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# **Towards a social justice agenda in Wales**



**edited by Victoria Winckler**

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autumn conference held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2003  
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## About the Bevan Foundation

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# Preface

The Bevan Foundation's autumn conference is fast becoming an essential event for all those concerned with social justice in Wales. Following on the appointment of Mrs Edwina Hart AM as Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration in April 2003, the Bevan Foundation organised a forum at which the key features of social justice in Wales, and how it might be promoted, could be discussed.

In choosing the subjects to be addressed our aim was to highlight the key dimensions of social justice – around equalities and diversity, working life, and health and wellbeing especially of children. We were delighted that such a distinguished panel of speakers agreed to contribute, to the conference and that some 50 delegates attended on what turned out to be a glorious autumn Saturday in Tredegar. Together they made for a lively and thought provoking discussion.

Unfortunately, technical difficulties meant that we are unable to publish a full account of the proceedings as we had hoped. Nevertheless, we believe that the presentations made by the speakers provide an invaluable contribution to developing a social justice agenda in Wales.

Victoria Winckler  
Director,  
The Bevan Foundation

# 1. The Welsh Assembly Government's Vision for Social Justice

**Edwina Hart AM**

I thank you for the opportunity to address the Bevan Foundation on the subject of social justice and to do so as the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration.

I thought to myself when I was coming up in my car today on the Heads of the Valleys road, looking across at the mix of houses, old and new, what does social justice mean to all those people, all those individuals? So, during my contribution I want to give a vision, but I also want to focus on practical issues that need to be tackled by the Social Justice agenda.

In last May's election Welsh Labour gained sufficient support from the people in Wales to form a Labour Government within the Welsh Assembly. We achieved this despite an electoral system which was designed to prevent the creation of a single party government. We may regret the low turn-out but it was nevertheless an outstanding endorsement of Labour in Wales and a stunning rejection of the reactionary forces of conservatism and nationalism.

Majority Government brings its own responsibilities. Without the constraints of minority or coalition, we now have no excuse – we must deliver on our manifesto and on our programme. My message is that the programme of Labour in the Welsh Assembly is at its core a programme for social justice. I acknowledge that this is going to be a very difficult task, because as the Minister I do not hold all the levers - many of those levers are held by the U.K. Government, others are held by other Ministers, fellow cabinet members. So when you look at the prospect of achieving the social justice agenda I am dependent on the collective will of Government. Of course that is all very easy in theory but at the end of the day, the reality of the Government is such that the silo mentality of budgets and departments remains.

If I can turn to a hero of mine, John Smith. Ten years ago John Smith, the then Leader of the Labour Party, established a Commission on Social Justice. John Smith said at the time:

*“The scourges of poverty, unemployment and low skills are barriers, not only to opportunities for people, but to the creation of a dynamic and prosperous society. It is unacceptable to continue to waste our most precious resource – the extraordinary skills and talents of ordinary people”*

I feel quite passionate about that statement, because it is the extraordinary skills and talents of ordinary people that do transform society.

By the standards of the United Kingdom, Wales remains a relatively poor country. This poverty is visible in parts of Wales – it is not masked poverty, you can actually see it, or you can look at statistics for children in poverty and you realize that this is unacceptable. And the message from John Smith was that we achieve our new prosperity by working with all people to release their skills and talents.

As socialists we know that there is no choice between enterprise and social justice – we achieve a dynamic and prosperous Wales through our programme of social justice.

In the past year the Bevan Foundation set out a powerful new policy agenda for the South Wales Valleys. My point today is that we should work to achieve that bold vision for vibrant valleys not just because the poorest people of our valley communities need a better future – but because Wales as a whole cannot achieve its potential until we realise the potential of the poorest people in our poorest communities.

## **More and Better Jobs**

In September, Rhodri Morgan set out the strategic direction for our new government in a document entitled ‘Wales: A Better Country’. Stress is placed on the fundamental importance of getting more people into jobs and ensuring that the quality of those jobs is always improving. It is obvious that this is the foundation for social justice.

The first two propositions on social justice set out by John Smith’s Commission were:

- Paid work for a fair wage is the most secure and sustainable way out of poverty; and
- We must radically improve access to education and training and invest in the talent of all our people.

We are making progress and will continue to do so.

The minimum wage introduced in 1997 was a direct result of the Social Justice Commission. The minimum wage was an announcement to every investor that the poorest communities of Wales and Britain were not available for the extremes of exploitation – forced into the lowest quality of jobs for the poorest wages. It was a declaration that the poorest communities would compete on the basis of their real potential - not on the basis of cheap labour.

Along with many other policies of Labour in Government, we can now begin to see the results. More jobs are now being created in Wales than in any other part of the United Kingdom. There are now 54,000 fewer economically inactive people in Wales than just a year ago.

It is not just about getting more jobs. We also want to see a more highly skilled workforce that can meet the needs of employers and generate the good, well-paid jobs of the future. An important aspect is our approach to improving the level of basic skills. About a third of our people have significant deficiencies in their ability to read, write and handle numbers, and there is no doubt that for many this is holding back their ability to obtain jobs and rise up the employment ladder. Our Basic Skills Strategy, for example, also has a range of support available for adults.

We also have a good working partnership with Jobcentre Plus to ensure that their New Deal and other programmes are effective in Wales. One such example is the Pathways to Work pilot that is about to start in Bridgend and Rhondda Cynon Taff. This will help address the health-related barriers that prevent many people on long-term incapacity benefits from returning to work. Jobcentre Plus will work closely with the two Local Health Boards to test a range of innovative measures to address the barriers that people find in their way into employment.

A priority in my new portfolio is to encourage, develop and sustain social enterprises at all stages in their development. We are currently consulting on the Social Enterprise Action Plan which has been developed in accordance with our economic development.

Our social justice aims require that economic opportunities are available in each and every community in Wales. There is huge significance in the draft Wales Spatial Plan which my colleague Sue Essex has published. The Bevan Foundation has recommended that we develop a vision for the whole of the south Wales valleys and their inter-relationship with the coastal belt. The Spatial Plan offers a first outline of that vision and asks all of you to contribute to it. It is on this basis that we can encourage business investment and plan government investment into transport, economic development and urban regeneration.

## **Better Health**

On of my last acts as Finance Minister in the first Assembly Government was set up a review of Health and Social Care to be advised by Derek Wanless. The report from that review is I believe one of the most radical documents ever to come out of Welsh government. Its conclusions go to the core of our social justice agenda and deserve to their place at the centre of new strategy of the second Assembly Government.

The Wanless report noted that there was substantial unmet demand for hospital care in Wales. It then makes the brave and radical recommendation that we should invest no more resources into hospital care – the problem is not too little supply for general hospital services but too high a level a demand. The people queuing for hospital places would very often be better served by enhanced

primary health care in their communities. They would be very often be better served by better social care in their own homes. With less poverty, better jobs, more hope and confidence – there would be better life-styles, better diet, a culture of fitness; all of which would transform the demand for health care. This is why our health objectives are so inter-related with our social justice objectives.

## **Stronger Communities**

The third pillar of this Government's social justice agenda is build on our commitment to strengthen the communities of Wales. I go back once again to relate our the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy of 2003 to John Smith's Social Justice Commission which stated as its fourth proposition:

*"We must reconstruct the social wealth of our country. Social institutions, from the family to local government, must be nurtured to provide a dependable social environment in which people can lead their lives. Renewal must come from the bottom up as well as the top down."*

Those words go a long way to capturing the particular responsibilities that I have in the Welsh Assembly Government. They include anti-poverty initiatives, the social economy, the voluntary sector, housing, community safety, relations with the police, the fire service, drug and alcohol abuse, youth justice, equality and the development of the Communities First programme.

Communities First remains fundamental to the Welsh Assembly Government's vision of building a better Wales. Its success lies in building the confidence; raising the self-esteem and the aspirations of local people; and helping them meet these aspirations for themselves and their communities. We in the Assembly and our partners in local government and beyond must provide the necessary support to ensure this happens.

This is not easy and in the first few years of Communities First we have had the ambition that allows us to take risks – sometimes we succeed, sometimes we don't. The challenge now is to learn and develop on the basis of being honest in identifying where things have worked and where they have not. The Deputy Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Huw Lewis, is reviewing Communities First to assess its impact at the strategic and local levels. He will make recommendations that we can all consider in developing our policies.

Similarly, the well-established Community Safety Partnerships are a central plank of policy, in which police and local authorities share the lead. These are now having a very real impact across Wales. Local community safety strategies reflect people's concerns and seek to address the sort of offending or nuisance behaviour which afflicts them most and which can drag whole communities and individuals down.

We have:

- Channelled £1.5 million into the provision of CCTV in 13 Communities First Areas throughout Wales; and

- Put £11.2 million into a new Safer Communities Fund over the next three years. Over £8 million of this will go to Community Safety Partnerships for projects, which focus on youth crime and disorder, with a particular emphasis on work in deprived communities. This is significant funding which will enable Partnerships to make even more of a difference.

I am particularly pleased that all the Welsh police forces are committed both to community policing and to the regeneration agenda. South Wales police are engaging directly with Communities First projects and 35 officers have been introduced into 7 areas to provide specific support and a very visible police presence; this activity is set to expand. In North Wales, there are plans to introduce community beat managers into 26 Communities First areas through an Assembly/Police partnership.

It is now just over a year since I took on the responsibility for substance misuse. In this time I have become only too aware of the devastating effect this scourge has on communities in Wales and I have made tackling it one of my top priorities. Last summer I launched a public consultation which debated the future for the delivery of services and also looked at early findings of treatment review. Resources have been increased from £3 million to £12 million per year by 2005-06, with additional one-off increases that bring the total increase to nearly £20 million so far for 2003-06. A number of initiatives and projects have been started and more will get off the ground shortly including the Rhondda Treatment Services Initiative.

## **Conclusion**

I may be the Minister of Social Justice but I cannot achieve my objectives unless we succeed in being a Government of Social Justice. The people of Wales have invested their trust in this Welsh Assembly Government. The people of Wales have a long tradition of social justice. They recognise that a dynamic and prosperous society must provide opportunities and a fair deal for all.

I am keenly aware that there are high expectations of this Assembly Government. To meet these expectations we must govern with innovation and imagination. We must learn new ways of bringing all part of government together, working across boundaries, working across ministries, working across central and local government, learning to match the energies of local people in their communities with the strategic support of a national government. We must provide both leadership and a modest recognition that governments only succeed when there is a real partnership with the people.

## 2. **Social justice for children and young people in Wales**

**Catriona Williams**

It is said that a society can be judged by the way in which it treats its children. In Wales there are around 668,000 children and young people under the age of 18 years, the age range covered by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

To be part of society, one has to feel included and valued. In Wales today, however, there are thousands of children and young people who feel totally excluded for a variety of reasons. Adults can also be in the same situation, but there is a double jeopardy for the under 18's. They have no real say in society because they are unable to vote. In addition the view has prevailed that children should be 'seen and not heard'.

### **Children's Human Rights**

In the UK as a whole, society views children as different in a range of significant ways. They are not really part of the community and are regularly referred to as 'future citizens'! As such they are rarely involved in decision making about aspects of life that affect them. Another difference relates to the physical chastisement of a child which is allowable by law provided it does not constitute 'significant harm' whilst hitting an adult is legally an assault!

Children are also regarded by society as either 'villains' or 'victims'. This view is promoted particularly by the media, through which children are rarely treated as valued citizens, unless of course associated with the unhelpful hype of the 'heart of gold' image. As a result, children and young people are rarely involved in decisions affecting their lives. Of particular note is the omission of both the media and government to publicise the fact that children are more likely to be killed, especially babies, than adults.

The UNCRC is the minimum set of standards against which countries can measure themselves. When a Country ratifies the UNCRC, it takes on obligations under international law to ensure the realisation of all rights in the UNCRC for all children in their jurisdiction. Article 4 requires countries to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for implementation.

While it is the state which takes on obligations under the UNCRC, its task of implementation and of making a reality of the human rights of children, needs to engage all sectors of society and of course children themselves. Ensuring that all

domestic legislation is fully compatible with the UNCRC and that its principles and provisions can be directly applied and appropriately enforced is therefore fundamental. In addition, the UNCRC Committee has identified a wide range of measures that are needed for effective implementation, including the development of a range of special structures and monitoring, training and other activities in government at all levels.

The UNCRC Committee's response to the UK Government's first report presented in September 2002 included the strong recommendation to withdraw the reservation on the Nationality and Immigration Act where children can be separated from their parents if they fall foul of the immigration legislation! The Committee also strongly recommended the withdrawal of another UK Government reservation that allows children to be locked up with adults. Other criticisms included the lack of a co-ordinating mechanism; lack of training for professionals on the UNCRC; insufficient expenditure in the social sector; high numbers of children living in poverty; high numbers of reports of physical and sexual abuse; lack of legislation re physical chastisement; low age of criminal responsibility; homelessness; high number of teenage parents.

However the UNCRC Committee's response to the Second UK Government's report in 2002, whilst making reference to previous recommendations and making new recommendations, did include some positive comments. Wales actually fared better than England through the active development of initiatives promoted by Children in Wales and its wide membership. Developments such as 'Funky Dragon'; a strategic approach to children's services; establishing the Children's Commissioner and incorporating the UNCRC into policies were praised.

There is however no room for complacency and more than words is needed to ensure social justice for the young. Child impact statements should be produced for all Welsh Assembly Government and UK Government policies to avoid unintended consequences for children. Consultations with children and young people need to be accessible and provide sufficient time for engagement and consequently for quality responses. The reality of the need for investment in and support for core front line services must be recognised over the plethora of new initiatives that denude essential services of core staff.

Finally, the reality of involving the young in important community initiatives such as in Communities First needs to be real and not tokenistic. Young people are well able to evaluate the success or otherwise of their involvement if asked. Children and young people have a vital role to play, so all community based initiatives should involve practices that ensure their active participation and the monitoring of the impact on children addressing matters such as the safety, play, leisure and transport needs of children and young people.

## **Key issues**

Wales has the highest rate of child poverty in Britain with one in three children living in households below the government's poverty level and twenty one percent of primary and eighteen percent of secondary school pupils entitled to

free school meals. In order to help prevent and eradicate child poverty in Wales, it is essential to implement a strategy that incorporates UK Government initiatives and targets. It is also crucial that children and young people's perceptions of poverty and its impact are central.

Equally important is the detailed analysis of child poverty in Wales and undertaking a systematic and regular review of children's well-being to monitor and evaluate the impact of policy on the poorest and most vulnerable children living in Wales.

The criminal justice system is particularly fraught in relation to social justice for children and young people. The civil and criminal courts must become more effective in avoiding delay when they are making decisions that affect children's future welfare. Regarding safety, children in Wales are vulnerable to being injured or killed through accidents on the roads, about a quarter of which are on journeys to or from school. In fact around forty percent of road accident casualties are children!

Finally, there are many groups of children and young people who are in particular need. One in five deaths of young people are due to suicide and around two thousand children are on the child protection register.

It is essential that accessible therapeutic services are available in every local authority area to support traumatised children. Regarding child abuse, Wales needs a national programme to develop services for children and young people at risk of sexually abusing others, so that early action is taken to change their behaviour. It also critical that there are sufficient universal services, that are accessible to all children in order to minimise the numbers of children becoming children 'in need'.

Disabled children, children in public care, refugee and asylum seeking children as well as gypsy and traveller children are all at risk of being denied social justice in terms of reaching their full potential, particularly in relation to health, education services.

Wales must aspire to all our children being able to reach their full potential and to quote a young person who felt socially excluded, 'we want to achieve and not just to survive'.

# 3.

## Issues for Equalities and Discrimination

**Kevin Fitzpatrick**

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) was set up just over 3 years ago. Our stated purpose is to help create the conditions in which every disabled person is equally valued in society. Our goal is to obviate the need for a commission at all; to embed the principle of equal treatment so deeply that it permeates all walks of life, unremarkably. It is a tall order, but that is no reason for not trying to reach this ideal. Part of the way to achieve such a goal is to enforce existing rights, and to fight for more new ones.

An essential part of the fight for rights however is in direct reaction to discrimination. Discrimination is rooted in ignorance and fear. These give rise to prejudice and the unreasonable behaviour of the discriminator is born. At its baldest, people discriminate against other people. The DRC's four specific interest is of course where disability is the excuse for discriminatory behaviour.

But the existence of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) clearly remind us that women and people from BME communities receive equally bad treatments. The women's and the civil rights movements, which have challenged these behaviours, have had varying degrees of success.

Here in Wales there is a language issue, and the press for a Welsh Language Act and the repudiation of certain behaviours in that context, has sometimes been portrayed as an equal opportunities issue. In the not too distant future, at least in the arena of employment, people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual, older people, and people of particular faiths will have some protection in law too. Others hope for protection in law against discrimination on the grounds of nationality.

In recent times the national government started a debate, not necessarily as well thought out as it might have been, about merging the concerns of all these groups of people together under the banner of a Single Equalities Body. The discussion began from at least these two perspectives:

- It is too expensive to replicate commissions for each pressure group
- There are ways in which each group shares concerns

The commonality of concerns is in principle perfectly acceptable at one level. Indeed, the value of trying to share resources to achieve an economy of scale is not in dispute either. When the DRC was setting up in Wales we tried to co-locate with EOC and CRE on that very basis.

It would be lovely to sit here and pretend that across all the equalities agendas, and I say *agendas* advisedly, that such commonality would surface as would allow for a single body to be effective.

Practicalities would interfere and render the body next to useless from a disability perspective. That is borne out by the experience in N Ireland and in Australia for example, in varying degrees, where disability quickly became the very poor relation.

One of the structural difficulties that would bedevil such a body is the constant struggle amongst bodies representing various strands of the equalities theme for resources. This is a structural difficulty not because a working model is impossible but because there is no way to compare the needs of disabled people against those of women or black or Asian people in an equal way. It is practically if not inherently impossible to decide which should take precedence on any logical basis when taken from our current starting points. Therefore the resolution of any disagreement about allocation of resources based on importance of need will always be piecemeal, unsatisfactory and open to challenge.

It is likely that matters of race would rise to the top and matters of disability sink to the bottom of any hierarchy of purpose or endeavour that a single body would attempt. There is no value judgement in that; it is not better or worse that race issues rise to the top. What is clearly worse is if one part of the equalities agenda would suffer at the hands of another, even if inadvertently. To try to structure a single body with our current starting points, including the length of times the respective commissions have had to deliver outcomes against their specific agendas, appears to me to be a hostage to fortune at best and at worst would descend into fiasco very quickly. If it did work it would only be because the personalities were strong enough to bring it off, and we cannot rely on personalities since they must change on a regular basis in each commission.

The fight for resources infects a wider group. Voluntary sector organisations live and die in a world of competitive bidding. Clearly, the voluntary sector is becoming more professionalised. Not professional, because there have always been very many dedicated professional people working in the sector, but professionalised. Voluntary sector organisations have been forced to develop in ways that reflect private sector businesses in order to meet the ever-growing demands of funders for accountability. This inevitably means a weighty bureaucracy and that requires certain elements of this professionalisation.

But it is this very professionalisation that removes the voluntary sector organisation by one step, from the people it serves. There are other ways in which this is happening throughout the sector but this is an important one largely because it is unnecessary and can be resolved. Indeed, some serious attempts are being made to deal with this complex issue by our keynote speaker this morning. Initiatives are growing that will help the emergence of a fourth sector, i.e. community born and bred initiatives, located in and owned by the community that the project will directly benefit. The resources issue is an important example, but it is still only one example, a device to illustrate a point. What's the point?

The point is simply that we need a shift; whether we call that a shift forward to a new place, or a return to former understanding whilst taking advantage of a forward movement in time to get to a new place.....

Commonality of concern, the sharing of issues between the equalities agendas, will not be enough to *practically* allow for structural changes in society. It is not contradictory to agree that a single equalities body is a good idea in principle whilst being heavily sceptical about its ever working thoroughly well in practice.

What then can make a difference? Surely the shared concern that women, men to a lesser extent, people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, gay, lesbian and bisexuals, older people, *children without a voice*, people of different faiths, nationality, language or culture...this list is so long it embraces everyone of us...surely what fundamentally affects each one of us is being treated badly because....and you fill in the lacuna from your particular perspective.

The supposed reason for the discriminator's behaviour is of less consequence than the behaviour itself. Someone might find wheelchair users abhorrent simply because they use wheelchairs, but then proceed to work alongside wheelchair users in a truly inclusive way. That person's visceral reaction, which is properly characterised as an aesthetic reaction in a moral sense, is translated into best practice from an equalities point of view. Of course, that is not as usual as the translation into prejudice and discrimination, but that is not my point.

The point I'm trying to grasp hold of here and is still feels very slippery, is that the discriminatory behaviour is what we must continually challenge. The bond between the various strands is that someone has taken exception to me as a disabled person, you as a woman, you as an elderly person and so on. [I resist the temptation to do the bit about the triple whammy of being a black, disabled woman as I find it slightly off the mark.]

There are commonalities of experience but there remain fundamental differences too. It is not that I can never come to understand what your experience as a woman is like...if you're prepared to spend the time telling me I get it just as if you're prepared to listen to my experience long enough I'd expect you to get what it is like for me.

One quick illustration of that: social work departments and certain organisations who should know better still get non-disabled people to do simulation exercises – so for example, someone goes out into the street blindfolded or sitting in a wheelchair for the day as if to learn what it is like to be disabled. But if you are pretending to be a wheelchair user and you are on an upper floor when fire breaks out and the lift stops working, you will not sit on saying 'I cannot get off this floor, I'm a wheelchair user'! Sitting in a wheelchair for a day will never help you to understand what it is like to wake up every morning knowing that today again, and for the rest of your life, you are a disabled person.

So there are certain aspects of the differences that take a lot of time and effort to understand. The commonality of our experience has often been overplayed. But the way in which our experience is common is the very basic one of

'You cannot do this/come in here/be clever etc etc etc...*because you are x*'

My question is: can we not tackle the discriminator on that ground? Together?  
And form an anti-discrimination alliance?

# 4. Health and social justice

**Anthea Symonds**

## **Introduction**

Inequalities in health between social classes and groups in society have been well documented since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is nothing new in the focusing upon social inequalities to explain health inequalities. In recent years we have seen a number of reports chronicling this social inequality in health; from the Black Report in 1979 to the Acheson report on Health Inequalities in 2000. Currently, the Assembly government has a policy document on tackling health inequalities which is out at consultation.

The concerns expressed over health and social inequality can be divided into 2 main areas:

- Inequalities in access to health services and provision
- Greater vulnerability of deprived social groups to ill health and early mortality

## **Inequalities of provision**

It was a GP living and working in Wales, Julian Tudor Hart, who first coined the phrase Inverse Care Ratio to describe the built-in discrepancy in resources available to different regions. Those areas with greatest need receive less resources, areas with less need receive higher resources. This can be mirrored in the present day with areas of high deprivation in Wales suffering from the greatest shortage of medical and health care staff. It is an uncomfortable fact, that as the social policy theorist Richard Titmus noted, ever since the inception of the NHS in 1948, it has been the wealthier middle classes who have gained the easier access, use and provision of health care services within the NHS. Many studies have shown that the length of GP consultations, early referrals to hospital, access to surgery and recovery rates are directly related to the social class background of the patient.

## **Greater vulnerability**

When looking at incidence of chronic disease, morbidity and early mortality (with the exception of certain conditions) there is a direct social class gradient. In basic terms, the poorer you are, the higher your vulnerability. This can be 'caused' through many factors:

- poverty
- Unemployment / lack of education
- Bad housing
- Environment
- Pollution
- Mental stress and fear
- Lifestyle

The overall causes of ill health can be further categorised into the following areas:

- Social – poverty, work, housing, environment
- Individual – lifestyle, genetics
- Service - inadequacies of funding and access

As a further illustration of the connection between social deprivation and ill health let us turn to the seemingly 'random' nature of accidents. Surely accidents are just that, accidental? Everyone has an equal vulnerability to chance or fate haven't they?

- 11.000 people each year die in Wales as a result of accidents
- Deaths in road traffic, falls by elderly people and suicide are the 3 most common causes
- Children from deprived areas have 5 times the death rate from injuries
- Pedestrian injuries, burns and scalds are higher in deprived areas
- People in deprived areas are 5 times more likely to suffer a fire related injury
- High crime areas are also areas of high rates of ill health

All of these factors are linked and all render the poor living in deprived areas the most vulnerable. The 'health of the nation' has not and is not evenly distributed. But is this solely the responsibility of the Health Services?

## **The waterfall analogy**

The analogy of the waterfall is an often used one to argue for a wider and more preventative approach to raising standards of health. An approach which places the responsibility for health away from the individual and firmly within society itself.

The waterfall is situated outside a village, it is very dangerous and frequently people fall over the edge and are swept downstream. All the rescue facilities are centred at the point in the river where the bodies float past. This rescue operation takes up a large part of the village's resources and the mortality rate is high. Then one day, a person came to the village and suggested that instead of concentrating everything on the 'rescue' operations, a fence and safe path should be erected around the waterfall to prevent people falling in .

This solution is, of course, the basis of a true public health joined up approach. Let us now look at one area where policies are urgently needed to address the greater vulnerability of some groups to accidents and ill health, transport.

## **Transport**

- 168 people died in 2001 as a result of traffic accidents and over 13.000 sustained injuries
- Pollution and noise affects respiratory diseases and mental stress
- Children in inner city areas are more likely to suffer from both respiratory diseases and be victims of road accidents.

BUT

- Safe transport is essential to gain access to services and to maintain community and family networks especially for older people in rural areas.

This is an example of one policy area which can have a significant effect of health

## **Well being in Wales**

There is evidence that in Wales this lesson of a joined up approach has been taken on board. The Welsh National Government have issued a directive to Ensure that Local Health Boards and Local Authorities adopt a proactive approach so that action to promote health and top prevent disease and ill health sit alongside effective and efficient health services and are given equal priority. It is now up to local organisations to put in place real `public health' policies.

# 5. Gender and Social Justice

**Adele Baumgardt**

The following is the text of Adele's slides shown at the seminar. Her article on gender budgeting, which was explored during her presentation, follows.

## **A. Presentation**

### **EOC Wales Vision**

- For a society and economy that guarantees equality for women and men

### **Women and Poverty**

- The gendered nature of poverty
- Age issues and pensions
- Unequal impact of childbearing
- Cyclical nature of poverty
- Household income indicators
- Family breakdown

### **Children and Poverty**

- Lone Parent Households
- Teenage pregnancy and parenthood
- Wallet versus the Purse
- Children poverty levels

### **Equality and Services**

- Assumptions of gender neutrality
- Sport/Health
- Transport
- Childcare
- Work
- Pay – Part-Time/Low Pay

## **The Unpaid Caring Economy**

- Unpaid care – children, elderly, sick, those with disabilities
- Economic recognition
- Age profile and demographics changing

## **The business and economic case for equality**

- Individual business benefits
- Wales and the economy
- Social Justice arguments

## **What do we need to do?**

- Mainstreaming
- Gender Budgeting
- Gender evaluation in all public service area:
  - Transport
  - Childcare
  - Pay Reviews

## **B. What is gender budgeting?**

Most of us spend our money in a way which automatically evaluates its impact. When we buy our groceries, we think of ways in which products will create meals, who will eat them, what their needs and preferences are. We also select from products on offer, ensuring that the family budget goes as far as possible.

Most policy initiatives within Wales should already be firmly underpinned by the principle to positively promote equality. Most budgets and initiatives are assumed to affect everyone more or less equally to serve public interest and demand, and could therefore be described as gender neutral.

However what appears on the surface to be ‘gender neutral’ may on closer examination be seen to be ‘gender blind’. That is, the effect of expenditure may, in fact impact on one gender very differently to another.

A gender budget approach does not aim to produce a separate budget for men and women, but to analyse expenditure, or resource allocation from a gender perspective. In this way it identifies the impact and implication of budgets and policies on women and girls compared to men and boys. This gendered approach can be effective at any stage of the budgetary process.

## **Examples of Gender Budgeting**

### ***Transport***

An apparently gender neutral transport policy, where access to roads, trains, buses and other public transport methods is not restricted to the use of any group, may appear to be gender neutral. Anyone may use them. However, depending on how policy is designed, its actual usage may be gender biased. If, for example, most buses are supplied for the busy commuter rush hour providing transport to workplaces for before 9am, the majority of beneficiaries will be men who work the traditional working pattern of Monday to Friday 9 'til 5. Women are more likely to work part-time or flexible working patterns, or need to reach childcare facilities before starting work, and may therefore be disadvantaged by such a policy. In fact, the study from which this is taken demonstrated that men were not using these services either! A gender budget approach would therefore inform service providers of how to increase usage in general.

### ***Public Service Delivery***

An example from Sweden is very interesting. Here a gender budget approach was applied to the ambulance services. Initially this was assumed to be a gender-neutral service. All people were dealt with on equal terms, given the same level of care and treatment. The project was studied from all angles – who called the ambulance, how quickly did it arrive, how was the patient treated. Surprisingly, results showed that more women than men called ambulances but far more men were rushed to hospital at top speed than women. Further questions were then raised, are men and women treated differently, or are men in more emergency need? The study also turned up differences in the way women and men felt they were treated. Women found ambulance staff friendly but that they did not get enough pain relief, for men it was the other way round. Again men and women were found to be receiving a different service. This study is still on-going and has raised awareness issues and budgetary impact questions in an area where previously gender issues had been nobody's concern.

### ***Sport***

Many countries have carried out gender budgetary work in the area of sport and leisure provision. In Australia, driven by the links to health and welfare, they have again started from the assumption that provisioning e.g. through a leisure centre is gender neutral. Statistics quickly demonstrated that usage and participation were very different for men and women, boys and girls. The reasons for this difference were evaluated and categorised and finances considered. Expenditure on maintenance of facilities predominantly used by men was compared to spend on activities used by women. (For example the cost of maintenance of a football pitch compared to a sports hall). Women's low participation was linked with 'time poverty', cost, childcare and access. Leisure centres were able to offer free ironing services, specific transport and childcare in exchange for aerobics lessons. All these initiatives had direct impact on budgetary spend and allocation and the impact on increased participation is still being evaluated.

## **Why should we consider a gender budget approach?**

Most obviously, it is a way of measuring fairness - money talks!

There is no doubt that talking about money and resource allocation concentrates people's minds. There are however other clear advantages to adopting this approach. It can contribute hugely to a more equal economy and society in Wales that better recognises and rewards individual contribution and increases our national prosperity and competitiveness.

## **Policy**

Gender Budgeting can inform policy making in a new way, ensuring that our resources are effectively applied equally, and become an effective tool in transforming our ideas of what is 'normal'. A society where men work 9 'til 5 Monday to Friday for 40 years with the same employer, women give up economic activity to stay at home upon marriage and care for children, family and the home; and where both stay married for life, is no longer a realistic 'norm'.

However many of our policies and infrastructures are built around just such a norm. As working patterns and gender stereotypes no longer fit the experience of men and women in Wales, we need to make sure that policies and resources are most effectively targeted at their new needs.

## **The Economic Case**

In general women's income over a lifetime is less than that of men's. This is due to time spent out of the labour market and discrimination within it. Again, in general, women are 'time poor' compared to men and carry the majority of unpaid caring roles including child and elder care, health and domestic responsibilities, have poorer access to private transport and therefore greater reliance on public transport.

Advice regarding the impact of life-cycle decisions is also lacking. A woman proposing to leave or take a break from the labour market rarely receives adequate advice about the long term financial impact of such a break, including the pension implications. A man, about to become a father, receives very little advice to facilitate more active fatherhood, or plan long term pension provisions. Raising individual and organisations awareness of the financial impact of their decisions makes good business sense.

Economic policies aimed at getting people back to work, may enable a greater proportion of women than men to enter or re-enter the labour market. However, these policies may, at the same time, make women 'time poor'. The disproportionate effect of increased child and elder care costs, and the burden of domestic responsibilities are not be addressed by these policies, unless a 'gender lens' is applied. Such policies need to be underpinned by effective approaches to address caring and unpaid activity burdens. Re-addressing paternity and unpaid caring roles can greatly reduce gender inequality. It can also

assist in addressing business priorities; drivers and assumptions regarding maternity costs and help challenge gendered assumptions and encourage female entrepreneurship.

## **What Difference will it make?**

Adopting a gender budget approach has an appeal to policymakers. It has clear links with economic prosperity, reduction of poverty, (in particular child poverty), helps address social exclusion, and contributes to sustainability. Getting more women back to work assists in increasing productivity; redressing the gender balance in the caring role, assists in preventing assumptions about who should take on certain roles; getting women into better paid, better recognised work, is not only fair, but also helps ensure pension provision. Where men and women are more able to equally access education, and childcare, and are more equally represented in policy and decision making bodies, not only will decisions made be more representative, but social exclusion will also be actively addressed.

Taking the gender budget approach asks fundamental questions about the needs of the consumer or recipient of services, and assists providers to meet their qualitative targets. This approach can help in avoidance of false economies, for example increasing the unpaid caring burden of (generally) women. It can help challenge gender stereotypes, and assist in tackling the long hours culture, which is currently the burden largely of men. It can help challenge our culture's perception of the 'norm', and increase individuals' choices. Outdated concepts of working patterns can be challenged.

All this demonstrates that you don't need to be an economist or accountant to be able to be involved in gender budgeting, or to be able to see the impact and implications of such techniques. Gender budgeting techniques can be complex and technical, but the principles can be simple and general.

Where previous efforts have sought to address women's rights and needs in special and separate development programmes, the gender 'budget' approach seeks to integrate women's needs into the wider picture, calling for the different life courses of men and women to be considered at an early stage and emphasising the need to monitor the different impact of policies and programmes on women and men, girls and boys.

This shift in focus recognises that the status of women cannot be addressed as a separate issue; it can only be addressed by considering the status of both sexes. And in doing so, it effectively improves the economy and society for all in Wales.

## **The Wales Gender Budget Group**

The Wales Gender Budget Group (WGBG) is an independent network bringing together people from organisations that have a common interest in the promotion of gender equality through the gender budgeting process.

The WGBG aims to promote gender equality in Wales through the effective use of gender budget tools in any policy decision-making and processes. The GBGW works closely with other gender budgeting groups in England and Scotland.

The WGBG has a unique opportunity to further this work within the Welsh context. The commitment of the National Assembly for Wales to equality through the Government of Wales Act is contained in Article 120 that the National Assembly for Wales shall 'make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that its functions are exercised with due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people'.

This legal imperative is unique and has already been the driver behind many practical implementations of equality programmes and in the approach to many of the devolved areas of public policy in Wales. This attitude to cultural change in Wales offers the Wales Gender Budget Group new and exciting entry points into the economic and policy-making strategies in Wales.

With so much high level, influential work of gender budgeting, already taking place within the national and international debate, it is not our intention to duplicate or repeat any of this learning. Rather it is our intention to build expertise within Wales on how this approach might have most impact on key devolved areas of the Welsh economy, policy and demography.

# 6. Social justice – a trade union view

**Felicity Williams**

Trades Unions and the Wales TUC welcome the creation of a social justice portfolio within the Welsh Assembly Government as the key to ensuring a co-ordinated approach to tackling improvements in economic prosperity and social well-being.

The Wales TUC's vision of a successful economy is one which is technologically innovative, ecologically sustainable and socially inclusive, an economy characterised by high levels of employment, based on fair terms and conditions for employees, and supported by public services which are properly funded and effectively managed.

The current economic and social circumstances within our most deprived communities are, we believe, a consequence of combined failures by the private and public sectors. The failure of the private sector can best be described as market failure with the communities offering insufficient profit potential to attract and sustain private sector employment. The failure of the public sector has been one of insufficient resource leading inevitably to a concentration on symptoms rather than causes.

Whilst the private and public sectors will have important roles to play if we are to move these communities out of deprivation, other initiatives born out of the communities themselves are needed to kick-start the process of recovery. Some examples are:

- **the development of Credit Unions.**

Membership of credit Unions is based on a 'common bond', where people work or live. Credit unions encourage both social and economic development on a local basis. They retain wealth within communities by encouraging local people to save. People can also develop their skills through volunteering opportunities in a credit union.

- **the development of Co-operatives:**

jointly owned, democratically controlled enterprises. which are owned and controlled by and for their members. They can be structured as Community Co-operatives, Worker Co-operatives or Secondary Co-operatives. There are already co-operatives across Wales which support the most disadvantaged members of our communities.

- **Enterprise Rehearsal Projects:**

These projects allow individuals to test out a business idea whilst still claiming benefits. ERPs are designed to release the entrepreneur in people who are not currently in paid employment.

The Wales TUC strongly believes that the success of the social economy is critical to removing social exclusion from Wales and to support people from deprived areas moving into jobs or starting their own business.

## **Pay**

What of pay? Wales is at the bottom of most UK pay indicators, which helps to explain why the number of income support claimants is on the rise here. 10.1% of the population claimed income support in 2001, compared with a UK average of 8.4%. Trades unions campaigned hard for the introduction of a minimum wage and whilst welcoming what we have, we continue to campaign to see it updated and indeed extended to all those in work.

A fairly paid workforce will have a positive impact on women in the workplace and community. While the National Assembly has no direct responsibility for equal pay, it does have a crucial role to play in promoting equal pay audits amongst the public sector workforce in Wales and amongst the suppliers who benefit from the £3 billion which is annually spent on public procurement in Wales. Similarly, trades unions have a crucial role to play in delivering equal pay audits in the private sector where much of this procurement will be sourced.

## **Economic Activity**

Whilst the Welsh Assembly Government has gone some way to helping the economically inactive, such as free prescriptions and free breakfasts for school children, more needs to be done to assist people back to work. Some suggestions from the Wales TUC would be:

- Setting up a Taskforce to investigate economic inactivity in Wales. A task and finish group, such as that which reported on 'Partnership at Work' might be the solution;
- Improving preventative health services;
- Improving and greater targeting of learning opportunities;
- Increasing childcare, residential day care and out of school provision;
- Subsidised transport to and from work for those out of employment for more than six months;

## **Better learning opportunities**

For those not in work, studies show that around half of the economically inactive have no educational qualifications, whilst for those currently in work, the need for a lifelong learning platform is absolutely critical to the economy of Wales, dependent as it is on a highly skilled, adaptable workforce with transferable skills. The Wales Union Learning Fund has shown how workplace skills can be boosted through partnership between unions and employers.

If Wales is to become a more dynamic, adaptable economy, then a greater level of importance must be placed on providing opportunities (and as importantly overcoming the barriers to participation) in key and basic skills. The Basic Skills Agency found that 25 per cent of people in Wales suffered from very low literacy and numeracy rates compared with 12 per cent and 7 per cent respectively in Germany. A recent study estimated that 30% of the gap in productivity between Germany and the UK could be directly attributed to poor skills. We also believe that there is an urgency for the Welsh Assembly Government to work with industrial training organisations for those skills that will be most in demand.

## **Improving Health**

Another key reason behind Wales' lower economic activity rates compared to the UK average is the significant number of people who are inactive because of long-term disability and injury. Following the pattern of lower economic activity rates, Wales has a significantly higher percentage of those economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability than for the UK. Unions traditionally have always been able to secure compensation for our members who are injured at work. Annually the TUC unveils yet another record year for compensation payouts, and over the last five years it has 'won' over one and a half billion pounds for its members.

The more radical approach is to get people back to health and back to work, in other words, rehabilitation. The challenge is enormous. We need, as a society, to put at least as much effort into getting people rehabilitated back to work as has been devoted to getting unemployed people back into employment. That effort will include a number of different responses including,

- medical treatment provision - both traditional hospital medicine, but also especially physiotherapy, chiropractic and osteopathy. It will also include occupational health services
- adaptations to the workplace - to make sure both that people with an injury or illness can do the job they left, but also so that they don't suffer the same problems all over again; and
- retraining - so that where they cannot do the same job in the same way as they used to, they can still make their contribution and perhaps even do more.

Addressing the issue of rehabilitation and enabling people to resume their economic activity by getting back into work is an issue that should not only be central to the National Assembly's overarching objective of making Wales a better place to live and work but also in raising the competitiveness and productivity of business in Wales.

Rehabilitation is used widely elsewhere in the world to facilitate an injured person's return to work. The timely implementation of a planned rehabilitation programme, structured to meet the individual needs and capabilities of the injured person, has been shown in other countries to improve recovery from injury or illness. Yet the UK lags behind other industrialised nations in its provision of long-term treatment for people injured or made ill by work. There is a clear need to improve the current healthcare provision to optimise the opportunities of returning to the workplace.

And what of the role of occupational health? Is this seen as someone else's problem, a singular role of the NHS, the local doctors surgery or the personnel department? Most larger companies have some sort of occupational health service (OHS) but the majority of workers in the UK, especially those in small firms, do not have access to *any* sort of OHS. The NHS currently lacks the resources or expertise to provide a national occupational health service available freely to all. What services there are tend to be medically driven, often used as a disciplinary tool and, as they are not integrated into the health and safety systems at work, lack preventative effect. Training in occupational health is optional for medical professionals and therefore expertise is lacking. Consequently ill-health related to work is poorly diagnosed, poorly treated and many workers suffer long periods of ill-health without adequate referral or treatment and little chance of rehabilitation. Britain is one of the few countries in Northern Europe where all workers do not have access to an OHS.

The following are points for further discussion:

- Can the NHS in Wales do more to provide rehabilitation?
- Is there a role for Community based Healthy Workplace Services?
- Is the government doing enough to promote and encourage Occupational Health, both as a profession and as a service?
- Can businesses without Occupational Health Services share them with other employers?

English football fans (and others) were on tenterhooks over whether David Beckham would be fit again in time for this year's World Cup, after he broke a bone in his foot. By getting the best of medical care followed by comprehensive rehabilitation, he got on the plane against the odds.

The economy should really be able support someone to bend their back again as well as being able to bend a football again, but herein lies the truth. Our traditional response to injury, of compensation followed by a life of daytime

television is no longer compatible with the needs of a modern 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy.

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## **Better Transport**

The Wales TUC sees transport, and more specifically, transport infrastructure, as a key component of our economic agenda (attracting, sustaining and travelling to employment) as well as our social agenda (creating an affordable and accessible public transport network).

- Wales TUC wish to see the Assembly pursuing with the SRA policies that prioritise investment in those rail links that will best reduce congestion on roads and which directly contributes to labour market needs;
- Public transport continues to be patchy and unreliable for many. The Wales TUC sees it as a key part of the Assembly's duty to sustainability and equality that an affordable and accessible public transport system is in place for people across Wales, not just the major towns and cities. If the Assembly is serious about its commitment to social justice and helping those with no access to private and public transport, especially the economically inactive, then improvements towards a fully integrated public transport system must become a priority.

To summarise, I have tried to give you a flavour of the areas which trade unions see as key to tackling social justice in Wales. They are economic activity, fair pay, partnership working at all levels, lifelong learning, health promotion and rehabilitation, and transport. All of these taken together with the points made by earlier contributors are those which are necessary for a socially just society in the twenty first century.

## 7. Notes on contributors

**Edwina Hart MBE** is Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration and Assembly Member for Gower.

**Catriona Williams** is Chief Executive of Children in Wales, the umbrella children's organisation that promotes the interests of and takes action to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and their families in Wales.

**Kevin Fitzpatrick** is Disability Rights Commissioner for Wales and at the time of the conference national policy officer at the Shaw Trust. He is now a freelance consultant.

**Anthea Symonds** was at the time of the conference a lecturer in social policy at the University of Swansea. She is now a freelance researcher and consultant.

**Adele Baumgardt** is Director of Policy at the Equal Opportunity Commission, Wales

**Felicity Williams** was at the time of the conference Assistant General Secretary at the Wales TUC. She is now its General Secretary.