

THE

CITIZENS' VOICE



"An educated electorate is a powerful electorate. An informed citizenry is the greatest defender of freedom. An enlightened government is a democratising government." Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General



MAKE THE MEDIA WORK FOR WALES



The Open University in Wales (OU) and the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) are working together with people from all over Wales to explore how the media, news and information in Wales can be improved. We want to understand where people get their news and information from, how much they trust it, and how it makes them think and feel about politics in Wales.

In summer 2022, 15 local people from different parts of Wales came together online to discuss, debate and learn. The prompt for discussion was the question: *How well does the news help Welsh citizens to understand politics?*

At the end of the process the Citizens' Panel put forward recommendations to improve how the media works in Wales. Behind all the recommendations

is the idea that reliable sources of news and information allow people to make informed choices about the issues that matter to them, including participating in democratic processes like elections.



RECOMMENDATIONS

After listening to a range of experts and sharing their own opinions and ideas, the Citizens' Panel agreed that three big things are important if we are to make the media work better for people in Wales.

1...



MEDIA REGULATION

The Panel agreed that we must find a way of making sure that ordinary people can trust what they are hearing, reading and watching. It is difficult to make changes in Wales because so many newspapers, television and radio stations and websites are run from London or from abroad, but the panel think:

- At least some important decisions about broadcasting should be taken in Wales
- A Shadow Broadcasting and Communications Authority for Wales is a good idea
- Ordinary people should have a say on media policy
- Media outlets in Wales should have trust ratings like restaurants have for hygiene.

2...

DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The Panel agreed that most people have quite a low level of understanding about politics. They thought the news does not help people understand politics, and also thought schools don't teach enough about democracy and how citizens can get involved. They also said there was little chance for adults to catch up on what they'd missed in school, so they recommended:

- Welsh Government should strengthen democracy education in schools and the wider community
- New qualifications should include teaching about democracy and politics
- Training should allow teachers to specialise in politics.



“HOW WELL DOES THE NEWS HELP WELSH PEOPLE UNDERSTAND POLITICS?”

3...



RECOGNISING WELSHNESS

The Citizens' Panel agreed that our current media does not properly reflect communities in Wales. Lots of our news comes from London and is inaccurate or only about England. They also felt Welsh people don't have enough information about Welsh history and culture, including the Welsh language, so they said:

- Welsh Government funding for Welsh public interest journalism is a good idea
- Education resources about democracy in Wales should be created with ordinary people for ordinary people and promoted through schools and in communities.

The OU and IWA were assisted in this research by The Sortition Foundation who recruited the participants for the Citizens' Panel, ensuring that the selection reflected wider society, and Mutual Gain who helped to design and deliver the work. We also thank the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust for their funding of the IWA's work on media and democracy.

