actively listening and doing what matters the most to partners and citizens.
- Roll out and grow the North Wales Children's University and enable this as a vehicle for collaboration and change to support well-being for families, a love of learning for all, connect all community assets and develop future leaders.
- Test and explore new and innovative ways to listen to our communities and citizens with storytelling and other innovative methods.

Keeping well

Priority Actions:

- To support and enable citizens, communities and organisations to be and keep well, enabling kindness and compassion at the heart of all our work with partners supporting our region to become a trauma informed region.
- Leading with partners, our innovative approach to a social movement for change will focus on prevention and the wider determinants of health.

Strategic partnership working and research

Priority Actions:

- To grow our role as a convener, facilitator, enabler and deliverer of change to those we serve, partners and communities across the region.
- To enable our work with innovation, expertise, research and focus working with and alongside partners and communities that are driving real change in practice.

We will maximise our work and develop the expertise across the region to drive whole systems and transformational change, underpinning everything with research and impact so we can inform, shape and develop policy.

World leading research centre

Priority Actions:

- Lead the establishment of a world leading research and innovation centre focus on civic mission which is a centre for knowledge transfer and methodological innovation in measuring the impact of social policy in this area testing and shaping innovation to inform practice.

Thank you and contact us

A big thank you to everyone who has collaborated with us, supported us and engaged with our work over the 2024-2025 period. We have been lucky enough to partner with a number of brilliant organisations and individuals from across the country on a wide range of projects, and have had the privilege of working with, and supporting thousands of members of the North Wales community (from ages 8 to 80, and beyond).

We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved over the past year in our mission to tackle social inequality in North Wales, and look forward to continuing to grow and develop our work to best support the communities we serve.

If you would like to get in touch with the Civic Mission team, to learn about or discuss our projects, or to find out more about how we can work together, please contact us via:

Now Playing:

A selection of songs from members of the team, to give you an idea of the vibes in the office and the music we listen to whilst working hard to tackle social inequality!

- Firmans Man- KAJ
- Don't Stop Believin'- Journey
- Dreams- The Cranberries
- What's Up?- 4 Non Blondes
- Go Your Own Way- Fleetwood Mac
- (Something Inside) So Strong- Labi Siffre

- Nessun Dorma- Pavarotti

Glossary

AHRC - Arts Humanities Research Council

BCUHB- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Bob Talks- TEDx-style talks given by CYP around a specific topic. Name inspired by a talk given by Ysgol Eirias at the Wrexham Wellbeing Festival (July 2024).

CU- Children's University

CYP- Children and Young People

NWCEP (North Wales Civic Engagement Partnership)- A partnership of change makers from across the region, brought together with the aim to align priorities, facilitate regional collaboration, build capacity and maximise resources across the landscape to best tackle key societal challenges.

NWCU- North Wales Children's University

NWIP (North Wales Insight Partnership)- A partnership of people and organisations developing and delivering innovative projects across the region, centred around the 3 key areas of research, innovation and systems change.

NWPSL (North Wales Public Service Lab)- A physical and virtual space to bring leaders together to work differently. Building capacity and capability to drive innovation around collective challenges.

OECD- Organisations for Economic Co-operation and Development

PSBs- Public Service Boards

QAA- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

REF- Research Excellence Framework

SPARK- Social Science Research Park (Cardiff University)

TCM- Tomorrow's Changemakers Programme

TiD- Trauma-Informed Design Society

TrACE- Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences

WIN- Wales Innovation Network

