Is there a crisis in social care?

dignity • older people • extra-care • disability • citizens
costs • welfare reform • libraries • GCSEs
fairness commissions • sustainability
Join the Bevan Foundation

Join us and be at the forefront of new thinking to shape the future of Wales. Members of the Bevan Foundation come from all walks of life and include businesses, community groups, local authorities, trades unions, politicians from all parties and individuals of all ages.

Members have a say in what we do and also get:
- access to the latest thinking about social justice through our magazine, Bevan Foundation Review, published three times a year;
- insight into new ideas through our thought-provoking reports and pamphlets;
- opportunities to shape policy through our round table discussions and seminars;
- learning and networking at conferences and lectures;
- up-to-date information on social justice issues through our weekly e-bulletin

Membership rates for 2011-12:
- individuals: ‘Online’ £15 / ‘One Star’ £30 / ‘Two Star’ £120 per year
- organisations: ‘Three Star’ £120 (min for voluntary organisations) / ‘Four Star’ £250 (min for other organisations) / ‘Five Star’ £550 per year

For a full list of benefits you will receive by joining visit www.bevanfoundation.org

Name .................................................................
Organisation ........................................................
Address ..............................................................
................................................................. Post Code ...........................................
Email: ..............................................................
Tel: ................................................................. Fax: .............................................

the social justice think tank for Wales

You can also support our work with a donation in addition to your subscription.
I wish to pay as follows (please tick one)

☐ ‘Online’ £15 p/year  ☐ ‘One Star’ £30 p/year  ☐ ‘Two Star’ £120 p/year
☐ ‘Three Star’ £120 p/year  ☐ ‘Four Star’ £250 p/year  ☐ ‘Five Star’ £550 p/year
☐ Please invoice me for ........................................
☐ I enclose a cheque for .........................................
☐ Please charge my Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Switch ☐
Card No. .........................................................
Expiry Date .................................................... Issue No ........................................
Security Code (last 3 digits on back of card) ..................

Please return this form with your payment to:
The Bevan Foundation
FREEPOST RSHC - XZZU - UTUU 145A High Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8DP

Contents

2 Sir Deian Hopkin
The future of the library in the digital age

6 Duncan Forbes
The high price of the bedroom tax

9 Penny Simcock
Fit for work

12 Mark Drakeford
Crisis? Maybe

14 Chris Davies
Transforming to win-win

16 Liz Lloyd
Maintaining dignity in later life

18 Rob Taylor
Good progress - but where's the money?

20 Simon Pickthall
The power of communities

22 Gareth Rees
The great GCSE English controversy

24 Steve Smith
Fairness, apple-pie and motherhood

27 Suzannah Evans
Can we become a greener and more sustainable Wales?

30 Adrian Jones
New Cardiff, the wrong sort of aspiration

33 Paul Cabuts
Member Spotlight

34 NEWS

36 Find out more about... The WEA in Wales

Thanks to Peter Slater, Daneka Norman, Older People’s Commission and Brian Allan Community Housing for photos
The future of the library in the digital age

Does the digital age herald the end of public libraries?

Sir Deian Hopkin, historian, President of the National Library of Wales and member of the Higher Education Commission, argues that now is the time to revive the idea of a nationwide, integrated library service.

Libraries have long been regarded as the cornerstone of a civilised society, most clearly represented in the extraordinary philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie who sponsored the construction of over 660 libraries in the UK – “the universities of working people”. The National Library of Wales, like many other libraries and archives, was the product of similar philanthropy. It was public investment by local authorities and communities which largely created that extraordinary network of public libraries for which we all have such fond memories. And it is the deepest peacetime cuts in public expenditure in recent UK history which threaten so many libraries and archives at present. Over the past two years, around 157 libraries in England have closed or been handed over to volunteers and a further 225, including the archives of Ruskin College, are under threat. Wales, to date, has resisted some of the worst excesses but there is little room for complacency as the cuts deepen.

Technological advances have presented both opportunities and challenges to libraries. At first, computerisation and networking transformed and enhanced the role of libraries. On the other hand digitisation and the huge development of on-line services are often offered as alibis for displacing libraries on the ground that “everything” is available online and to everyone, and on the principle that private sector provision, such as Google, meets all needs. Some experts even suggest that over the next 20 years libraries as we understand them may cease to exist.

Just one example demonstrates the startling pace of change: between 1990 and 2011 worldwide mobile phone subscriptions grew from 12.4 million to 5.6 billion and now account for around 70 per cent of the global population. At the same time, developments in digitisation – especially Google books – and in data warehousing and “cloud” technology render the maintenance of large physical book collections less necessary. A recent survey of US university students revealed that 93 per cent preferred to find information on-line rather than in the library itself. On the other hand, whenever students are asked what they really want in their education, it is very often better face-to-face tuition, while the library is still seen as invaluable space, even if only to congregate and socialise.

This is where recent developments in library use offer a way forward. In recent years many traditional libraries have been transformed into community spaces, the locus of a wide range of activities, from children’s groups and adult reading classes to drop-in centres for council services. Some local authorities have even used their planning powers, as in the case of Tower Hamlets and the IDEAS stores, to create integrated library, education and advice centres as part of commercial developments by major retailers; others, such as Birmingham or Cardiff have placed new-model libraries at the heart of their urban regeneration strategy. Outside these metropolitan areas, however, the general picture is somewhat bleaker, especially in smaller and more remote communities where the removal of local library facilities, often in communities with low broadband provision and poor public services, can create real deprivation.

Wales, according to the latest surveys by OfCom and the National Survey of Wales, is a nation of fast adopters with more than two-fifths (39 per cent) of Welsh adults using smart-phones and a higher proportion using e-readers than England while 70 per cent of households and 77 per cent of adults have access to the internet. Yet this conceals a significant digital divide. 41 per cent of the households in the 10 per cent most deprived areas have no internet access and it is largely young people and the affluent who benefit from new technologies. Ironically the proposed new system of Universal Credit requires on-line access, something missing in the very households most likely to claim. This makes publicly-provided access crucial.

The National Library, for example, is in a unique position to combine those resources paid for by the Welsh Government but administered by the Library and those offered by the Library to its registered readers. Indeed, the Library could administer a national service for all Welsh schools. The case of public control of such services is also overwhelming given the increased power and influence of international commercial enterprises – none of whom is primarily motivated by charitable aims. However powerful these appear to be at this moment in time, history shows all too clearly that the life-cycle of businesses is inevitably shorter than public bodies. It is essential, therefore, that the ultimate control of digital archives is vested in publicly-accountable bodies which can, like the...
On the 60th anniversary of Aneurin Bevan’s powerful In Place of Fear, it may be salutary to remind ourselves how important libraries were to his generation of working class people and to reflect that if the current cuts go too far, the very people Andrew Carnegie sought to assist may be the losers – a new technological underclass. In a sense, treating libraries as a community asset brings the wheel full circle, back to the old miners’ institutes where the library was integrated into the social and education functions. And as we create new barriers to entry to formal higher education, certainly in England and, who knows, in Wales too if the present subsidy cannot be maintained, will we not need such alternatives more than ever, whatever benefits are conferred by digital technologies?

All of this raises the inevitable question: who pays? But also: where in the competing priorities of our age do libraries fit? How do you argue for the retention of a library when a hospital A&E is in danger of closing? Of course, some of the very same people who argue that there are other ways of getting books than using a public library, also argue that there are alternatives to the NHS for medical help. That, of course, is a much wider debate but one which exposes some sharp contradictions between public and private provision, and between short and long-term strategies.

Without doubt there will be continuing debates over the maintenance of buildings and physical resources at a time of economic constraint. But in the end, the physical world is more durable, predictable and, arguably, controllable than virtual space. With imaginative strategies, predictions of the death of the library may, like predictions of technological futures, be premature. But we need to be clear what kind of future we actually want.
In April 2013 an important change happens which will have a massive effect on tens of thousands of people in Wales and create internal refugees within their own communities and country. Working age tenants of councils and housing associations who are poor enough to get housing benefit but who are deemed to have too many bedrooms will be punished by having their housing benefit cut. In Torfaen, the reduction is approximately £11 per week if they have one extra bedroom and £24 if they have two or more extra bedrooms.

Don’t for a minute confuse having too many bedrooms with a ‘spare bedroom’. The Government’s definition means two children under ten are expected to only use one bedroom even if of different sexes, and children of the same sex are expected to share up to the age of 16. So, for example, a 15 year-old-boy, who is revising for his GCSEs, might have to share with his two-year-old-brother.

There is no allowance for parents who have access to their children – children only ‘count’ towards the bedroom requirement if it’s their main home. There is no allowance for foster parents who are supporting children in need – foster children don’t count when assessing bedroom need. And there is no allowance for grandparents having their grandchildren to stay a few nights a week so mum or dad can work nights and try and keep the wolf from the door. None of this counts – it is a brutal and rigid regime.

The UK Coalition Government says the changes are to require tenants to make choices about the size of their home. They can pay extra from their other income or they can move. But most haven’t got the money to make up the difference from their other income which is usually being reduced because it is a benefit being cut or because their wages are frozen or reduced because their employer is struggling. Secondly, they can’t move because we don’t have any homes to offer them. They will be forced into homelessness to become internal refugees.

Let me give you some idea of the scale of this issue I describe it locally as the ‘Torfaen Tsunami’. We estimate around 1,700 households in Torfaen will be affected, nearly 2 per cent of the area’s population. If the same impact had been created by a tidal wave, massive support measures would be financed and there would be enquiries and investigations. As this tidal wave is UK Government policy, nothing is being put in place.

Quite apart from the suffering this will cause, there are many unintended consequences likely to happen.

• **It could well cost more money**

  If a tenant in a three-bedroom house pays us £75 per week and is eligible for full housing benefit then moves to a one-bedroom flat in the private sector the rent is higher. So the housing benefit costs for that household will rise. The Government plan to try and save money through this change but it may end up costing more.

• **Fewer foster parents to care for children in need**

  The number of foster carers will reduce. Foster parents who have times where bedrooms are not in use will be penalised and have to pay part of their rent.
Domestic abuse will rise

Money problems cause stress and this is linked to domestic abuse. The welfare reforms could trigger more domestic abuse. As well as the awful human consequences for victims and children, the emergency services (police, paramedics, legal aid, hospitals, women’s aid, homelessness) required for domestic abuse are expensive and the demand for them will increase.

Child protection cases will increase

Social Care services have already experienced a surge in referrals which they attribute to benefit cuts. The ‘bedroom tax’ makes children a financial commodity. Families may respond by changing family caring and domestic arrangements in ways that create confusing and not necessarily beneficial changes for children for whom stability is essential.

Many settled households will have to move

Many of our tenants have been living in their homes for over 20 years and raised a family in that community where they’re happy and settled. Their friends and community connections will be lost if they have to move.

Families moving will disrupt education, child-care and medical care etc

Many who move will be families with children which is likely to have a major impact on the children’s education. A study by the Department of Work and Pensions of claimants identified the importance of support from family, neighbours and friends for child-care - even more so if households are working. If you force a family with this kind of local help to move and the arrangements collapse it can cause people to have to leave their jobs.

Impact on single vulnerable young people

The government wants to free up larger family homes but in Torfaen it is smaller homes that are already in shortest supply so ‘bedroom tax’ will increase the supply problem not improve it. Those needing to downsize will be competing with young people leaving care and young parents with one or two children so more and more people face being unable to get the housing they need.

Homelessness will rise

In Torfaen, we monitor the number of tenancies that fail in the first year so we can give support to reduce this happening. In 2011 the issue was young men so we designed services and were successful in dramatically reducing failures. Last year only one young person from a supported hostel lost his tenancy in the first year. But in 2012 this downward trend has reversed and numbers are increasing. For the first time, families are amongst households whose tenancies are failing within one year. We are analysing reasons but money problems seem most likely. As well as the stress of moving home and disruption to a child’s education temporary accommodation is very expensive to the taxpayer. A recent study by a housing student for her Master’s degree concluded that an eviction costs about £4,000 to the public purse.

Increased crime

Local police report that shoplifting has changed from luxuries to food as people are stealing to feed themselves and their children. These are just some of the unintended consequences of the change and many of these will end up costing more to taxpayers rather than less, but of course from a different departmental budget.

We in Bron Afon are doing what we can to support tenants through the changes ahead but in the end, we can’t provide the basic income they need. Only a fair benefits system can do that.

Amidst continuing controversy over the Work Capability Assessments administered by ATOS, Penny Simcock – formerly a social worker in a multi-disciplinary community team – describes her recent experience of accompanying a friend to an appeal tribunal.

My colleague Teg had become a single parent and life was not easy. She was working very hard as a community nurse, looking after her two boys and supporting her ailing mother and father. In the summer of 1988 she contracted a virus that brought her to her knees and within a few weeks she was admitted to hospital with acute anxiety and depression.

Three months later, Teg returned to work but she seemed to flat-line energy-wise. She saw several specialists and, eventually, a consultant in infectious diseases made the diagnosis of PVFS (post viral fatigue syndrome). Teg still has the
neurological damage caused by the virus – this accounts for the acute pain she experiences in the lower left quadrant of her body and her near constant state of exhaustion. In 1993, five years after onset, the NHS agreed early retirement and a small pension. She was awarded Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit. In time, life started to fall into an acceptable if dismal pattern: the ups and downs manageable and her boys grown up and supportive.

Then in 2003, at 50, Teg had to undergo her first major reassessment for Incapacity Benefit. It was stopped. She was utterly shocked by this. She had been assessed for 18 days and lost the appeal. The process exhausted her but she felt a deep sense of injustice and fought on. She had help from her local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and took her case to the Ombudsman. The decision to withdraw her Incapacity Benefit was set aside, the case to the Ombudsman. The decision to fade fluorescent yellow, which states ‘this lady will never be expected to work again’.

In February 2012, Teg received a letter from the DWP informing her that she would soon be required to attend a Work Capability Assessment. The anxiety, the pain, the insomnia, the exhaustion increased. Teg’s GP referred her to the Pain Clinic in May 2012 for a review of her pain medication to address frequent ‘break through’ pain and associated palpitations and insomnia. The appointment has still not come through.

In April 2012, Teg attended her Work Capability Assessment interview. As a professional she was appalled by it. The first half of the interview focused on her physical capacity and the second half on her mental capacity. There was no acknowledgement of the fluctuating nature of her illness or of the impact of her mental state and energy levels on her physical capacity. She felt the ATOS assessor did not understand the nature of her diagnosed condition and would not take on board Teg’s own experience of living with it. Teg was unsurprised by the outcome of the assessment, which she received in May. She had been assessed as having the capacity to work. She rang to ask for my support in the appeal she intended to make. She then notified the DWP of her intention to appeal and of my agreement to represent her, and forwarded new evidence challenging the DWP decision.

Teg received a letter back from the DWP to say that, pending appeal, part of her benefit would be reinstated (she would still lose £60 per fortnight) and that in due course we would receive the full set of documentation that the Appeal Panel would consider. Teg’s new evidence challenging the decision had been considered and did not provide grounds for the decision to be changed. At this point we contacted the CAB who agreed to advise us.

We noted two omissions from the appeal documentation which arrived in September: Teg’s daily log for March, given to the ATOS assessor on the day of Teg’s assessment, and our point by point response to the assessor’s grounds for her nil allocation of points, as sent off by Teg with the appeal notification. Significantly we had no copy of Teg’s handwritten daily log, so we constructed a new one for a week in October and sent this document and a copy of our ‘nil points’ response to the appeal panel. Teg sought letters from her GP and Consultant to support our various contentions.

The support from the CAB was excellent. Our adviser took an hour to make a thorough analysis of Teg’s case and within three days Teg received her cogent submission for the appeal panel, providing substantial evidence to meet the ATOS criteria for the allocation of points for lack of work capability.

On the morning of the appeal hearing in November, Teg said she felt weak from worry, pain and lack of sleep. She was very apprehensive, saying she and her sister had been treated ‘like dogs’ at her previous appeal. We arrived early, and sat in an ante room for 15 minutes watching and waiting. A middle aged man, accompanied by his mother, was waiting too. He was patently anxious. The woman declined to accompany her son into the court though he clearly wished that she would. There was an air of deep hopelessness about him as he went into the court on his own.

Our seats in the court seemed a great distance from the panel: a judge and a surgeon. We learned their names. The judge stressed the independence of the panel. Then he noted that information relating to Teg’s circumstances after the day of the decision in May could not be admitted as evidence. This ruled out Teg’s daily log based on a week in October, and recent information from her GP and Consultant relating to symptoms which had worsened during the summer. The judge explained the appeal procedure. The surgeon directed the questions to Teg whilst the judge took notes. I intervened on two occasions, on the first reminding Teg of an event in order to assist her in answering a question. The judge stopped me, saying very sharply that I was ‘leading’ the respondent inappropriately. On the second occasion I asked whether I might speak, and was permitted to provide evidence. I was told this was an acceptable way in which to represent Teg and that my evidence was relevant.

After half an hour the judge announced that the panel upheld the appeal, would set aside the decision made in May, to which date benefits would be backdated, and would recommend that Teg not be subject to further Work Capability Assessment for 18 months. Teg and I felt a sense of vindication, but much more strongly the sense of outrage that Teg and so many vulnerable others should be subjected to such an unnecessary, oppressive, life-consuming procedure. Teg is well aware that in 18 months or so there may be a repeat performance despite the fact that she will then be 61. And, if there is a next time, we wonder what might be the outcome, and with CAB facing substantial cuts, what help they will be able to provide.

There is a poignant doctor’s note on her papers from that tim e, high- lined in faded fluorescent yellow, which states ‘this lady will never be expected to work again’.

Our seats in the court seemed a great distance from the panel: a judge and a surgeon. We learned their names. The judge stressed the independence of the panel. Then he noted that information relating to Teg’s circumstances after the day of the decision in May could not be admitted as evidence. This ruled out Teg’s daily log based on a week in October, and recent information from her GP and Consultant relating to symptoms which had worsened during the summer. The judge explained the appeal procedure. The surgeon directed the questions to Teg whilst the judge took notes. I intervened on two occasions, on the first reminding Teg of an event in order to assist her in answering a question. The judge stopped me, saying very sharply that I was ‘leading’ the respondent inappropriately. On the second occasion I asked whether I might speak, and was permitted to provide evidence. I was told this was an acceptable way in which to represent Teg and that my evidence was relevant.

After half an hour the judge announced that the panel upheld the appeal, would set aside the decision made in May, to which date benefits would be backdated, and would recommend that Teg not be subject to further Work Capability Assessment for 18 months. Teg and I felt a sense of vindication, but much more strongly the sense of outrage that Teg and so many vulnerable others should be subjected to such an unnecessary, oppressive, life-consuming procedure. Teg is well aware that in 18 months or so there may be a repeat performance despite the fact that she will then be 61. And, if there is a next time, we wonder what might be the outcome, and with CAB facing substantial cuts, what help they will be able to provide.

---

**Work Capability Assessment Fact File**

| Number of completed assessments in Wales to date: | 86,900 |
| Proportion of claimants found fit for work: | 60% |
| Proportion required to undertake work-related activity: | 27% |
| Proportion not expected to work now or in future: | 12% |
| Proportion of fit for work decisions overturned on appeal (GB): | 38% |

Source: Department for Work and Pensions
Crisis? Maybe

Mark Drakeford AM, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee of the National Assembly for Wales, responds to the question ‘Is there a crisis in social care?’ with the words ‘Up to a point, Lord Copper’.

Is there a crisis in social care? When the editor of the Daily Beast, in Evelyn Waugh’s famous satirical novel Scoop, was invited to say whether he agreed with some particularly problematic opinion by the newspaper’s monomaniacal owner, his routine response was, ‘Up to a point, Lord Copper’. My answer to the notion of crisis in social care is comparable.

A number of reasons exist which argue that the notion of ‘crisis’ is too strong a term to apply to current circumstances and policy trends. In the first place, the suggestion plays hard into the hands of those who portray the growing number of older people in our population and the changing ratios between people of working and retirement age as inherently problematic and regrettable. In Wales, certainly since devolution, public policy has not been underpinned by such deterministic pessimism. Commissioner – policy has emphasised the Strategy and practical action to underpin it – by, for example, creation of the first Older People’s Commissioner; by more effective services, often and increasingly in the field. In our Inquiry, the Committee heard evidence calling for more urgent relation to publication of business plans, in advance of those seeking to enter the field, new and higher standards for a ‘fit and proper person test’ (as far as ownership is concerned) and new requirements in relation to publication of business plans, in advance of purchase (in order to underpin financial probity). So, is there a crisis in social care? Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. There are some very substantial public policy problems which need to be grasped and addressed. But there is also evidence of real achievements and new possibilities in key areas.

In the meantime, there are real problems with the current residential and domiciliary care markets. For some, myself included, the profit motive is, by itself, problematic in care services. Certainly, it becomes so when the market moves sharply in the direction of agglomeration, so that services are now provided by a small number of highly commercial, profit driven organisations which, as in the case of Southern Cross, become too big to fail. Profit is privatised, but risk remains in public hands, destined to pick up the pieces when things go wrong. Recent research by Corporate Watch shows that these risks are far from being eliminated as a result of the Southern Cross experience. Britain’s biggest private care home owners have combined debts of nearly £3bn. Three of the ten largest companies, owning a total of some 800 homes, have been assessed as risky by leading credit agencies, because of enduring concerns about their ability to pay off these debts.

There are some very substantial public policy problems which need to be grasped and addressed.

Finally, housing authorities have developed a new range of possibilities, especially in Extra Care which mean that wider choices now exist for people looking for a higher level of services than can be provided in domiciliary fashion. The very best provision seen by Committee members during our inquiry was found in new housing association developments, in which a variety of different needs were met through different types of housing, brought together in a single setting.

On the other hand, however, there are clear reasons for anxiety about policy direction. The whole issue of paying for care has been consigned by the coalition government at Westminster to the backburner, at best. Yet, we now know that the present local authority based system of funding is close to breaking point. Money is so scarce that resources drive decision making in a way which threatens to marginalise service development and the meeting of individual needs. The Welsh Government has set out a series of different ways in which care could be paid for in the future, but the interweaving of social security policy with charges for services in this area means that it has very little independent room for action. My own conclusion is that a social insurance system, drawing on Beveridge principles, offers the best way forward. Pooling risks and rewards in this way provides the greatest benefits for the greatest number of people. Of course, social insurance benefits have to be paid for by social insurance contributions, and it is not easy for any political party to campaign on the basis of increasing taxation in this way. One potential solution is to introduce the system for people aged 50 and above - the point at which provision in later life shifts from being a distant prospect to a more looming reality.

In the meantime, there are real problems with the current residential and domiciliary care markets. For some, myself included, the profit motive is, by itself, problematic in care services. Certainly, it becomes so when the market moves sharply in the direction of agglomeration, so that services are now provided by a small number of highly commercial, profit driven organisations which, as in the case of Southern Cross, become too big to fail. Profit is privatised, but risk remains in public hands, destined to pick up the pieces when things go wrong. Recent research by Corporate Watch shows that these risks are far from being eliminated as a result of the Southern Cross experience. Britain’s biggest private care home owners have combined debts of nearly £3bn. Three of the ten largest companies, owning a total of some 800 homes, have been assessed as risky by leading credit agencies, because of enduring concerns about their ability to pay off these debts.

Nor is this pattern confined to residential care. Behind the scenes, and in a way which is yet to attract the attention it deserves from analysts or policy makers, domiciliary care is heading in the same direction, with fewer and fewer, larger and larger, commercially driven companies operating in the field. In our Inquiry, the Committee heard evidence calling for more urgent action by regulators, in order to assess the financial health of suppliers of social care services and, for those seeking to enter the field, new and higher standards for a ‘fit and proper person test’ (as far as ownership is concerned) and new requirements in relation to publication of business plans, in advance of purchase (in order to underpin financial probity).

So, is there a crisis in social care? Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. There are some very substantial public policy problems which need to be grasped and addressed. But there is also evidence of real achievements and new possibilities in key areas. At root, if an older population is a problem, then pessimism reigns. If living longer is a cause for celebration, then, collectively, the challenges we face are ones we can tackle together.

This is an edited version of a paper given to a Bevan Foundation / University of Newport Conference on 2nd November 2012.
Transforming to win-win

Chris Davies, strategic adviser to Social Services Improvement Agency in Wales says that while the care system is under severe pressure, there is reason to hope that new ways of doing things will help to achieve good outcomes for people in need.

Is there a crisis in social care? Let’s start with six facts.

**First fact:** State-funded social care is reaching fewer and fewer people across the UK. This need not be a concern, as long as their needs are being met in other, better ways. But research evidence suggests that, when excluded by eligibility criteria or means testing, they are left with very little. The Institute of Public Care reports a 15 per cent drop in numbers supported in residential and nursing homes (2003-2010), and a 9 per cent drop in numbers receiving funded home care (2001-2010). Since 2009, the number of funded care home hours (which had been continuing to rise till then) has also sharply fallen.

**Second fact:** We are not matching peoples’ expressed needs. An NHS information survey found that key to satisfaction for home care users was continuity of the people calling, and reliability and promptness of the call. The EHRC found that “time to talk” and control over the tasks the home carer did was crucial. And yet, 25-33 per cent of home carers leave their jobs each year, employment is mainly casual, and carers are paid barely more than the minimum wage. Laing and Buisson report that 16 per cent of visits paid for by local authorities last a maximum of 15 minutes.

**Third fact:** Social workers now spend less than 20 per cent of their time in client contact. Assessments are tick-box dominated, and focus on listing deficits and then often result in no service entitlement.

**Fourth fact:** Residential care is now only available to state-funded elderly people because of a massive cross-subsidy from private payers. Good quality homes are only viable because they charge private payers about £600 per week for essentially the same care that councils pay £450 per week for.

**Fifth fact:** The cost of delivering care is rising. Because of the generally poor employment conditions in the sector, good things like minimum leave entitlement, minimum wage rises and automatic pension enrolment have a disproportionate impact. Oh yes, and then there’s the ever-increasing cost of fuel.

**Sixth fact:** None of this is because councils don’t think social care is important. Quite the reverse. They have protected social care from financial cuts at the expense of many other valued services. But the growing numbers of very elderly people in our communities and also of people with learning disabilities with complex needs, combined with the squeeze on council spending from government, means that the “gap” between expectation and delivery gets wider.

Is there a crisis? Well, there is certainly a lot to worry about, and we need new solutions. But at Westminster there is little sense of the kind of urgency to address the problems a crisis should generate. Social care is still not high on the political agenda. But only at government level can the funding gap be addressed, and we must increase our efforts to make the case in these difficult economic times.

More locally, there is reason to hope. There are new ways of doing things being tried out across Wales and good reason to think that the Welsh Government, in its new Social Care and Well-being Bill, will seek to encourage them. More of the same won’t do. In fact, more of the same will just mean “less of the same”, as we’re seeing already. We must all be willing to embrace quite radical change if we are going to get the best possible outcomes for people in need within constrained resources. Councils and their NHS partners are beginning to explore what can be achieved by getting earlier, light-touch help to people, designed to help them regain and keep independence. Information, advice, signposting, re-ablement, home safety checks, telecare, foot care, incontinence interventions, and connections back to their communities - the evidence is now very powerful that these things can restore real degrees of independence. A win-win: good for the individual, clearly, but also delaying more expensive hospital care. And we can reduce the process and bureaucracy costs by keeping the citizen where she or he ought to be - in control. Helpful, constructive and listening conversations rather than exhausting assessments are the key. We don’t need a panoply of case plans and reviews, but confidence that people know where to go when they need well informed help. Though we must always remember that the most vulnerable will always need special assistance and protection.

There are now moves, led by the Welsh Government, to focus more on outcomes for people. In home care, for instance, we can commission and pay for outcomes achieved rather than minutes put in, leaving the details of everyday life and support to the citizen/user to work out directly with the provider.

And we can stop doing things that don’t work and move the money to where it will have more impact. Winterbourne View care home in Gloucestershire (closed recently after a high-profile abuse scandal) was costing the state huge amounts of money, but with what outcomes for the individual? Evidence is also clear that some care packages for people with learning disabilities are actually disabling individuals. They are too heavy and detailed, not allowing people to have a sense of living lives that see them taking the same managed risks as their peers. And we know, don’t we, that hospital is unfortunately very rarely a good place to be when you are old, frail and confused. Decisions to move money and change patterns of services are hugely difficult – particularly for the health service - but we can’t avoid them.

So, I believe that if we encourage evidence-based innovation and adopt proven best practice we can transform outcomes for people in need. We need the support of the Welsh Government, with its welcome focus on care and support, and they must back brave and sound decisions, not over-rely on inspection and regulation, and look to reduce information and process demands which keep workers at their computers rather than out there with people.

The challenge is huge, and ultimately we must all value social care and the people who rely on it more highly through state funding. Yet there is also much we can achieve by reshaping how we think and what we do. Wales is a great place to do this.

This is an edited version of a paper given to a Bevan Foundation / University of Newport Conference on 2nd November 2012.
Maintaining dignity in later life

Dignity is frequently in the news in the context of scandals and exposures of abuse. As a consequence of these dignity is a big issue and, arguably, a dignity industry is developing. In English social care services dignity has become a key performance indicator, which will determine whether or not a care home is registered. As a result, consultants have emerged who provide independent advice to care home owners about whether they comply with requirements on dignity. However, despite this explosion of interest, it is clear that what often passes as a policy on dignity is little more than a restatement of basic care standards. A zero tolerance of abuse, the provision of individualised and person-centred services, a right to privacy and the promotion of service-user choice and control have become indicators of standards. A zero tolerance of abuse, the provision of individualised and person-centred services, a right to privacy and the promotion of service-user choice and control have become indicators of standards.

1. Dignity as merit

This is the oldest known version of dignity. It denotes high rank, such as might be due to a ruler. It also denotes achievement over and above the everyday, which is worthy of respect. This might come through official recognition such as in the honours system. It is unlikely that frail older individuals could achieve the dignity of merit, although they might have been honoured for achievements at an earlier stage of the life course or might be honoured retrospectively after death for what they achieved in their lifetime.

2. Dignity of moral stature

Dignity of moral stature describes behaviour that is in keeping with ‘the moral law’. It is inextricably linked with respect and self-respect. From the point of view of older people, the determination of a ‘fiercely independent’ older person can be understood as an effort to achieve moral stature by not being a burden. The dignity of moral stature is directly relevant also to care-givers because neglect or offensive behaviour diminishes their moral stature. The abuse of older people damages the dignity of the perpetrator as much as (or more than) the dignity of the victim.

3. The dignity of identity

Nordenfelt described the dignity of identity as ‘the dignity we attach to ourselves as integrated and autonomous persons with a history and a future, with all our relationships to other human beings’. From this perspective, dignity is automatically challenged by a reduction in or loss of capacity for self-care and increased dependence on others. This can lead to loss of self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence. The reference to the future raises specific questions about dignity in very old age, when the future ceases to be something to be planned for or looked forward to.

4. The dignity of being human

This is the only kind of dignity that is fixed. It applies to the fundamental human right to be treated with dignity simply because of being human. It applies equally to all, including those who lack mental capacity. Arguably, when the dignity of identity is threatened by illness and loss of capacity, this becomes the crucial focus of dignity.

Nordenfelt’s typology of dignity influenced a study of ageing and dignity conducted at the University of Bristol. This longitudinal qualitative study, Maintaining Dignity in Later Life, aimed to understand dignity from the perspective of a group of 34 people aged 70 and over who lived in their own homes and who needed some degree of help and support to enable them to do so. The questions we sought to answer were:

- What do participants’ accounts of their everyday life and relationships tell us about dignity?
- What factors are perceived to support or undermine a sense of dignity?
- How do they manage the transition from self-reliance to dependence when circumstances change?
- How do they see the future?

From our participants’ accounts we were able to understand how the dignity of identity is challenged by long-term health problems. They referred to the embarrassment of wearing bandages, not being able to wear shoes, having facial swelling, rashes, sweating, body odours or incontinence. Living with a colostomy or experiencing tremors or pain, losing the ability to bend, stretch or reach severely challenged their sense of who they were. As Lena (80) said: ‘I feel like a fish out of water’. Such bodily changes also affected their intimate relationships and their family and social life. Family members had become carers and this disrupted the flow of authority and dependency that they had been accustomed to.

The effects of illness were sometimes more public, leading to even greater embarrassment. Jonathan (85) talked about when he fell in the High Street: ‘I just fell down, and it’s very hard to get up. People had to help me up and it’s very humiliating’. It is notable that Jonathan felt humiliated not only by the fall but also by the need to be helped, which reflects the high cultural value of independence and self-reliance in British society and goes some way to explain how dignity is bound up with the moral imperative not to be a burden on others. The loss of physical strength and self-reliance were hard to accept and participants talked of the need to exercise mind over matter, to persevere with the challenges of everyday life. Yet at the same time, participants also talked about how they needed to be ‘sensible’ about their need for help. Being independent ‘to the point of being daft about it’ could be undignified, as Peter (78) commented.

Mind over matter could go only so far because matter would inevitably win in the end. A great deal of mental and emotional labour was spent in coming to terms with a changed identity and with the challenge to participants’ moral stature bound up with their growing need for help. The need for help is therefore a much more complex matter than a need for practical assistance with everyday personal routines, although this is what currently dominates contemporary care services. Participants gave vivid accounts of how respectful treatment by others was a boost to their self-esteem and helped to re-build a shattered identity. Yet, 22 participants gave accounts of rude comments, neglect or dismissive behaviour on the part of health and social care professionals, which not only breached their human rights but also exacerbated the loss of dignity they already felt. What participants said they appreciated were services run by competent and efficient people who paid attention to them, gave clear information in a constructive and helpful way and were kind, considerate and respectful. This complex and demanding stage of life is something we all face. The accounts of our participants showed that dignity is not something that can be ‘delivered’ by reference to a list of factors. Dignity is the outcome of respectful and considerate relationships and a high value placed on the giving and receiving of care.

This is an edited version of a paper given to a Bevan Foundation / University of Newport Conference on 2nd November 2012.

Liz Lloyd, Senior Lecturer in Social Gerontology at the University of Bristol, argues that dignity is more than ticking boxes – it’s about respectful relationships and giving and receiving care.
We are living in unprecedented times. By 2035, more than a quarter of the Welsh population will be over 65. Levels of people with dementia are also set to increase. It is estimated by Daffodil Cymru that by 2030, over 67,000 people aged 65 and over in Wales will have dementia – an increase of 27,000 from today’s figures. So the demand for social care is set to rise – but is care in crisis? This article aims to address this incredibly complex question from the perspective of older people.

For many older people later life brings enormous satisfaction. However – as the Age Alliance Wales Chair of Age Alliance Wales, Rob Taylor, says that lack of funding is undermining real progress being made in other aspects of social care for older people.

Good progress – but where’s the money?

We highlights in its recent report with the Bevan Foundation, ‘Wales: A Good Place to Grow Old?’ – not all older people are able to have the time of their lives when they reach 65. Too many do not get the health and social care services they need and too many are treated with a lack of dignity and respect. It is widely acknowledged that the existing arrangements for providing care in Wales are struggling under increasing pressure and a lack of resources.

In Wales, 39 per cent of people aged 65 and over say their health is only poor or fair, with ill health limiting the lives of about half of all older people in Wales. Consequently, thousands of older people rely on help from social care agencies and health services. Yet much of the care given in this country is given by those who care for their spouse, family or friends without payment. These carers save the state millions every year and need more support than they currently receive. It is also important to remember that for some older people in Wales their experience of social care is fantastic. They are supported to live effectively in their community in the way that they choose.

All too often, social care is only seen in its narrowest sense – the emergency, task-oriented service that provides meals or helps people to the toilet. This narrow vision means that other factors that improve quality of life, such as support to leave the house or meet other people, are often neglected and forgotten. This is the experience of far too many older people in Wales. For these individuals the social care system is routinely perceived as confusing, unfair and unsustainable. So what are the challenges?

First, the system does not provide for those who need it. With many authorities setting their eligibility criteria at “substantial” or “critical” levels of need, many older people are missing out. Policy on prevention is not matched with funding. Whilst it is known that preventative approaches, such as reablement services can be cost-effective, pressure on resources in many local authority areas inevitably means waiting until people are, or near, crisis point before intervening. This means the health and wellbeing of family carers can also be put at risk.

RNIB Cymru estimate that 50 per cent of care home residents have sight loss which is unrecognised and that overall, there is a lack of recognition of sight loss in people with dementia.

Second, the system is unfair. There is a postcode lottery for care – eligibility varies depending on where you live. For example, supply of assistive equipment to people with hearing loss is key in maintaining independence and reducing isolation, however 77 per cent of people with hearing loss say they are not given any information about equipment that is available to them when they leave an audiology department.

Third, it is impossible to plan ahead for future care needs. The first time many people have to think about social care is at some point of crisis, either for themselves or a member of their family. There is a widespread misconception that care is covered by the NHS – older people across Wales feel that the way individual financial assessments are conducted determine their contribution to care costs penalises those who have saved.

The system doesn’t treat people with dignity. Dignity articulates a minimum expectation of how we should be treated and is fundamental to good care. However we still haven’t found what it takes to maintain dignity when providing care and services – and in particular, when we are talking about providing care or services for older or vulnerable people. The system is also complex and difficult to understand. The care system must be straightforward and clear – people need accessible information which empowers them to make informed decisions. Independent advice and advocacy services are essential in enabling people to make choices on the care and support services that are right for them. However, largely as a result of unequal funding and support in different areas, the current provision of information and advice is patchy across Wales.

Last and not least, the system is under-resourced. There is simply not enough money in the system to provide good quality care. Social care expenditure on older people has not kept pace with the increase in demand and this has resulted in a system that is chronically under-funded.

The Welsh Government has had a clear focus on social care over the last few years and, in Age Alliance Wales, we are delighted that they have moved so decisively to bring forward legislation on social care. We very much support the ethos of what will now be known as the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill. The Carers Strategy (Wales) Measure became law in Wales in January 2012. It placed a responsibility on the NHS to work in partnership with local authorities, the third sector and carers to develop an information strategy and we hope that such a strategy will start to address this gap. There has also been a focus on dignity in recent years with the Welsh Government, and the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales championing the drive for improvements.

A national eligibility framework, with the threshold for eligibility set at a fair and reasonable level, can help achieve the aims of prevention and early intervention and will provide some response to the accusation that the system doesn’t provide support for those that need it – that it is unfair and overly complex.

However, legislation cannot deal with under-funding. Paying for care and care funding are the issues that successive governments have kicked into the long grass. Until this most basic and fundamental of all the issues is addressed, it is difficult to see how we can do anything more than ration, and struggle on with fewer and fewer people receiving the support they need.

So yes, social care is in crisis. The Welsh Government is responding to that crisis. Yet without addressing fundamental questions about funding, this response may not go far enough.

This is an edited version of a paper given to a Bevan Foundation / University of Newport Conference on 2nd November 2012.
The power of communities

We must challenge our thinking about how social care should be designed, argues Simon Pickthall of Vanguard Consulting, who has been inspired by seeing the results of that change in thinking in a local authority in Wales.

I have previously written about the excellent work being undertaken by a social services team in Wales. They are focusing on the strengths of individuals, rather than an assessment of their needs, with amazing results. In addition, they are working on throwing the bureaucracy out of their system - focusing on doing only the work that makes a difference to the citizens of Wales.

A crucial element of their work is to move away from a menu of services, where people are forced to choose from a list of commissioned services that may or may not meet their needs. I was told of a story in Children’s Social Services, where a mother of a child with learning disabilities described her interaction with the authority. She stated that she ‘is offered Sunday lunch, when all she wants is a sandwich’. Her comment was made in relation to respite care, where the local authority only offered overnight care. However, she only wished for a couple of hours respite care to do some shopping. She stated that she felt compelled to take the overnight respite care, even though it was more than she needed, as she was worried she would not get offered any alternative.

This shows how important it is to really understand people interacting with social services. Individuals have, by definition, individual needs and if we offer a menu of prescribed services we are unable to meet these individual needs, and we spend more money than we need to. In this case, more money was spent because we did more than the person wanted. In other cases, it costs us money because we do not help the person properly, so they return time and time again. Just look at the percentage of demands placed on social services from people who are already known to the system. Some of these can be explained by deteriorating circumstances, but there are vast numbers of other repeat interactions. These are often due to the fact that the system is unable to respond in such a way that helps them with their individual needs.

However, we should not make the mistake of thinking we merely need to offer a wider range of services. There are other ways to respond to this problem. Taking the principle that we should build on people’s strengths rather than focus on their needs, leads us to ask better questions, such as “What does a good life look like to you?”, and “Tell us about your interests, talents and skills”. This is extremely effective in setting up the relationship between social services and citizens, as it moves firmly away from a dependency or ‘customer service’ model, where services are provided as commodities.

If a social services team can respond creatively to the answers to these questions, by helping citizens seek the support they need through strengthening community links and groups already active in the community, the risk of dependency is further reduced. In addition, as human beings, we do not like to be a burden and take great pleasure in giving something back. Helping people through existing community assets enables them to contribute their life experience in addition to receiving support. This is not possible for services such as home care, etc.

Additionally, the benefits in reducing costs for social services and health are obvious. As an example, one older lady, who was receiving home care in the morning, contacted the social services team asking for some additional help at night. The old way of responding would have been to offer her additional home care in the evening. However, by dramatically changing their assessment approach and asking better questions, the social services team discovered that the lady was previously closely linked into the community through her love of needlework. By re-establishing those links, the team were able to dramatically improve her quality of life, by creating meaningful and supportive connections. In addition, she stated that she no longer needed evening home care support, as her friends were going to help her.

The extension of this approach is to work within communities themselves, before matters come to the attention of social services. This is the next step for the social services team I discussed at the beginning of this article. They are pressing ahead with work on Local Area Coordination – an approach to community support developed in Western Australia since 1988. It is one of the most independently reviewed approaches to social care provision that I have come across - all reviews point to incredible results for individuals, communities and lower costs to the state. However, it remains relatively small in the UK. Small pockets of work are underway in Wales, and some larger examples are in progress in Scotland and England.

Local Area Coordination is driven by individuals within communities, who have a keen knowledge of the community support available and are able to match individuals together. They actively form partnerships, continually increasing the resilience and strength within communities. By working closely with social services and other public bodies, they help the public sector move to a preventative model.

It is a change in thinking that enables these dramatic and positive changes to flourish. We must challenge our existing thinking about how social care should be designed and managed. The best way to do this is spend time understanding the current system from the perspective of the people it is designed to help. Book the time in your diary to do this – it will be time very well spent.

If you wish to learn more about Local Area Coordination, the following resources may be of interest: www.inclusiveneighbourhoods.co.uk/ and www.livesthroughfriends.org.
The great GCSE English controversy

The publication of the GCSE results in August this year (2012) was marked by more than what have become the usual complaints about the supposed declining standards of Welsh schooling. There was a very public spat between two Education Ministers: Leighton Andrews in the Welsh Government, and Michael Gove in the UK Government (with responsibility for education in England). For quite some time, the two Ministers traded – metaphorical – blows over the rights and wrongs of the assessment of GCSE English; and the repercussions of their falling out continue to rumble on. At one level, of course, this rather sorry tale tells us no more than that we currently have two notably pugnacious politicians occupying equivalent positions in their respective governments. Conflicts are to be expected, especially as they are from different political parties. However, there are also more profound lessons to be learned from the episode. It opens up a number of quite basic questions about the nature of the devolution settlement, as well as about the purpose of assessment of educational attainment in our schools system.

This is not the place to provide a detailed account of the events themselves. In a nutshell, when the GCSE results became known, considerable concerns were expressed across England and Wales that the grades awarded for English Language appeared significantly lower than was expected. In particular, schools, teachers’ organisations, as well as students and their parents argued that the assessment methodology that had been applied had resulted in significant injustices; many students had received lower marks than they should have, with significant consequences for their progress to further and higher education, and to employment. What differed very dramatically, however, were the responses of the two Ministers. In England, Michael Gove argued that the assessment that had been carried out was a necessary part of maintaining, or even improving, standards, consistent with his wider attempt to stem the tide of what he believes to have been the ‘dumbing-down’ of school-based education. Hence, whilst special re-sit opportunities were made available, he made it clear that, in his view, no injustice had been done. More generally, he argued that what is required is a reformulation of the GCSE system as a whole, through the development and implementation over the next few years of much more ‘rigorous’ curriculum and assessment arrangements, encapsulated in the new English Baccalaureate. At the time of writing, various court cases remain pending, as unions, schools and parents attempt to secure redress of what they continue to see as an unjust assessment of the English Language GCSE.

In Wales, Leighton Andrews adopted a spectacularly different approach. He ordered his civil servants to conduct a rapid investigation of the circumstances leading up to the low marks in the English Language GCSE. This concluded that the methodology adopted in assessing the GCSE was not appropriate to Welsh circumstances. Again the detail is too complex to be explored fully. However, the crux is that in awarding the final marks, there was an adjustment applied to the raw scores, based upon the students’ predicted outcomes, based on previous levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (at the end of the primary school phase) in England. Welsh assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 employs a different methodology and, therefore, was not used. In the light of these conclusions, the Welsh Minister accepted that the marks initially awarded were unfair to the students and ordered the WJEC to undertake a rapid re-examining exercise. This resulted in significant improvements in grades; and, perhaps unsurprisingly, Leighton Andrews was widely praised not only within Wales, but more widely too. The end result, then, was that students in Wales received different grades from their peers in England, even though their actual work was judged to be of equivalent standard and, in a substantial number of cases, they had undertaken exactly the same assessment.

What, then, are the implications of these events? At a very simple level, they provided an intriguing insight into the realities of devolution. It was very striking, for example, that a number of English participants – even in the formal context of a Select Committee hearing – felt able to attribute the Welsh approach to Leighton Andrews’ political concerns about the purported poor performance of Welsh students, relative to those in England. They appeared to ignore the findings of the Welsh Government’s investigation altogether.

More importantly, however, critical questions are raised about the nature of the devolution settlement itself. Before this episode, the assessment of GCSEs was based on a pretty much common methodology across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, justified on the basis of maintaining common standards across the three jurisdictions (Scotland, of course, has its own separate system). It would appear that, certainly for the English participants in this collaboration, it was seen to be led by the English authorities, with Northern Ireland and Wales very much playing second fiddle. Clearly – and to obvious surprise in England – the Northern Irish and the Welsh did not see it like this; and they have both been content to proceed separately from their larger neighbour.

In Wales, the extent of divergence will become clearer once the Review of 14 to 19 Qualifications – established by the Welsh Government some time before the August fracas – reports at the end of November. One question that will certainly have to be resolved, however, is whether the Welsh Government itself is the most appropriate authority to deal with matters relating to qualifications and assessment, which were absorbed into the Welsh Government as part of Rhodri Morgan’s ‘bonfire of the quangos’. Whilst there is no need to take very seriously Michael Gove’s apparent outrage at a ‘political’ intervention into GCSE marking (especially in light of the extraordinary extent of his own interventions in the English schools system), there are convincing arguments to be made in favour of creating an authority that is at arm’s length from the Welsh Government, to develop matters relating to qualifications, assessment and curriculum, not only for schools, but for further education colleges and other providers too. Scotland operates such a model; and it seems to work very effectively.

More generally too, the GCSE dispute of August 2012 raises quite fundamental issues about the sort of education system that we wish to construct in Wales. Many lay people who followed events closely will have been surprised to discover that the grades awarded at GCSE reflect a much more complex set of procedures than simply experienced professionals judging the quality of the work completed by students. What this highlights is that GCSE grades are not some wholly ‘objective’ system of measuring an individual’s educational achievement; they are a very fallible outcome of complex processes of adjustment and moderation. This is, of course, necessarily the case. However, it also suggests that, to be fair to the students, perhaps we should be more careful with GCSE scores and more concerned to develop much more rounded assessments of educational performance.
Fairness, apple-pie and motherhood

Steve Smith, chair of the Newport Fairness Commission and Professor of Political Philosophy and Social Policy at The University of Wales, Newport, examines the case for such commisions and how fairness might be defined.

On the 25th September 2012, and in the face of objections from opposition council members, Newport City Council voted for establishing an independent Fairness Commission to monitor key council decisions according to the criterion of fairness. Consistent with its manifesto pledge, the commission was set-up by the Labour leadership as part of a “New Charter for Newport”.

Newport’s Fairness Commission, being the first in Wales, follows similar commissions already established in England – for example, in Islington, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sheffield, and York. As well as addressing specific concerns about cuts in public expenditure, these commissions have raised wider political debates about the meaning of fairness and how local government policies and practices are able to promote it.

But, do we need Fairness Commissions? Aren’t existing institutions and decision-making based on this principle, with commissions only adding unnecessary layers to processes already set-up in government? Moreover, if these commissions comprise unelected members (which they largely do), aren’t they legitimate democratic institutional practices being by-passed as a result?

Let’s address the last question first. It’s no accident, of course, that in times of austerity, politicians are keen to demonstrate that their policies, despite reductions in public expenditure, are still adhering to the principle of fairness. “We can’t do anything about the cuts, but at least we can still use our limited resources fairly”, is the plea, no doubt, that politicians of all hues make to electorates at impending elections. Fairness Commissions have to stand up to the potential criticism that they are mere covers for these decisions, with difficult and problematic outcomes being “sold” to the electorate as if, having received the so-called “fairness” rubber-stamp from the local Commission.

Consequently, if Fairness Commissions are to be effective, and, moreover, if they are seen to be effective, it is imperative that they act independently from local government – that they be bold enough to critically engage with council policies, and that this critical engagement is visible to the public, as pertinent policy issues are raised and discussed in public debate. Indeed, I would conjecture that without this independence, criticality, and visibility, commissions will likely become too close to councils, and appear as a token-gesture to the goal of fairness. Therefore, answering the second question raised above directly, it is important for commissions to be precisely outside of traditional democratic processes, to preserve their independent status, acting as critical connections between local communities and political decision-makers.

But, this leads us back to the first question raised: aren’t we in danger of simply adding an unnecessary layer to monitoring processes already established? Newport City Council has three Scrutiny Committees to monitor and evaluate policies in education, schools and training; and in economic and community planning and development. Therefore commissions will need to provide something qualitatively different to the existing scrutiny process, to prevent becoming another mere ‘add-on’. But what would this difference be exactly?

It is at this point I believe we get to the heart of what a Fairness Commission should be doing. Namely, to keep on the public agenda (i.e., those agendas which exist outside of council meetings and committees) issues concerning fairness, and how principles of fairness are both decided upon, and acted upon, in public and other policies. However, and this is the rub, the public agenda-raising, if it is to be done effectively, will inevitably highlight the wider and deeper problem of promoting fairness.

First, it must be openly acknowledged that the notion of fairness is a ‘hurrah’ word which everyone, from whatever political quarter, cheers about and champions. Consequently, if ‘fairness’ in any political discourse risks turning debate into empty platitudes; no-one claims they are against a fair society, as this is akin to arguing against apple-pie and motherhood.

Second, the job of any Fairness Commission, therefore, is to move beyond these platitudes and start examining the more difficult questions and issues concerning fairness – so making sense of the difficulties of implementing policies while living in a period of Government austerity, but also exploring the different and conflicting substantial meanings of fairness without just expelling political hot-air.

Therefore, it is centrally important for any fairness commission to unpack how fairness might be usefully and substantially defined, with the view to reaching some agreement at least, over terminology. The latter task is difficult, but
Can we become a greener and more sustainable Wales?

Suzannah Evans, an environmental campaigner living in Newport, highlights threats to the environment in Wales that the Sustainable Development Bill will need to be strong enough to address.

There are many threats to the environment in Wales, which will have a dramatic impact if they are not addressed. Incinerators, motorway expansion (also known as enhanced road schemes), barrages and fracking are a few of these. This can make environmental campaigners feel that the green aspect within sustainable development has taken a back seat. It can certainly feel this way when the government is focussed on what we needed yesterday. Concerns raised within the green sector are that...
we need to look strongly at developing a more sustainable transport system through vastly improving public transport if we are to meet our emission targets within Wales.

the government focuses on the economy, with jobs and growth marked as top priorities rather than mapping them alongside green issues. Each must work together and not as a separate entity in order to truly be sustainable long term. A stronger economy can be achieved through a focus on the environmental aspects of sustainable development with an emphasis on green jobs benefitting both the economy and the environment.

According to the Green Alliance, an environmental think tank, the low carbon and environmental sector is continuing to grow steadily around New Port since 2004. As road transport is known as an ‘enhanced road scheme’ aimed at improving traffic flow. The consultation has been deemed by environmental groups to be ‘shambolic’. Campaigners criticise the government for making unsubstantiated and misleading statements because the consultation is based on traffic levels increasing, whereas trends show the level has decreased around Newport since 2004. As road transport is responsible for approximately 12 per cent of Wales’s total greenhouse gas emissions, we need to look at improving fuel efficiency and developing low carbon vehicles. However, we need to look strongly at developing a more sustainable transport system through vastly improving public transport if we are to meet our emission targets within Wales. Another major concern within Wales is the Severn Barrage, with Peter Hain stepping down from the Shadow Cabinet earlier this year to focus on the £30 billion campaign. He states the barrage makes sense both environmentally and economically. However, Gareth Clubb, Director of Friends of the Earth Cymru, has voiced concerns about “the potential impact of a massive concrete structure on an internationally important wildlife habitat”. He argues that there are “alternative ways to capture tidal energy that could cause less damage and also provide cleaner energy sooner than the 20 years it would take to build a barrage”. The estuary is ideal for generating tidal energy with the second highest tidal range in the world but this must not come at the expense of the natural environment. The Cardiff to Weston barrage will be the wrong solution and would block other possibilities. Alternatives need full consideration as tidal lagoons, for example, would be a more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly option.

Another issue within Wales is the controversial fracking for shale gas, as there have already been many applications for test drillings. The process involves pumping water, sand and chemicals underground which releases shale gas. Fracking has the potential to cause earth tremors, can pollute water supplies and would harm efforts to cut our carbon emissions.

The upcoming Sustainable Development Bill will introduce a law which could make unnecessary environmental damage a thing of the past. The new law will place a duty on the Government and other public bodies, such as councils and health authorities, to act sustainably, with an independent commissioner appointed to hold them to account. However, the Welsh Government needs to negotiate the new legislation carefully and must have a clear definition of what it means by Sustainable Development. A failure to do so will leave it open to legal challenge from all quarters. As Peter Davies, the Commissioner for Sustainable Futures, has discussed on the Bevan Foundation blog, short-term political cycles can mean that when the government changes the new leading party will want to bring in their own changes. Therefore, short-term goals may be favoured as they would like to see measurable results within their own term of office but this does not give policies a real chance to take effect. It is hoped the Sustainable Development Bill will overcome this by ensuring the legislation places sustainable development at the centre of all activities and decisions of the Welsh Government and public bodies within Wales. The Bill will also see the creation of an independent sustainable development body in Wales that will be able to not only offer guidance, support and expert advice but also challenge the Welsh Government. The new body must be strong and continue dialogue with relevant organisations that have expertise in the field on issues such as those discussed here.

The consultation has closed and the White Paper, due shortly, will include more detailed proposals. The Bill must be meaningful and not watered down, ensuring we are working towards a more sustainable future for Wales.
Thirty years of development has left Cardiff’s city centre looking crass and banal, says Adrian Jones, a planning consultant and award-winning planner for Nottingham City Council. Cardiff needs less braggadocio and more finesse and confidence.

New Cardiff, the wrong sort of aspiration

Returning after 40 years to the city you grew up in is always going to be a disturbing experience. It’s no longer your city and Cardiff has changed more than most, at least superficially. Actually so much is still very familiar; the amazingly eccentric profile of the Castle and the animal wall that I used to pass each day with scarcely a glance, the fabulous arcades, the market, the grandeur of St Mary’s Street, the extraordinary imperial pomp of Cathays Park.

More than that, the structure of the inner city and suburbs, which in most British cities has been mangled by post war demolitions and damaging urban motorways, in Cardiff is very much intact, except towards the Bay. The inner city may be down at heel in places but is still very cohesive and Edwardian and suburbs like Pontcanna, Roath Park and Penylan are positively buzzing with metropolitan confidence.

This is one of the main reasons that Cardiff is still such an attractive city with such a good quality of life – it had a superb built environment inheritance from the early Twentieth Century, not just the commercial and civic buildings and the outstanding network of parks but the quality of the housing, instantly recognisable in Doctor Who and all the other TV series now made at Porth Teigr.

However, alongside this superb city, as familiar to me as it would be to my grandfather, there is a parallel universe of such crassness and banality that it disgraces the capital of Wales. Of course the architecture and townscape of cities reflects their economies as much as their aspirations. In the early Twentieth Century Cardiff had both wealth and patrician aspiration – it acted like a capital before it was one.

In the last 30 years Cardiff has reshaped itself for a post-industrial future in a neo-liberal economy where power lies with faceless multinationals not government or communities. New Cardiff used its political clout to get big things done but was pragmatic, or irresponsible, about the quality of the place the corporations were creating. So its desire to flex its muscles as a capital, to punch above its weight, actually resulted in boorish and unconfident townscape, quite the opposite of the city it had once been. Sometimes it works; shoe-horning the Millennium Stadium between the Arms Park and the Taff was bonkers but is a bold statement of something specifically Welsh and Cardiff. What is scandalous is that the fine adjacent Empire Pool was destroyed for a trashy leisure complex. So very typical of New Cardiff.

I have already upset some Cardiffians by criticising Cardiff Bay in my blog. It may be inverted chauvinism to maintain it is the worst example of waterside regeneration in Britain – there is an awful lot of competition around – but it has to be a serious contender. It is not principally the buildings – poor as most are, sadly they represent the current British regeneration standard. No, it is the lack of any coherent urban structure, of real streets and worthwhile public spaces. In other words it is the dumb plan. Instead of building on the strong pre-existing urban fabric this has been ignored and left to rot. A new ex-urban car-dominated masterplan has been superimposed.

Worse, Butetown has been literally ghettoised with new development turning its back on the community, which is fairly amazing as the rationale for public investment in the Bay was ostensibly about the deprived communities of south Cardiff.

Much public money has been wasted on vanity projects which could have been much better spent on public housing.

Cardiff certainly needs to ask itself how Swansea managed to create much more coherent and attractive dockland regeneration with less public money. Swansea, a city that lives in the shadow of Cardiff and sadly seems to have a low opinion of itself, can certainly teach the capital some lessons in town planning and place-making.

I think the reason is that Cardiff has concentrated on big projects and grand statements that are not thought-through as townscape or real places. New Cardiff does not do subtlety and detail. The fault-line runs right through the city centre; you can see and feel the transition between the urbane, confident inherited Cardiff and the brash, uncouth New Cardiff in the matter of a few footsteps – at
In the first half of the twentieth century, the society of south Wales was one of those most devastated through the vagaries of laissez faire capitalism and also, because of this, one of the most visualised. By the time I was recording the region as a documentary photographer in the late 1980s, the traditional indicators of working class life were rapidly disappearing. My own photography attempted to reveal the dramatic changes that were taking place. The terraces of miners’ houses had become homes for commuters, pitheads had been replaced by memorial sculptures, and conical slag heaps had become smooth green bumps. My book, *Creative Photography and Wales*, presents a history of the relationship between photography and the industrial south east of Wales in the twentieth century where, to a large extent, those from outside the region produced the images that would represent it.

Through my own teaching I have been keen to promote the notion that photography can be a tool for change, capable of challenging dominant forces. The importance of providing opportunities for individuals to share their own narratives, in their own voice, was at the core of the pioneering digital storytelling project.*

---

*Read more from Adrian Jones at www.jonestheplanner.co.uk*
There are more than a hundred community co-operatives in Wales today, and they come in all shapes, sizes and sectors and are found in almost all parts of Wales. This report, prepared for the Wales Co-operative Centre, highlights the valuable contribution of some community co-operatives to the economy and society.

In action...

The Future of Libraries in a Digital age
As government cuts threaten libraries across the UK, we were delighted that Prof. Sir Deian Hopkin gave the Bevan Foundation annual lecture 2012 on the future of libraries in a digital age. Deian reminded the packed room at South Wales Miners’ Library, Swansea, that we need to be imaginative and creative to create libraries for the 21st century.

How to make Wales Dementia-Friendly
The number of people in Wales with dementia is forecast to double in the next 40 years. This, and a recognition that society could do more to support people to live with the condition, lies behind moves to change how dementia is addressed. Delegates who attended a seminar jointly organised by the Bevan Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Foundation heard first-hand about what this means in practice.

Welsh Labour Market 2020
With austerity predicted to continue, a conference organised in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on 22nd November showcased the latest findings on the impact of changes in employment on poverty. Almost 100 delegates heard about the outlook to 2020 and discussed what needs to be done to mitigate the worse effects.

Shaping opinion
The Bevan Foundation continues to inform and shape public and political opinion – as well as commenting in Welsh and UK media, we’re increasingly mentioned in debates in the Senedd by AMs from all parties. We’ve also shared our work with groups ranging from students at Ystrad Mynach College and Coleg Gwent to delegates at Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent and Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Citizens Advice Bureaux Annual General Meetings, and to delegates at a Welsh Government conference on equality.

In print...

Community Co-operatives in Wales
There are more than a hundred community co-operatives in Wales today, and they come in all shapes, sizes and sectors and are found in almost all parts of Wales. This report, prepared for the Wales Co-operative Centre, highlights the valuable contribution of some community co-operatives to the economy and society.

Co-operation: A post-war opportunity missed?
Current debates about the role of co-operatives in public services echo those of 1945-1959 between the cooperative movement and the Labour Party. This essay, written by Alun Burge, asks what lessons can be learned from the arguments of the post-war period and how they could be applied today.

Out of Sight
Poverty affects more than one in five people living in Wales today. Crucially, it affects disabled people including people with a visual impairment. This report, produced for RNIB Cymru, aims to investigate the links between visual impairment and poverty and sets out ways of tackling the problems.

Cuts Watch Cymru
The Bevan Foundation is working with more than 30 other organisations in Wales on the effects of changes to social security benefits.

Five easy-to-read briefings on different aspects of changes to social security benefits are now available at www.bevanfoundation.org or www.cutswatchcymru.org

They cover:
- The Benefit Cap
- Overview – October 2012
- Equalities
- Small areas
- Overview May 2012

More are scheduled to be released shortly.

Bevan Foundation is working with more than 30 other organisations in Wales on the effects of changes to social security benefits.

Five easy-to-read briefings on different aspects of changes to social security benefits are now available at www.bevanfoundation.org or www.cutswatchcymru.org

They cover:
- The Benefit Cap
- Overview – October 2012
- Equalities
- Small areas
- Overview May 2012

More are scheduled to be released shortly.
The WEA South Wales

NAME Maggi Dawson
JOB TITLE General Secretary/Chief Executive
ORGANISATION Workers’ Educational Association (WEA)

In 140 characters describe the WEA
A democratic, voluntary adult education movement, committed to widening participation, active citizenship and social justice, providing best quality learning.

What is your role in WEA?
I am the General Secretary/Chief Executive of the WEA in South Wales, covering from Monmouthshire to Ceredigion. The WEA is a longstanding movement that is UK wide, with worldwide connections. It was founded in England in 1903 and in Wales (in Barry) in 1907. Currently the WEA in England and Scotland are amalgamated but in Wales, there are two organisations, for north and south. We are looking forward to forming one all Wales WEA by August 2013.

What do you enjoy most about working there?
We have such great bunch of talented staff, both part time and full time, (including over 120 part time tutors), who believe strongly in the power of adult education to change lives for the better – education for a social purpose. They are backed up by our highly committed individual members and our network of WEA Branches, who are made up of volunteers and learners. I am impressed by everyone’s commitment to the ethos of WEA, with its roots in trade unionism and the cooperative movement, and the desire to provide opportunities for those needing a second or third chance at learning, either in the workplace or in the community.

If you could pick anyone in the world, dead or alive, to speak at one of your Day Schools, who would it be?
There is a long list, but I would be highly honoured if we could attract a line up of these three people: Noam Chomsky, Malalai Joya and Malala Yousafzai, to talk about campaigning for peace, equality and women’s rights through peaceful protest. Noam Chomsky, the American linguist and philosopher since his lectures and writings on peace, democracy and a participatory society are as potent and challenging as ever, despite being in his eighties; Malalai Joya, the author, politician and anti-war activist who stood up to the warlords in Afghanistan, despite attempts on her life and who campaigns in Europe and the US for the withdrawal of troops, recounting what the war in Afghanistan has meant for the people and for women, in particular; and Malala, the Pakistani schoolgirl, shot in the head by the Taliban for her daring blogs in favour of girl’s education. What a line up, but one which may also interest members of the Bevan Foundation!

Let us know if you’d like to be featured in a future issue of Review – email: info@bevanfoundation.org

Community has been part of Welsh life for over 100 years

♦ We’re proud to represent members across Wales in industries new and old

♦ Our mission is to improve the lives of our members in their workplaces and in their communities.

Community—the union for life

Not a member? You can join today
To join by phone call 0800 389 6332
To join online visit www.community-tu.org
Supporting workers since 1921.

We only work for employees, never employers. Ensuring we only work for those who need us the most, not those who could pay us the most.

For more information about Thompsons call 0808 100 8050 or visit www.thompsons.law.co.uk