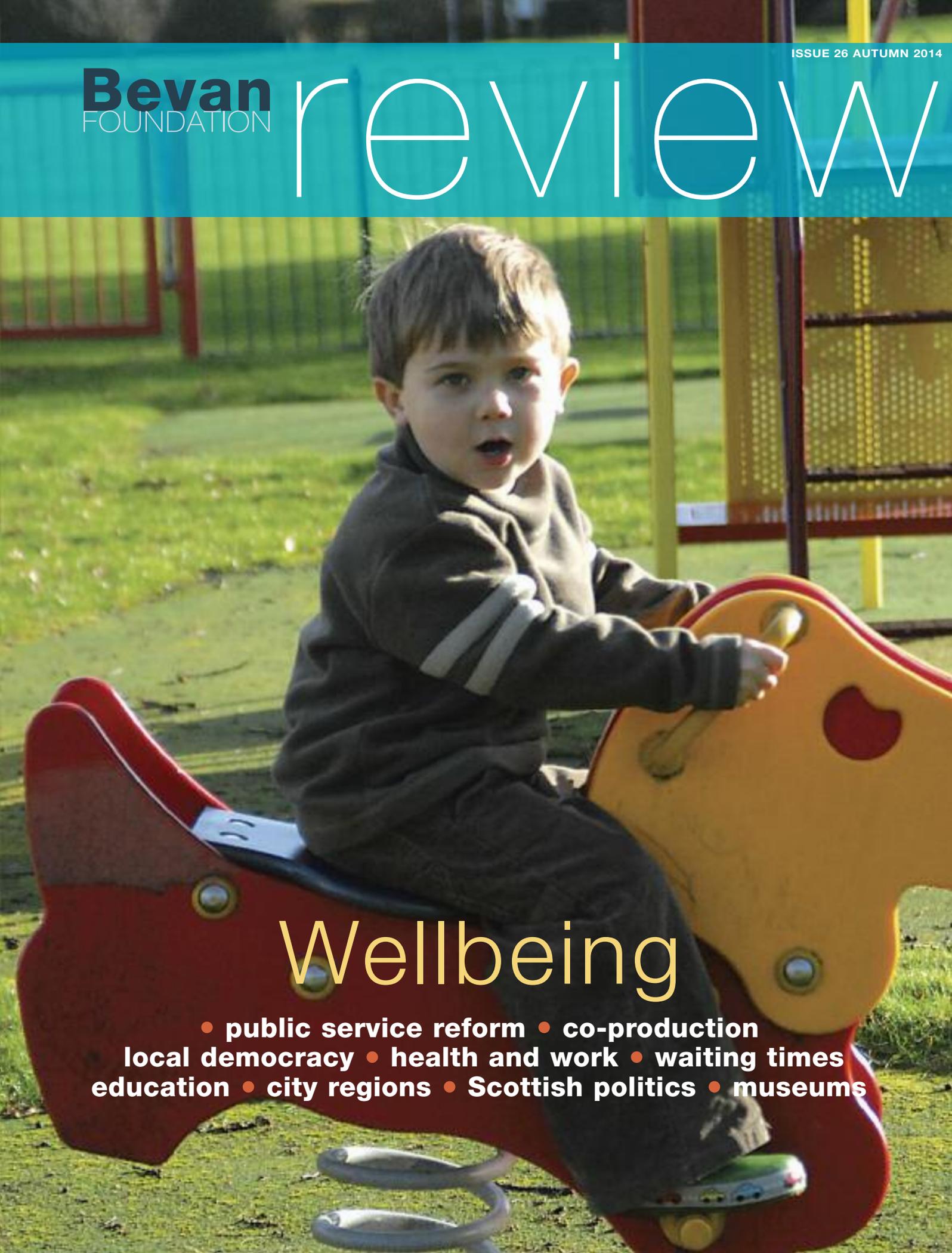


**Bevan**  
FOUNDATION

# review

A young child with short brown hair, wearing a dark grey long-sleeved top and dark trousers, is sitting on a red and yellow rocking horse at a playground. The child is looking towards the camera with a slightly open mouth. The background shows a grassy area and a yellow and red playground structure.

## Wellbeing

• public service reform • co-production  
local democracy • health and work • waiting times  
education • city regions • Scottish politics • museums

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The Spirit of Brotherhood by Bernard Meadows



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Thanks to Peter Slater and Marian Delyth for photos



# Is it all about money?

**At last month's Carnegie Challenge debate, Peter Kelly, Director of Scotland's Poverty Alliance, set out why he thinks money matters – up to a point.**

The question of well-being is one that should occupy the minds of policy makers, campaigners and politicians a lot more than it does at the moment. As an anti-poverty network we are principally concerned about the wellbeing of individuals and communities (the two should really be viewed together). We spend much of our time discussing and campaigning around issues like the living wage, or about the type of welfare system that we need, or looking at how we respond to the rising demand for food banks. Or we think about the kind of job opportunities people need, how to address the health inequalities that mean a man in the poorest

part of Scotland dies twelve and half years before a man living in the richest part, or how to close the educational attainment gap.

But whether we are campaigning, or lobbying government ministers or helping people on low incomes to speak out, we do it because our primary concern is with improving well being. And we believe that the one of the key ways that we can do this is by finding ways to better address poverty and to reduce inequalities.

So, is it all about money? It is not, at least not completely. Will more wealth solve our problems? Up to a point, then no. Is it all about relationships? I hesitate, but also no, but like money, it's a lot harder to achieve wellbeing without supportive relationships.

Like most tricky questions in social policy, as in life generally, the answers are rarely black and white. Some things improve wellbeing and some things don't, and these should shape our priorities for the future.

Let's start with the question of whether wellbeing be improved with more money? I suppose the first thing is to be clear about what we mean by more money – do we mean for individuals (and especially those currently with very little money), do we mean for communities (however we define them) or perhaps for public services that may enhance or in some views diminish well being?

Let's consider just one area – money for individuals. Our wellbeing is not all about money, I think money is absolutely fundamental to improving wellbeing. Without access to a secure and adequate minimum income, our individual wellbeing is likely to be damaged. One of the things the Poverty Alliance does is to engage with people with direct experience of poverty. We do this to ensure that their experience is shared with policy makers and that there is greater dialogue regarding how we best address problems of poverty and inequality.

Often when we talk to people who are living on low incomes they will tell us about a wide range of problems they face – employment is always an issue, mental health and issues with housing too. But no matter what, invariably they will place low income at the heart of the problems they face. Whether it is the

stress and worry caused by the increasing gap between income and expenditure, or the inability to cover the cost of emergency repairs, or the need to get by on inferior quality food, people will over and over again come back to the fact that they simply do not have enough income to meet their needs.

Finding ways to ensure that everyone had access to an adequate minimum income is, I believe, the most basic of tasks that we face as a society. Adequate minimum incomes are, to paraphrase Professor John Viet Wilson, the clean water of anti-poverty policy.

I believe that adequate incomes are as essential to wellbeing as clean water has been to disease prevention. If we are to improve our sense of wellbeing, as individuals, communities or as a society, then securing adequate incomes must be at the heart of what we do. So it is a basic task, yet it seems to be an incredibly difficult one. Or perhaps we make it difficult.

But it isn't all about income. We published a report from participatory research we carried out with lone parents in Fife last year. The women who took part in that research were very clear about the importance of low incomes for them – it loomed over almost every aspect of their lives. But when we spoke to these lone parents about what quality of life meant to them they identified three crucial areas for wellbeing and quality of life: family and support networks; choice and freedom; and the emotional and physical health of themselves and their families.

These are things that all of us would see as contributing to our wellbeing. But it was quite clear that for the women in this study, the experience of living on a low income exacerbated some of the other issues in their lives. For example, the issue of loneliness and isolation. These are not uncommon experiences for any of us to have. However, the fact of getting by on a low income could compound feelings of loneliness. Having access to an adequate income



**I believe that adequate incomes are as essential to wellbeing as clean water has been to disease prevention.**





**As our national wealth has continued to grow over the last forty years we have become an increasingly divided society.**

may not overcome loneliness or isolation, but not having one certainly creates an additional barrier.

So relationships within families, having good support networks of friends and colleagues, and being able to feel a sense of choice and freedom are all important for our wellbeing, and these factors are no less important for people living on low incomes. To support this we need to live in

communities where there is mutual respect, where there are decent services, and where there are enough suitable and satisfying jobs for all those who need them.

It is all very well for me to say we need an adequate income, or we need to create the conditions for the flourishing of individual wellbeing by investing in our communities, but you may ask, how are we going to pay for this? Don't we simply need to become a wealthier country? If we focus on economic growth, increasing our GDP every year, doesn't that ensure that over the longer term, our wellbeing will increase?

Unfortunately, it does not. Ever increasing wealth has not improved our wellbeing for a long time. Wilkinson and Pickett have highlighted the diminishing returns to continued economic growth on our wellbeing. This shouldn't really be that surprising. As our national wealth has continued to grow over the last forty years we have become an increasingly divided society.

Part of the driver for that division has been the changing structure of our economy. The growth of the financial sector has driven the inequality in wealth and income that we have seen. So in the UK between 1979 and 2007 the top 10 per cent

increased their share of total income by 14 percentage points, from 28.4 per cent to 42.6 per cent. The top 1 per cent accounted for fully two-thirds of these gains, seeing their share rise from 5.9 per cent to 15.4 per cent of total income. Sixty per cent of the increase in income share accruing to the top percentile has gone to financial service employees although they account for only around one-fifth of such workers.

Some of this change can be attributed to the fact that as top rates of tax began to fall in the 1970s and '80s, high earners began to bargain more aggressively to increase their pay. Which is hardly surprising. Such a change in the distribution of income and wealth clearly has had an impact on political process and outcomes. Whilst GDP and wealth have been growing, inequality has been growing too. And it should not be surprising that whilst these changes have been taking place we have also seen an increase in the number of people working long hours, increases in over-indebtedness, and at times increases in poverty.

So how can we start to address wellbeing in this context? To begin we must start to reduce our almost obsessive focus on economic growth. The old saying that a rising tide lifts all boats is simply not true when it comes to reducing poverty and improving wellbeing.

We need a different emphasis on the kinds of economic activity we encourage and support, the level of interventions that we make when we support activity (with an emphasis on the local and the regional), and we also need to reconsider how we measure our economic activity. We need a different approach that focuses on the foundations of our economy, rather than always chasing high value international trading.

Whilst doing this, we need to introduce a greater element of economic justice into our society – in part that means people at the lower end of the labour market being properly rewarded through a living wage, security of employment and respect in the work place. At the upper end it means using progressive taxation to help encourage some restraint in the high incomes that drives the inequality that damages us all. Finally, underpinning all of this we need to look seriously at how we secure adequate minimum incomes for everyone, so as to ensure that people can lead dignified lives.

Until we begin to seriously address some of the big drivers of inequality and injustice in our society, then we will make only faltering progress in improving the wellbeing of all citizens.

**Michael Trickey,**  
Programme Director of  
Wales Public Services  
2025, moves beyond the  
debate about boundaries  
and numbers to ask  
'what is local  
government for?'



# What is local government for?

The ins and outs of local government policy rarely quicken the pulse but the debates in Wales over future local government structures and the cuts in funding are certainly making the headlines. Less prominent so far is the debate about the future purpose of local government.

The glory days of Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham or Herbert Morrison in London belong to another time. But if the next era of a local government in Wales is to be a success, a common understanding will be essential between politicians

at all levels, staff and the public as to what local government is fundamentally for.

This has become a much tougher question for a number of reasons.

One is that, whatever the argument about the share of resources between the NHS and local government in the Welsh budget, the overall cake has got smaller and is likely to get smaller still. The Chancellor is seeking £25 billion additional cuts, *on top of existing plans*, in the next Parliament as part of an explicit drive to create a smaller state. He says,



**Any sign-up to the austerity narrative makes more cuts almost inevitable whoever forms the next UK government.**



‘Our country’s problem is not that it taxes too little. It is that its government spends too much.’

The Labour and Liberal Democrat approaches to the deficit are, in their different ways, less draconian but any sign-up to the austerity narrative makes more cuts almost inevitable whoever forms the next UK government. Even if spending eventually starts to rise again, it could take years to claw back to the real-terms 2010 level. And this is at a time when demand due to demographics and other pressures will be skyrocketing. The Wales Public Services 2025 programme projects a funding gap for Wales of between £2.6 and £4.6 billion by 2025. This is climate change, not just a piece of bad weather. With their much deeper cuts, the talk is of many local authorities in England being limited to social service provision. The trajectories in Wales are much less steep, the policy environment different, but there is a palpable sense of retreat to core services.

A second is that local service delivery and accountability is changing profoundly. The growth in cross-boundary collaborations, generally for good operational or policy reasons, is creating a complex, variable geometry of service delivery. Meanwhile, the Welsh Government is increasingly setting the terms of local service delivery, with a strategy for most major services and a strong interest in performance. Key local education functions are regionalised, social and other services are increasingly driven by national frameworks. Many argue that this is a necessary feature of small country governance but it raises a dilemma.

The more that local spending and policy decisions are driven by national priorities and ‘protections’, the more councils risk being perceived as agents of central government rather than being driven by a

local democratic mandate and a place-shaping agenda.

A third is the growing emphasis on achieving better local outcomes, where the deepening challenge of tackling poverty, promoting sustainability or improving well-being, implies a very different role for local authorities with far-reaching implications for how they exercise local leadership and relationships between citizens, communities and services.

Finding a way through these tensions is not easy but, unless reconciled, the default could so easily become one of a managed decline which hits the least well-off the hardest.

There is no single pattern to the cuts which local authorities are making but there are some common themes:

- conventional efficiencies such as de-layering management structures, process improvements including digital solutions, rationalising the estate and closing local offices;
- new business models for service delivery, especially in leisure and cultural services, including local or shared not-for-profit models and community-managed arrangements;
- straight cuts, whether ‘street scene’ expenditure (lighting, cleansing, parks, grounds maintenance etc), transport subsidies, grants to voluntary bodies and in some cases social service packages. Distinctions between specific statutory and looser legal obligations often feature.

Meanwhile, to replace lost Welsh Government grant, many councils are increasing council tax ahead of inflation and raising charges across the board – from car parking to meals on wheels. But there will be limits to asking local communities to pay more each year for fewer local services.

Efficiencies and innovation, including how change is financed, have to be part of the response but many argue that the future depends on building a new two-way connectedness with communities based on reciprocal roles and responsibilities between citizens and services. We should not underestimate the effort and energy this requires.

Some in local government saw the way the wind was blowing years ago and embarked on local service change in consultation with their communities. The concepts vary - early intervention, demand management, co-design, co-production, integration, lean systems - but at the heart of this is a mix of working across service silos and strengthening the voice of those using or needing services to find new ways of achieving better outcomes. It means working with the totality of local resources – community, third sector, partner agencies as well as council - to mobilise the collective effort and making better use of resources as a whole. Relationships, soft power and influence become essential currency.

In most parts of Wales there are great examples of such approaches. But only exceptionally are they yet amounting to fundamental change in the way a whole authority works.

There are a number of issues for national and local government to consider.

A shared sense of purpose is crucial. Unless authorities have a vision of their future role and function as well as the associated success factors, decisions are likely to be short-term and tactical, whereas the change needed requires long-term consistency. The often, and rightly, celebrated integration of health and social care in Canterbury, New Zealand, has taken ten years or more.

But pace is also essential, even during a re-organisation. It may need some form of national but co-designed change campaign so that politicians, staff and



**There are a number of issues for national and local government to consider. A shared sense of purpose is crucial.**

public can feel confident about the direction of travel. Supporting the workforce will be crucial, particularly as less money almost inevitably translates into fewer jobs. The public servants required for the next decade will need very different skills and mind-sets from those that sufficed twenty years ago. If its potential can be harnessed, the social partnership model which has been developing in Wales, bringing government, employers and unions together could be a powerful springboard.

New and emerging legislation – whether the Social Services Act or the Future Generations Bill – are signposting a new direction for local services. As it develops its policy for a new era of local government, the Welsh Government can draw on the analysis of the wider challenges covered by the Williams report in addition to the structural issues. We have to be clear about what kind of authorities we want and how we expect them to work. Local government everywhere in the UK is facing these questions – and each country will have to find its own way.

public can feel confident about the direction of travel.

Supporting the workforce will be crucial, particularly as less money almost inevitably translates into fewer jobs. The public servants required for the

*Children's play grounds are amongst the services being affected by new business models*



# Co-production - words into action

**Graham Benfield, former chief executive of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action argues that citizen engagement should be central to future public services.**

Over the last decade the Welsh Government has set itself the ambitious task of developing a distinctive and different way of delivering public services which reflect more closely the culture and values of Wales. This journey began with the original *Making the Connections* thinking, continued with the review by Beecham which endorsed the approach but called for bolder and quicker action, through to the recent Williams Commission, which accepted that 'the only viable way to meet the needs and aspirations of people is to shift the emphasis of public service towards coproduction and prevention.'

Throughout this development of policy there has been a set of common and widely-accepted set of principles and values, based on citizen-centred, efficient and accountable services with public engagement in their design and delivery. These principles are now embodied in government policy and legislation. The new Minister for Local Government, Lesley Griffiths, said on 16th July 2014:

*Public services need to be a shared endeavour between the user and the service, based on the principles of co-production. Placing people at the heart of the design and the delivery of public service will ensure that they are responsive to their needs.*

So the rhetoric and intention is there, stronger than ever, but there remains a gap between theory and practice.

The need for change has been recognised for some time. The Williams Commission called for radical action before it is too late. But there is scant evidence that change has gone beyond a few public



sector enthusiasts or valuable but short-term projects, with little transfer of good practice between organisations. The mainstream has had little challenge to its practice, and citizens could be forgiven if they haven't noticed much difference in their services or the opportunities to engage effectively.

We need to understand why change has been piecemeal and slow if we are to move on and turn the words into action. I think there have been three factors which have been a diversion.

The first is the tendency to create or reorganise structures. Beecham recommended Local Service Boards as a new structure but with no accessibility or direct accountability to the citizen. Williams proposes reducing the number of local authorities by half. Health has until recently been reorganised every few years, and quangos come and go with alarming rapidity. But changing structures alone does not change services and can divert attention away from service redesign to internal reorganisation

The second is a reluctance to give up on the orthodoxies which are inconsistent with a community-based citizen approach. 'Value for money' procurement and 'economies of scale' are largely unchallenged, yet sit uneasily with approaches based on strengthening social capital or

developing locally-owned micro-enterprises. One policy can easily cancel the other out.

The third and perhaps the most significant is the growing impact and awareness of the severity and duration of austerity measures which

threaten the very existence of non-statutory services. Serious talk of whole service redesign and new relationships beyond the public sector was academic while budgets could be squared with a little salami-slicing here or there or by shared costs. But now inaction or piloting innovation are becoming luxuries of the past. Money is running out, poverty is increasing, the demand for acute services is rising and even preventative and community services are being cut.

The old models of direct provision or putting the service out to the market look inadequate when squeezed between demand and supply. Efficiencies and re-organisations are not enough. Many countries are now developing new approaches which build services around the person and the community and unlock potential resources of time,

money and expertise, with the state as supporter and enabler. These new approaches meet our aspirations to live in safe, healthy, prosperous and attractive places and accord with our understanding that our quality of life is determined by a mix of individual, family, community and state action. We take much of this social capital or fabric for granted, but it needs expanding and nurturing.

The state has a crucial role in investing in communities and supporting the social fabric so that demands on its services can be reduced. Multi-purpose hubs at the heart of communities could play a pivotal role in providing a focus for local people and a springboard for community economic, social and environmental development.

This approach is not without its challenges. It needs to recognise that there are inequalities in social capital within and between communities and although there is no direct correlation between levels of income and social capital, additional support and investment will be required in some areas to increase capacity and confidence. Equally there is unlikely to be a large reservoir of citizens just waiting to be "used" when the money runs out or who want to volunteer for the council, not least because they feel they have already paid for the service.

But there is evidence to suggest that people will respond positively to genuine initiatives to discuss and engage with how services will be run in their communities. Vague questions like 'what sort of community do you want' or 'should we close your library or the leisure centre' are hardly likely to involve or mobilise. Whereas 'what would you like to do with us (and with our resources) to improve the area' is a much more attractive and exciting proposition.

There is also accumulating evidence from around the world that people now believe that they can deliver better results, given the opportunity, than central or local government or private or voluntary sector contractors. Encouraging and supporting such confidence will be critical to a future public service, where many of the services may be community-owned and run.

So, the stage is now set. The script has been honed to perfection, and citizen-centred and engaged communities are the star. We have been on a journey towards co-production for many years yet are still just at the beginning, but with the combined forces of political commitment, the necessity of reducing expenditure and growing evidence that co-production works, the time is right for the show to begin.



**Old models of provision look inadequate when squeezed between demand and supply.**

# There's never been a better time to change how we do democracy

**Cllr David O'Neill, President of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Chair of the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, argues that the passion unleashed by the independence referendum can be harnessed to reinvigorate local democracy.**

After two years of campaigning, the Scottish Referendum is over and the world has been struck by the passion that has gripped the nation. It is easy to see why. For the first time in decades, democracy has felt truly energised and exciting. More than four million people were registered to vote. A record 85 per cent cast their vote. After decades of declining participation in democracy, people from all parts of Scotland and all walks of life have felt what it is like to have power and authority over their future, and it should surprise no-one that they have grasped that opportunity with both hands.

Local people have electrified the debate and proven once and for all that they care passionately about the issues that affect them, their families, and their communities. And on all sides they have spoken clearly about what they need to happen for their lives to improve. It is time to think again about what it would take for that to become the new standard for democracy.

For 50 years Scotland, and the rest of the UK, has been on a journey in which the voices of local communities have become increasingly irrelevant in the decisions that affect them. It is little wonder that with little say, more and more people have become disillusioned with the whole democratic process. Despite huge investment, that approach simply hasn't resolved the big social problems that our communities face either. Take that most basic of all measures, life expectancy. In some parts of the country, many people can expect to live well into their 80's or beyond. Only a few streets away, some will be lucky to ever draw a pension. When I first became a local councillor in 1980, I was shocked that in my own part of Scotland the gap in life expectancy

was 14 years. Despite the best efforts of the whole of the public sector, the gap has increased to 24 years

It need not be this way. While the debate about Scotland's future has raged, the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy has been looking at what it would take to ensure a lasting legacy for communities.

Overwhelmingly, the evidence shows that the top down approach to politics has had its day. Look across the rest of the world and local people in virtually every modern democracy are already in charge of their spending, their services and how they are governed. It's no coincidence that the outcomes that they achieve are better too. Scotland, and indeed every part of the UK, must be no different. Simply repositioning power nationally will not address the challenges and opportunities that communities face, or deliver the kind of participation that we now know is possible.

The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy has set out evidenced, rational, and radical conclusions that can kick start the change. Some can be started quickly, but all of them will require perseverance to think through, develop and deliver. While the Commission has also made a number of specific recommendations, in the end, all out thinking has come down to seven fundamental principles that we believe must underpin our democratic future:

1. The principle of sovereignty: democratic power lies with people and communities who give some of that power to governments and local



**Look across the rest of the world and local people in virtually every modern democracy are already in charge of their spending, their services and how they are governed.**



Marian Delyth

vary from locality to locality. Second, it has been clear that the principle of subsidiarity also means that localism has to be practically feasible and linked to whether it matters that something is local or not. It has suggested, therefore, that strong local democracy, if it is to be effective, needs to be supported by appropriate aggregation and sharing. Indeed, the international experience suggests that the most extensive decentralisation is made possible by combining or sharing capacity between highly decentralised units of local government.

governments, not the other way round.

2. The principle of subsidiarity: decisions should be taken as close to communities as possible, and local governance has to be right shape and form for the people and the places it serves.
3. The principle of transparency: democratic decisions should be clear and understandable to communities, with clean lines of accountability back to communities.
4. The principle of participation: all communities must be able to participate in the decision making that affects their lives and their communities.
5. The principle of spheres not tiers of governance: different parts of the democratic system should have distinct jobs to do that are set out in 'competencies', rather than depend on powers being handed down from 'higher' levels of governance.
6. The principle of interdependency: every part of the democratic system has to support the others, and none can be, or should seek to be, self-contained and self-sufficient.
7. The principle of wellbeing: the purpose of all democracy is to improve opportunities and outcomes for the individuals and communities that empower it.

The Commission qualified this view with two factors. First, it has said that fundamental rights must be respected, and that these fundamental rights cannot

Of course, like any major transformation, it will be a tough journey. We know that it is difficult to approach our recommendations with an open mind about how democracy might change in the future. After all, everyone who is active in public life today has only ever experienced the current way of working. Yet across the political spectrum, and across communities the length and breadth of Scotland and the whole of the UK, there is a feeling that it is time to take a step back and think about the reform that will make a real difference to communities.

The details will take time, but one thing is for sure. The issues that have inspired millions of Scots have not been about the internal workings of Westminster or Holyrood. They have been about what it would take to improve people's lives locally, the local services that they need, and how they can have a meaningful say about them.

That is the real prize for democracy, and it is worth fighting for. Take that bold step forward and we can start to really change Scotland. Revert to type and try to take change forward from the centre, and we must accept that disenchantment is inevitable, and pass up on this extraordinary chance to transform lives across the country.

The current period of debate and creativity is a real opportunity to get the democracy our communities deserve. We look forward to the debate that lies ahead, because together we must to get this right for the people of Scotland.

**Professor Dame Carol Black**, expert adviser to the UK Department of Health, Principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, chairman of the Nuffield Trust and newly-appointed member of the Bevan Commission, responds to receiving the Bevan Prize for Health and Well-being 2014 'life time contribution' award.



*Professor Baroness Ilora Finlay presents Professor Dame Carol Black with her 2014 Bevan Prize*



The issues surrounding health and work are not just problems of individual, family and social wellbeing, they directly influence economic performance.

# Good work for health

In recent years we have seen the founding principles of the NHS developed to serve a larger purpose. That purpose is recognised as part of a wider social duty to promote equality – to take steps necessary to reduce health inequalities. As Sir Michael Marmot and others before him have so clearly shown, variations and inequalities in health and life expectation mirror the socio-economic circumstances of people's lives.

During the past few years my task has been to examine one aspect of this concern for human welfare. It has to do with health and work. Work, I think most would agree, is for most people the best form of welfare. An individual's health bears on their working life, and the conditions and experience of work affect their health and well-being.

Safeguarding and improving the health of working age people is central to their welfare. Supporting people in work and enabling them to stay in work in the face of illness or disability is a key element of this social enterprise.

It is not enough that people should be in any work. It should be good work, good in the sense that it promotes wellbeing in the working individual. The evidence, gathered painstakingly over many years in diverse arenas of working life, is consistent and strong. It leaves no doubt about the characteristics that we look for in identifying good work and a good workplace. They include the role of the individual in decision making, the quality and quantity of work demands, an environment where psychological needs are recognised and met, where resilience and self esteem are enhanced, and where there is confidence in the response to sickness and disability.

The effects of workplace influences are felt and assessed in various ways. First is the personal health and wellbeing of employees – their physical health and their mental health. Physical health and ill health are often declared and can be measured; mental health, especially if threatened or impaired is often masked and hidden. Each to some degree reflects underlying social determinants of health, among them the conditions of working life, that we

recognise as the causes of causes of health inequalities.

Among current concerns is the need for effective ways to support people with health conditions – especially long-term conditions – to stay in work. This becomes more pressing as the working population ages and more are inflicted with the common health conditions of ageing – conditions that are still compatible with productive work.

Another concern is how through collaborative efforts we can best enable individuals to return to work without delay after sickness absence. Recent independent reviews and government responses have addressed the issues in detail. The greater part of sickness absence comes about through the sustained absence of those with long-term conditions. Failure to help such people to re-enter work leaves them too often at risk of never working again.

A third issue is that of 'presenteeism' – the condition of being at work but not being able to function to maximum capacity. It is thought to be an even greater problem overall than sickness absence. Whether due, for example, to the work environment, poor managerial relations or unsupported poor health – it is often unrecognised and it is difficult to measure at the workplace. But surveys reveal its magnitude.

The issues surrounding health and work are not just problems of individual, family and social wellbeing, they directly influence economic performance.

Dealing with these problems calls for a united purpose. There is an overall need for individuals, employers, health, social and official agencies to work together to support and enable unbroken links with the workplace – or more generally the labour market – in the wake of illness or injury. They are participants with common interests but whose perspectives, motives, incentives, attitudes and beliefs may differ. That challenge is to bring a new and shared understanding of a common problem. It is a realisation of ideals that Beveridge and Bevan set out so many years ago. It is a task scarcely begun.

# Real patients coming to real harm

**Ceri Jackson, Director RNIB Cymru, highlights the challenges facing Wales's eye care services which mean that about 50 people a year lose their sight unnecessarily because of delayed and cancelled hospital appointments.**

Highlighting the challenges in timely access to eye care hospital services has long been a priority for RNIB across the UK. Half of all sight loss is avoidable. Losing sight has a devastating impact and leaves people at much higher risk of depression, unemployment, falls and loss of independence.

Across the UK the divergence in services is growing and, although each of the countries has capacity problems, there are good examples of innovation and new approaches to providing services. The Welsh Government published its Eye Health Care Plan in 2013. Wales should be proud of its achievements, including new eye care pathways, diabetic retinopathy screening and low vision services. But the fact remains that people are losing their sight due to cancelled or delayed appointments in secondary care. The plan failed to include fundamental priorities such as eye health needs assessments, a robust review of capacity and demand in secondary eye care or a strategy to improve data collection and monitoring to inform and evaluate services.

Hospital eye clinics are finding it difficult to cope with the workload particularly for long-term conditions such as glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration. These conditions require timely diagnosis and monitoring, yet treatment and follow-up appointments are frequently cancelled and delayed. This puts the service under significant pressure – compounded by a high percentage of patients seen in unscheduled care.

The shocking reality is that

patients are going blind unnecessarily because of capacity problems in eye clinics in Wales and across the UK – eye clinics are simply too busy to keep up with demand. Patients tell us of the delays and cancelled appointments they experience and the concern this causes, yet many do not want to raise concerns or complaints with health boards. Patients tell us they are incredibly grateful to ophthalmology staff who work under intense pressure.

RNIB Cymru's latest report '*Real patients coming to real harm*' is based on interviews with ten of the sixty consultant ophthalmologists in Wales. It is a stark and gravely concerning read. It highlights extensive concerns including:

- waiting lists that do not accurately reflect the true picture;
- waiting lists that are long and getting longer;
- thousands of patients on holding lists waiting for





**Whilst many health boards are working hard and further funding has been provided, the backlog of patients remains significant.**

follow-up appointments;

- a quadrupling in the number of patients waiting over 36 weeks, from 809 in 2012 to 2,468 in 2014.

We estimate that 48 people are losing their sight every year because of these problems. This is probably a conservative estimate, because the lack of robust data and monitoring systems means it is impossible to quantify the challenges and to plan services effectively. Conversely, we are also unable to measure success. RNIB Cymru is calling for a systematic review of capacity and demand to ensure patients are managed according to clinical need.

Capacity issues are compounded by the increase in demand due to our ageing nation, an increase in some of the underlying causes of sight loss and the availability of new treatments. Over a 100,000 people in Wales are living with sight loss now and the number is likely to double by 2050.

Welsh Government targets have put pressure on health boards to prioritise new patients over follow-up patients. This has been to the detriment of patients with long-term conditions – a substantial part of the ophthalmology workload. RNIB Cymru has been advised that Welsh Government is awaiting the outcome of two pilots before making a decision on future targets.

Whilst many health boards are working hard and further funding has been provided, the backlog of patients remains significant. Patients continue to contact us for advice and support because of delays. The Health Minister is encouraging health boards to use the principles of prudent healthcare to tackle the challenge of increasing demand and rising costs. We believe that the principles of prudent healthcare should be applied to ophthalmology services across Wales. Systems should be put in place to ensure eye clinics have the appropriate information to prioritise

appointments in line with clinical need and not waiting time targets. Capacity issues could be addressed by organising staff by the “only do what only you can do” principle. RNIB Cymru also wants to see a significant improvement in patient communication, ensuring patients are informed of the risks to their sight if their appointments are delayed or cancelled. And it is imperative that all health boards in Wales have a consistent approach to recording and measuring the incidence of patients losing their sight while waiting for an appointment.

The third sector has a key role to play in ensuring patients have a voice, particularly where patients are reluctant to use formal health board processes such as concern and complaints procedures. Our insight into the challenges faced by patients across Wales and the views of clinicians provides a compelling case for systemic change – nobody should lose their sight from a treatable condition simply because their eye clinic is too busy to provide care in a clinically appropriate timescale.

A copy of the report can be downloaded from <http://www.rnib.org.uk/real-patients-coming-real-harm>



#### **Northern Ireland**

The situation here is similar to that in Wales. There is no regular analysis of those waiting for review appointments and no targets for review appointments. In June 2014 5,000 patients were waiting longer than the 9 week target for initial appointment at which a sight-threatening condition might be diagnosed.

#### **England**

The position is also very worrying. RNIB has found that delays in diagnosis, treatment and follow up appointments are resulting in patients losing their sight needlessly. Staff described their working conditions as “chaotic” and “running from one crisis to another.” Despite raising alarm bells and asking for additional support, their requests are not being heard.

#### **Scotland**

Capacity issues in ophthalmology departments were identified in 2012. Patients now have a Treatment Time Guarantee (TTG) – a legal right to receive planned incident or day-case treatment within 12 weeks of the treatment being agreed. The Eyecare Integration project has had a significant impact on reducing patient referrals to hospitals. Issues remain in respect of capacity and workforce.



Although both have been a constant feature of the Welsh education system since devolution, the period up to 2009 can be seen as one where far more emphasis was placed on supporting teachers, schools and local authorities in their attempts to improve achievement by young people. Curriculum developments such as the Foundation Phase and the Welsh Bac and the extensive funding offered by the Welsh Government (through the General Teaching Council for Wales) for teacher professional development, can be seen to be typical of this period.

# A new era for education?

**David Egan, Professor of Welsh Education Policy and Director of the Wales Centre for Equity in Education at the University of Wales Trinity St David, argues neither ‘support’ nor ‘challenge’ are sufficient to achieve radical improvements in educational achievement.**

Recent developments in the Welsh education system have included the decisions of the Welsh Government to move away from school banding and replace it with school categorisation, the revision of future targets for our participation in the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), a new approach (‘New Deal’) to the professional development of teachers and the soon to be announced reforms to initial teacher education.

Taken together, these can be seen to reflect the long debate in education about the role of ‘support’ and ‘challenge’ in achieving system improvement.

The disappointing PISA results of 2009 brought an end to this period of support. They led to widespread alarm at political level within the education system, seeming as they did to confirm that not only did average achievement by young people in Wales lag behind other parts of the UK, but also many nations across the world.

As part of a much wider global development (sometimes referred to as ‘the GERM’: the Global Education Reform Movement) after 2009 Wales began to place far more emphasis on challenge within the education system. This trajectory was often associated with claims that the Welsh Government had ‘taken its eye of the ball’ during this earlier period and had become far too concerned with the views of producers (teachers and schools) rather than the consumers (parents and employers) of education performance.

These suggestions were always stronger on polemic than evidence for their justification. In its strategic document of 2006 *‘The Learning Country: Vision Into Action’*, the Welsh Government had recognised the need to significantly improve levels of education achievement in Wales. One of the consequences of this commitment was the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) of 2008, which attempted to achieve a new equilibrium between support and challenge based on extensive research evidence of ‘what works’ in achieving system reform.

The SEF was effectively abandoned after 2009 in the ‘gadarene rush’ to introduce far more challenge within the system. A more demanding Estyn inspection framework, School Banding, national

strategies designed to more closely prescribe what teachers were expected to do in the classroom in areas such as literacy and numeracy teaching, stretching future PISA targets and the role of the Regional Education Consortia in challenging 'under-achieving' schools have all become symbols of this 'challenge turn'.

Whilst achievement in the education system has continued to improve slowly during this period since 2009, the rate of improvement has been no greater than that achieved during earlier periods. What greater challenge has produced, however, is low morale within the education system resulting from a constant emphasis on the failings and weaknesses of teachers and schools. These outcomes reflect what one of the most acute observers of the support/challenge debate within educational improvement, Professor Richard Elmore, has observed. He argues that accountability needs to be a reciprocal process: 'for every increment of performance I demand from you, I have an equal responsibility to provide you with the capacity to meet that expectation'.

In the last eighteen months there has been another discernible change in the emphasis of Welsh Government policy in this area. Much of this can be seen to have been influenced by a report from the OECD in 2013 which highlighted the dearth of support available to schools and teachers in the Welsh education system and the lack of a vision for education improvement led by the Welsh Government.

So where does this leave us?

With a new synthesis of support and challenge for sure, but increasingly one wonders if this is really the right way ahead for the education system in Wales. Developments such as the greater emphasis on the importance of high quality teacher education and professional development, curriculum reform and the School Challenge Cymru programme are all welcome and draw upon a reasonably robust evidence base of what is likely to work. Other features of the system, particularly the work of the Regional Education Consortia look as unproven and troubled as ever. Given the imminent reform of local government in Wales following the Williams Commission, perhaps it is time to wonder if the consortia have a place in future arrangements for education governance.

Implicit in this ('the GERM' in Wales) is that we have the wherewithal to bring about the improvement in our education system that we all desire, through the endless fine tuning of support and challenge within school improvement until we find



**Whilst achievement in the education system has continued to improve slowly during this period since 2009, the rate of improvement has been no greater than that achieved during earlier periods.**

poverty in Wales. We were also aware that the educational achievement of our most disadvantaged young people was problematic. The report, however, makes clear just how much that is the case. Taking the key indicator of 15 year olds achieving 5 'good' GCSE passes including English and Mathematics, it discovers that children in Wales who receive free school meals achieve less than their counterparts in England and Scotland, and achieve less than all but six of the 152 local authority areas in England. It describes this as a 'failure by the Welsh schools system' – a serious challenge but one that needs to be faced up to.

Here then is the most significant issue for the Welsh education system: one that long predates devolution, but has got little better over the last fifteen years. Rather than endlessly adjusting the support and challenge levers in the education system, the focus should be on this fundamental weakness. Despite Huw Lewis making it his major priority for education in Wales, there is far too little evidence of this working its way down to be the priorities of the Regional Education Consortia and most schools.

Quite simply, the current paradigm for school improvement is not working and faced by this challenge is not going to work. As the UK Commission suggests, the solutions of the past will not work for the future we face. What is required is radical new thinking. We need a new paradigm: one that recognises that school improvement including support and challenge are a **necessary** part of the movement for transformational change in education, but they are in no way **sufficient**.

In the lead up to the next Assembly Elections the education debate in Wales should focus relentlessly on that new paradigm if devolution is to produce the outcomes in education that we all desire.

the right equipoise. Perhaps, however, it is time to question this whole paradigm.

Recently we have received the 2nd Annual Report of the UK Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission. Its first report had very little on Wales: the second has much more and it is deeply worrying. We knew that we have some of the highest levels and greatest concentrations of child



# Putting poverty on the city region agenda

**Josh Stott, Head of the Place Team at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, looks at what Wales's city regions could learn from the JRF - Leeds City Region *More Jobs, Better Jobs* partnership.**

We know that economic growth passes many people and places by. Even in more successful urban economies there is no guarantee that all citizens will benefit from growth in their local economy, and growth may not reach all parts of a city. The persistence of poverty for households trapped in a low pay, no pay cycle and the persistence of acute deprivation in the same old neighbourhoods highlights the stark limitations of trickledown economics. A rising tide will not lift all boats.

We also know that job creation is the critical factor in linking growth and poverty reduction, and the quality of the jobs created matters as well as the quantity. The face of poverty in Wales and the UK is changing, and families in which at least one adult works have become the largest group in poverty. In

2011/2012 more than half of the 13 million people in poverty in the UK were in a working family. Britain has a larger proportion of low-paid, low-skilled jobs than most developed countries. The situation is likely to worsen as the labour market 'hollows out' and the number of mid-level jobs decline, meaning progression opportunities will be increasingly limited for the growing bottom end of the labour market. Tax and benefit policy changes alone will not reduce poverty unless conditions at the bottom end of the labour market are addressed.

Cities are becoming increasingly important for economic growth and they also have high levels of poverty. Wales is reflecting the City Growth agenda in England, where a new institutional framework around city regions, Local Economic Partnerships and Combined Authorities and new central/local relationships negotiated through City Deals and the Single Growth Fund are emerging. The agenda, in Wales as in England, is squarely focused on growth. Issues around the distribution of growth, and who might benefit from the proceeds of growth have been marginalised.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation wants to broaden the current growth discourse so that poverty isn't viewed



**we want to identify what can be done at city/city regional level to deliver more and better jobs and to connect these jobs to households in poverty.**

merely as a drag on growth, an unfortunate outcome from growth or relevant only to public service reform. Poverty reduction is a key driver of growth. It is integral to creating a sustainable urban

economy. Growth and poverty is a single agenda with a single set of objectives focused around raising skills levels, raising levels of employment, raising pay levels and increasing productivity. Local economic strategies need to cover local economies as a whole, not just high growth, innovative sectors.

Albeit within a highly centralised fiscal and regulatory framework here in the UK, we want to identify what can be done at city/city regional level to deliver more and better jobs and to connect these jobs to households in poverty.

To do this, we have established in Leeds the **More Jobs, Better Jobs** partnership which provides an exciting opportunity for us to explore these issues in practice and in depth. We are going to be working together over the next four years to gain a better understanding of how these issues play out at a local level, and to identify and support adoption of new policy and practice.

The partnership is in its early stages – we have identified four cross-cutting themes to help unpack some of the issues and guide our activity. These cover:

1. **Sectors** – we are interested in exploring who is and who is not going to benefit from different local growth initiatives. We are also interested in exploring growth in lower value sectors such as hotels and catering, retail and care which are particularly associated with low pay. We want to identify what can be done at a local level around issues of job quality, skills utilisation and progression.
2. **Labour market** – we are exploring what can be done to ensure local residents will benefit from training and employment opportunities rather than them simply being displaced by more socially mobile in-movers or commuters.
3. **Anchor Institutions** – we want to understand the contribution of major institutions to the local economy and poverty reduction and to identify alternative procurement and recruitment practices which could maximise their impact locally.



4. **Incentives** – we want to be clearer about the scale of costs and benefits which accrue from reducing poverty, to see if they can drive local economic growth and manage future demand on local public services.

The defining feature of our partnership is that we are approaching growth and poverty as a single agenda. This is complicated as it requires thinking well beyond the confines of traditional approaches to economic development. Households in poverty accessing jobs, sustaining jobs and progressing in jobs is multi-dimensional and cuts across economic development, skills, welfare and other areas such as childcare, housing and transport.

Alongside our work focussing on Leeds City Region we are also developing a wider evidence base of comparative international and UK wide research. We are hoping this wider body of work can be cross-fertilised into our partnership with Leeds City Region and critically that our work can be translated to other cities, including those in Wales.

Further information about the Cities Growth and Poverty programme and the More Jobs, Better Jobs partnership can be found here <http://www.jrf.org.uk/topic/cities>

**The closing months of 2014 show radically different fortunes for the political parties in Wales and Scotland, writes [Daran Hill](#) from public affairs company Positif.**

In the year in which the future of Scotland has been the predominant constitutional and political theme in Wales, analysis and discussion has generally been fixated on powers and finance. Even discussion of fifteen years of the National Assembly was viewed through this particular tartan prism.

But there is an equally interesting dimension related to the survival and progress of political parties. 2014 has been a very useful staging post in

examining, from a psephological perspective, what exactly has happened to Labour in both Wales and Scotland during the course of devolution.

In 1999 few would have predicted how things have turned out. Labour's first Assembly election result was seen as a failure: it received just 28 per cent of the vote and was challenged in heartland seats by Plaid Cymru who took the previously rock solid Islwyn and Rhondda. In contrast, Labour's result in Scotland saw them form a government in very predictable terms.

But the fifteen years between 1999 and 2014 was something truly remarkable happen. Where Welsh Labour has consolidated and solidified, showing itself to be the natural party of government in Wales, the precise opposite has happened in Scotland. The tone is set at the top. Here we have had only ever had three First Ministers. The brevity

# Welsh Labour's future rests with Scotland

Marian Delyth



**The weakest link in the Better Together campaign was the Labour Party.**

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of Alun Michael's tenure gave way to a decade of Rhodri Morgan and, this month, Carwyn Jones will mark five years in post. Further, two Cabinet Ministers have been members since the start of devolution – Jane Hutt and Edwina Hart – while the majority of Labour AMs who have sat in the Senedd have never made it into government. Many bemoan this occasionally atrophic lack of change. It certainly breeds a sense of 'unchallengability', which is not necessarily a good thing for politics. But at least for Labour it is stable – unlike Scotland.

On pretty much the same date that Carwyn celebrates five years in the top job, Scottish Labour will be electing its seventh leader in fifteen years. This is quite something, especially considering that former First Minister Jack O'Connell was in post for six of those years. The other five holders of that office have clocked up an average of two years each. Indeed, it is already a tricky pub quiz question to name all the leaders of Scottish Labour since devolution.

And all the while Labour in Scotland has been on a path of decline – sometimes slow, sometimes fast. To prove this, examine the number of MPs won by Labour in Scotland and the share of the vote achieved there over the last thirty years – in 1987 it won 50 seats out of 72 with 42 per cent of the vote; in 1992 it won 49 seats with 39 per cent of the vote; by 1997 it won 56 seats with 46 per cent of the vote. In 2001, Labour won 55 out of a reduced number of 71 seats with 43 per cent of the vote and, following a huge reduction of seats to just 59 in 2005, Labour won 51 of them with 40 per cent of the vote.

Over the same period, Labour also dominated the Scottish Parliament. In 1999 they won a handsome 53 out of 73 first past the post seats with 39 per cent of the vote; and then 46 out of 73 seats in 2003 with 35 per cent of the vote. It was the 2007 Scottish Parliament election that saw the SNP pip Labour, winning 47 seats to 46 with both parties on about 32 per cent of the vote. This was significant. What happened next, of course, was striking because in 2011 the SNP did the impossible and won 53 out of 73 first past the post seats, compared with just 15 seats for Labour. The SNP had won the same number of seats as Labour did in the first Scottish Parliament election just 12 years earlier, displacing Labour from the premier league.

The same trend wasn't apparent in Westminster elections however. In 2010, just one year before being crushed in the Scottish Parliament elections, Labour scored a remarkable success and won 41 of

the 59 Scottish seats in Westminster, increasing its share of the vote to 42 per cent, holding the SNP to just 6 seats.

These results suggest a growing divergence in voting behaviour, with working class Labour voters supporting Labour in Westminster even if they chose the SNP for Holyrood.

September's referendum changed all that. The weakest link in the Better Together campaign was the Labour Party. Polling by TNS in July 2014 showed that 28 per cent of those who'd voted Labour in 2011 were planning to vote 'Yes' in the referendum. That figure was surpassed by the final result. The swathes of 'Yes' voters were abundant in inner city areas where Labour is at its strongest, such as Glasgow.

Indeed, to my mind, the real seismic change of September 18th 2014 was not the rise of nationalism but the death of Labour as the dominant working class party in Scotland. The killer proof of this is the voting patterns in the referendum. Working class voters generally voted 'Yes', while middle class voters generally decided to vote 'No'. Both Yougov and Lord Ashcroft polled those likely to vote before 18 September and talked again to the same samples to determine how they had actually voted. Their findings were reinforced by an Ipsos MORI poll which showed that 65 per cent of those living in the most deprived fifth of neighbourhoods in Scotland voted 'Yes', compared with just 36 per cent of those in the most affluent fifth of wards. These results explain why the SNP triumphed in Glasgow and Dundee in September but lost in more middle class areas where they hold Westminster or Scottish Parliament seats.

It also explains some recent polls ahead of the next General Election in Scotland. One predicted Labour to win just four seats – a giant 37 seats down on 2010. That was based on Labour receiving just 23 per cent of the vote compared to the SNP's 52 per cent which would deliver the SNP a staggering 54 out of 59 Scottish parliamentary seats.

Which is why, for Labour in every part of the UK, the result of the current leadership debate in Scotland is as critical as anything else. Because whatever ground Labour makes in Wales or England in May 2015 could be swept away completely if the result in Scotland is as predicted by the opinion polls. It would also leave Labour in Wales even more isolated in every way from the rest of the UK.

Indeed, the future of not just the constitution but the next decade of party politics could be decided in Scotland.

Local and national museums have a crucial role to play in giving access to cultural experiences, and 2014 has been a crucial year for museums in Wales, writes Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales, **Jennifer Stewart**.

# Museums changing lives

Museums change lives. This may sound like a really bold statement, but it's one which is true and which provided the theme in October when the Museums Association annual conference met in Wales.

The conference, which saw a record number of delegates this year and the largest ever international delegation, was held in Cardiff but provided an opportunity to showcase the work that museums do across the whole of Wales.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is proud of our record on funding museums. In financial terms alone we have invested over £1bn, thanks to National Lottery players across the United Kingdom, to transform the museum experience.

Here in Wales over the past twenty years we have spent £65 million on 186 different museum projects.

Many of these are indeed life-changing projects made possible through the National Lottery. Substantial sums have been invested in major works accessible to the whole of Wales, such as the current expansion of St Fagans.

During this twenty year period the way museums have presented themselves has changed so much, and they are now seen much more as a community resource. This is particularly true of many local projects that are increasingly coming from socially excluded

groups, such as the *Varda Venture* and *Hidden Now Heard* projects.

Young people from two Gypsy Traveller communities came to us for funding for their *Varda Venture* project to help them change existing stereotypes and attitudes towards their community, which had received significant attention in recent years as a result of TV programmes such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. Using a traditional *Varda* caravan to house a new exhibition, they collected oral histories and developed research skills, creating a travelling museum which helped them to demonstrate how proud they were of their unique heritage and traditions, whilst also breaking down stereotypes.

"Many people in Wales have a connection to the, at times, uncomfortable part of our history and are aware of the stigma attached to long-stay hospitals." So said former politician and Mencap Cymru Vice President Lord Dafydd Wigley on welcoming HLF funding for their *Hidden Now Heard* project to preserve the memories, experiences and lifestyles of the people who lived in the six long stay hospitals for people with learning disabilities in Wales. The last of these hospitals closed in 2006 but thanks to a groundbreaking national project by Mencap Cymru their story will continue to live: six regional museums across Wales are displaying exhibitions based on captured memories and research undertaken. The exhibitions give a voice to the stories of former patients and staff at these hospitals that were previously silenced. The exhibitions will then be displayed permanently at St Fagans, Cardiff.

These projects have been funded through a variety of HLF's funding streams, and have been critical in helping museums transform the way they continue to reach out and engage with a variety of different audiences. We have also worked with organisations such as the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, funding their *Catalyst Cymru – Heritage Fundraising Programme* which helps staff, volunteers and trustees within the heritage sector in Wales, including those working in museums, libraries and archives, to diversify their fundraising. This is especially important with the current squeeze on public sector spending: in 2014 the amount of money the Welsh Government has to spend on public services is 9.4 per cent lower in real terms than it was in 2010. The impact of these cuts are perhaps most keenly felt in the heritage sector where funding for museums, libraries and environmental organisations is currently very tight.

But the value of funding such projects can be much more significant, of course, than purely financial terms. Because protecting the work of museums to make their collections available to as many people as possible, including the National Lottery players who helped fund exhibitions and premises, is absolutely critical.



**Article 31 of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right to a wide range of cultural activities...**



This was a central point made by David Anderson, Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales and President of the Museums Association, when he warned the Museums Association conference of the need for museums to step up to their “moral responsibility” to make a difference in people’s lives at a time when funding cuts are happening throughout the public sector.

In short, museums can be and should be a vehicle for opportunity and change, which was a theme returned to time and time again at the conference, especially in relation to opportunities for children. Article 31 of the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the

right to a wide range of cultural activities, and the museums sector has a key role in offering such opportunities and removing barriers to cultural participation by children and young people..

Because access to culture matters. Not only because children have a right to participate in cultural activities but also because there is growing evidence to suggest that cultural engagement supports better educational engagement and outcomes.

The Heritage Lottery Fund is very supportive of this approach. We recently worked with Baroness Kay Andrews who undertook a study on how museums can help alleviate the symptoms of poverty and provide opportunities for the poorest in society, especially children and young people. The report stresses the important role our heritage can play in inspiring individuals to learn and gain new skills whilst also developing their appreciation and interest in Wales’ rich history, which very much reflects the aims of HLF. In the coming years, the Heritage Lottery Fund will continue to ensure lottery players’ money helps museums to change lives

# Do you really need a smartphone?

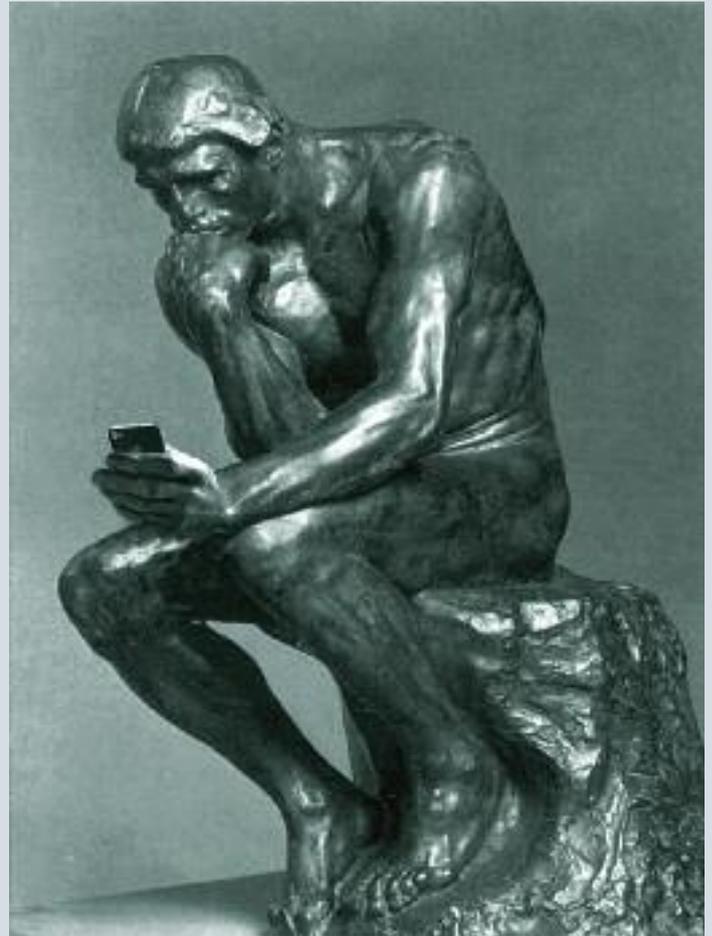
**Gideon Calder,**  
**Professor of Social**  
**Ethics at the**  
**University of South**  
**Wales, looks at what**  
**we mean by ‘needs’.**

‘**B**ut I totally *need* my own smartphone,’ says a girl of 10-ish on Commercial Street, Newport. ‘No you don’t,’ replies her mum: ‘you just totally *want* one.’ You can see mum’s point. People, we might think, *need* a roof over their heads, and sanitation, and access to adequate healthcare. Saying they need phones seems to cheapen what ‘need’ means. ‘Needs’ sound basic, non-negotiable, objective, perhaps universal, a part of the human condition. Smartphones, great though they are, seem unlikely to fit that bill.

And if ‘needs’ are primary (perhaps these are things we need to address in order for people to have a decent life at all), ‘wants’ may seem like optional extras. A ‘want’ sounds like something subjective, dependent on the preferences and priorities I happen to have. Wants also sound open to manipulation, by advertising, ideology and other kinds of suggestion. While ‘I need food’ is a statement of the inevitable, ‘I need a multipack of cheesy Wotsits’ may seem a simple misuse of the word – not to mention an insult to those without due access to nutrition.

Maybe, then, social justice means everyone’s (basic) needs being sufficiently met, but people being left to cater for their own wants? So everyone would have decent housing, and access to education, but having a smartphone would simply be a matter of personal choice – or mum’s. This picture has a lot going for it. But it’s a little too simple. Here are three reasons why.

For one thing, needs *do* seem socially variable. Here’s an example. When invented, phones were a luxury item. No longer. Indeed, in a society where



everyone is presumed to have a phone, not having access to a phone might make you drastically vulnerable. For the world around you – health centres, schools, emergency services – assumes you have one. Do people then *need* personal access to a phone? It’s hardly crazy to say so. Their welfare may literally depend on it – just as it might depend on access to electricity, domestically accessible clean water, reliable transport links, and other things denied our ancestors. But Joan of Arc didn’t need a phone, and neither do those many people living in societies without an infrastructure that presumes that everyone has phone access. So across time, and across different societies, whether something is *needed* seems obviously variable. It may look like a



**'Needs' sound basic, non-negotiable, objective, universal - a part of the human condition.**

wild extravagance or a staple, depending at least partly on social context, and on how much of it other people have.

Here's a second point. Much of the time, what we say we need is really only a kind of vehicle. Do we really need a phone? No, we need to communicate – *that's* the basic thing. A phone is just one of various possible means to that end. And we need to have ways of accessing certain services. This needn't be by phone: it all depends on how those services are set up, and how people are expected to use them. So phones *themselves* don't guarantee people accessing the services they need. Maybe we'll find better replacements for the kinds of communication (phones, social media, the web in general) currently on offer. Maybe looking back, what the Welsh Government calls 'digital inclusion' will come to seem a fleeting priority, rather than reflecting a fixed or universal need – no more an ongoing answer to social ills than the horse and carriage.

And here's a third consideration. Our needs don't just shift as society progresses – they also multiply. While the needs of our cave-dwelling ancestors would have overlapped with our own in plenty of ways, they would also have been much quicker to list. This is partly because the division of labour in modern societies has made all of us far less self-sufficient. Once, the vast bulk of jobs would have been carried out within family units or small-scale communities – from house-building to healthcare to education to the sourcing of dinner. People had to be multi-skilled – and contributed in various ways to the sustaining of viable social life.

Our skills have narrowed since. How many people can rewire their own houses, or perform their own dentistry? How many of us know much at all about how computers work, even as we spend half our day relying on them? We are each of us hugely,

complicatedly dependent on the expertise of others. Without the services and safety net that such expertise provides, each of us would be disabled in ways not even wildly imaginable for cavemen.

Some reject the whole concept of needs as flaky or irrelevant. They may argue that whatever seem like 'needs' are actually socially constructed, all the way down – things which seem necessary, but only because of the way different societies work and the dominant perceptions they generate.

Economists tend to talk as if *preferences* are where it's at – so for my life to be going well, what's crucial is that I'm getting to do and have what I'd prefer to be doing and having, rather than that my needs are met. Preference satisfaction, it's said, is easier to measure than needs satisfaction, and less disputed. (Actually it's not, but that's mainstream economics for you.) Wherever we find a list of the basic prerequisites of a flourishing life, we'll find complaints that it's biased, or selective, or gappy.

There's a strong, vital case to be made that many needs are universal, and constant – and that the extent to which they're met is a vital indicator of social progress. In their still-seminal 1991 book *A Theory of Human Need*, Len Doyal and Ian Gough identify two needs the meeting of which is preconditional for participating in a good life: physical health and personal autonomy (the capacity to make informed choices about our lives). Satisfying them requires a range of enablers, achievable in various ways: food, water, housing, work, a viable physical environment, healthcare, education.

In the past 100 years or so, in countries like ours, it's become reasonable to hope that social policies might deliver such priorities for all. Aneurin Bevan worked on that basis – and for some decades after 1945 in the UK, there was a kind of political consensus on those lines. Yet since the 1970s and the interventions of the Thatcher government, that consensus has withered. The challenges Bevan identified remain; some have intensified. It's our complex dependency on other people, on social institutions, and on our environment, which both frames our needs and makes promoting them such a complex, vital business. So does a 10-year-old actually *need* a smartphone? Not really. But does she need to relate to others and the world around her in ways which allow her to thrive? Totally.

**IN ACTION**

**Towards a Wales without Poverty**

The ways in which poverty in Wales is changing and effective ways of reducing it were the themes of the Bevan Foundation’s first annual social justice conference. Working with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, more than 100 delegates heard from experts across Britain to deepen their understanding and learn good practice. Ninety per cent of delegates rated the conference good or excellent.



Panel discussion with (l-r) Jane Millar (University of Bath), Gerald Jones (WGLA), Graham Benfield (Building Communities Trust) and Rosie Sweetman (BiTC Wales).

**Carnegie Challenge Debate - ‘Is it all about money?’**



Delegates participated in a lively debate on 4th November, supported by the Carnegie UK Trust. Peter Kelly, Director of the Poverty Alliance, and Jonathan Jones, of the Heads of the Valleys Development Company, sparked things off while a wide range of contributions from the floor was ably managed by BBC Wales’s Tomos Dafydd. Peter Kelly’s speech is printed in this issue.

**IN PRINT**

**One in eight has problem debt**

About one in eight of the Welsh population, some 400,000 people, has problem debt according to evidence in our report for the Public Policy Institute Wales. Indebtedness is strongly associated with low income and financial exclusion – about half of all those who are indebted have household incomes of £20,000 a year or less.

The full report is available at [www.bevanfoundation.org](http://www.bevanfoundation.org)



**Rethinking Poverty**

Tackling poverty’ has a very high political priority in Wales, but it’s not always clear what the ‘poverty’ problem really is. This paper suggests that focusing on raising household incomes, and having a home, warmth and food are fundamental, as are having literacy and numeracy, digital and financial skills.

The full report is available at [www.bevanfoundation.org](http://www.bevanfoundation.org)

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Michael Trickey and Victoria Winckler give evidence to the Assembly's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

### Poverty and Inequality

Our evidence on poverty and inequality is informing the National Assembly for Wales's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's inquiry into poverty and inequality. Submitted jointly with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, our written and oral evidence is playing a key role in shaping the committee's thinking.

Read the evidence at <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ieListDocuments.aspx?CID=226&MID=2571>

Watch the webcast at <http://senedd.tv/Meeting/Archive/7ced8f09-8b52-4c04-b89a-3da7306a659b?autostart=True#>

### Helping to change Wales

It is often difficult to measure the impact of what we do, as we do not necessarily know if or how an individual or organisation uses our findings. Recent surveys have found that:

- half of those attending one or more of our **Poverty and Education Network** seminars had made 'a lot' or 'some' changes as a result of attending.
- nearly a quarter of those attending our **Towards a Wales without Poverty** conference said they were changing what their organisation did as a result.
- more than 9 out of 10 organisations said **our overall activities** provided useful evidence for their work and 1 in 10 had changed their policies or practices.

Find out more in our annual review of 2013/14 available in English and Welsh at [www.bevanfoundation.org](http://www.bevanfoundation.org)

### Better buses

People on low incomes, older and young people and women are by far the most likely to depend on buses to get about. The Director of the Bevan Foundation is chairing the Welsh Government's **Bus Policy Advisory Group**, bringing bus operators, local authorities and passenger representatives together to look at ways of encouraging sustainable bus services. The first report of the group was published in July 2014. The group has now resumed its work and will continue to May 2016.



Read the report at [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

## Evidence, ideas and answers that make a difference

**Vivienne Sugar, new Chair of the Bevan Foundation, outlines her vision and urges members to get involved.**

**B**ecoming Chair of an organisation that is universally lauded for the quality of its work and its far-reaching influence is both an honour and a big responsibility. With a new strategic plan in place we will be at the forefront of identifying the issues that will face Wales in 2020 and producing the evidence, the 100 ideas and the answers that will make a difference.

Because the prospects for Wales in 2020 currently look bleak. Poverty and inequality are increasing as the age of austerity rolls on (we are definitely not “all in it together”!). Low wages, insecure employment, zero hours contracts, increasing numbers of older people needing care and support, children in our schools who are under-achieving, health services which are struggling to cope, environmental threats and more. Rising inequality is not however inevitable and what Nye Bevan’s mission for change and passion for justice delivered when I was growing up was good schooling, good housing, the best of health care when ill and a vision of liberating human potential through equality of opportunity

to develop whatever latent talents and aptitudes people might have through the whole of their lives.

As public finances are reduced we have to find new ways of helping individuals and communities to combat disadvantage and enjoy safe, secure and rewarding lives. It is usual to point upwards to governments and demand that “they”

do something. It is true that some major levers for change will be in the hands of those in Westminster or Cardiff but it is also the strength of our communities that can make a difference. Many have suffered pit or factory closures, long-term unemployment and outward migration as people leave to find work elsewhere but many have retained a sense of solidarity and compassion. So, how can that be turned into economic activity and enterprise, creating local jobs and training opportunities?

Our mission is to develop evidence-based ideas for social and economic change in Wales. Gaps in evidence on social and economic issues mean that public policy and debate is often not well informed or is shaped by a relatively narrow range of perspectives. We are uniquely placed to provide that independent constructive challenge but we will need your continuing support to do it.

Like many small organisations finance is a continual challenge. Our partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and sponsorship from other partner organisations of our events and individual pieces of work is vital but above all we are a membership organisation. Membership subscriptions are an important source of funding but so too is the contribution you make to our blogs, writing articles for this Review magazine, attending events and contributing to debate.

The next 2 years will be testing for us. A general Election in 2015 and National assembly Elections in 2016 will produce new politicians, new power bases, new political directions. Our key message must be that poverty, inequality and social injustice should be the concern of all public servants and of all politicians regardless of party affiliation and that all sections of Welsh society should work together to focus their own priorities, policies and programmes on making Wales a fairer place to live.





- ◆ ***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***

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[www.bevanfoundation.org](http://www.bevanfoundation.org)