

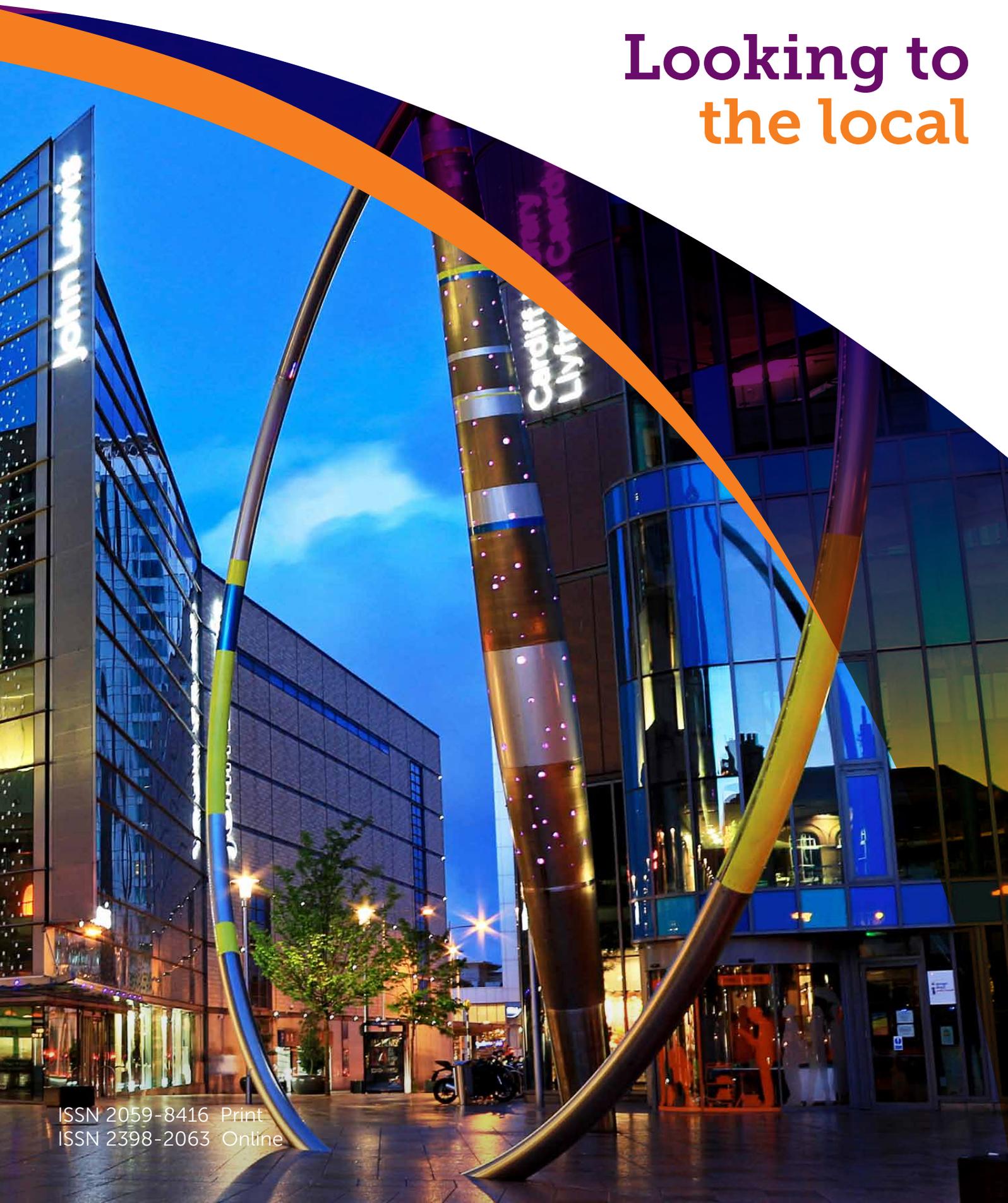
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Looking to the local



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Learning to love local

Victoria Winckler, Director of the Bevan Foundation, explores why place matters - and considers why Welsh public policy has always struggled with 'the local'.

This issue of Exchange looks at the question of 'place' and asks if policy-makers take sufficiently into account the differences within Wales. It's all the more important in light of the drift towards regional rather than structures across a wide range of services.

Wales is extraordinarily diverse. From the birthplace of the last industrial revolution to the 'internet coast' of the next. From the Welsh speakers of Gwynedd to the Punjabi speakers of Cardiff. From the rolling fields of Powys to the cockle beds of the Gower. And so on. As sociologist Graham Day pointed out a little while ago, while you can probably say this about any country the differences between places in Wales are particularly marked and people tend to be very aware of them.

We see this in how people talk about place. Where you come from and where you live are usually one of the first things discussed when meeting someone new. And when people say where they are from, they're usually very careful to be specific, volunteering that they are from Builth Wells or Ebbw Vale rather than simply Powys or Blaenau Gwent.

People's attachment to place is evident in various statistics too. In all but a handful of local authorities, the majority of the population live and



work in the same area. People tend not to move home frequently and if they do, mostly stay in the same area. So it's hardly surprising that around 85 percent of the population of Wales feel that they belong to where they live.

The diversity of Wales and people's attachment to place isn't directly translated into Welsh public policy however. Across the board, the emphasis is on all-Wales policies that are somehow supposed to meet the needs of all these diverse

places. We have policies for health, education, buses, social care and the economy that often don't allow any variation whatsoever: be it Conwy or Cardiff, one size must fit all.

Even when government programmes are explicitly about place, in regeneration programmes and Communities First for example, the criteria, objectives and outputs must all be pretty much the same, even if the challenges facing deprived communities in, say, Merthyr Tydfil are very different to

Where you come from and where you live are usually one of the first things discussed when meeting someone new.

those facing deprived communities in, say, Pembrokeshire.

Welsh public policy's difficulty with 'the local' is perhaps most clearly seen in local government. The current 22 local authorities reached their 21st birthday this year, but there were no celebrations – merely surprise that they had survived so long. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government has promised that the existing 22 authorities have another ten years of life, but while the names above the town hall door may be the same in 2027, they look set for radical change in how they work.

Already local authorities have seen a loss of functions, mostly through the back-door. Instead of overt power-grabs, financial pressures are whittling away local services. Around half of Wales' local authorities have seen their council housing transferred to social landlords while more recently many have given away their leisure and arts services to independent trusts. At a seminar recently, the Chief Executive of one local authority talked about his authority being 'hollowed out'.

At the same time there's growing pressure on local authorities to 'collaborate'. I've deliberately used inverted commas, because true collaboration is voluntary whereas the collaboration that's in the frame now has a strong element of compulsion. The short history of local government reform in Wales goes something like this: commission an external review (Beecham, Simpson and Williams);

decide that collaboration is the way forward; take steps to incentivise or compel authorities to work together; watch it unravel to a greater or lesser extent; begin again.

The January 2017 White Paper 'Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed' once again focuses on 'collaboration'. This time it proposes to make collaboration mandatory in respect of economic development, transport, land use planning, social services, public protection and education improvement. In addition it raises the possibility of collaboration on housing, waste and community safety.

Like its predecessor reforms, the drivers of change in the White Paper are relentlessly managerial – the talk is all about economies of scale; removing duplication; simplifying activity; workforce resilience and so on. There is even, betraying the unease about the local, reference to 'ensuring consistency'. There is no praise for the local level, whether it is the benefits of people having a say in decisions that affect them or the value of meeting local needs and circumstances.

The regional models, be they city regions or educational consortia, raise some very important challenges. For a start, it is far from clear what the electorate can expect from their regional bodies. The current model is that local council candidates go to the polls with an offer to the electorate, which they are expected to deliver if successful. But in a regional model, a local candidate can make all the promises in the world but their ability to fulfil them is hugely reduced as decisions are taken elsewhere.

There is also the vexed question of accountability. The White Paper makes clear that regional collaborations will take decisions in the interests of the region as a whole, not one area. This is an extraordinary shift. Until now Cardiff Council has taken decisions in the interests of Cardiff residents, but in the regional model it has to take into account the needs of the region as

a whole. Not only does this assume that there is a single regional interest – a moot point at best – but it also assumes that Cardiff residents will be happy that a major investment has been agreed in Newport or Bridgend or Blaenau Gwent.

The acid test is what happens if as a resident you aren't happy with a regional decision? Exactly which council office do you wave placards outside? And which councillor do you vote out at the next election? On this question, which to my mind is absolutely fundamental to having 'resilient and renewed' local authorities, all the White Paper says is 'Welsh Government will provide a clear framework for making arrangements to hold those making decisions to account'. Essentially, the public is being asked to agree to major changes in how local services are delivered without knowing how they can make their views heard.

Local authorities are by no means the only bodies to be urged towards 'collaboration'. In health, individual GP practices are being organised into 'clusters', enabling them to share resources but also, as Rachel Polodak's article describes, raising challenges about their autonomy from health boards. Similarly, in the third sector, county voluntary councils, which are the umbrella bodies for the voluntary sector, are now expected to collaborate on issues such as training.

In contrast to Welsh public policy's unease about the 'local', there is its long-standing love affair with 'community'. This buzz word features across a raft of Welsh Government policies and programmes, such as community energy, community learning centres, community pharmacies, community assets and Communities First to name but a few. Communities even have their own Cabinet Secretary, with Carl Sargeant being the latest incumbent with 'community' in his title. Thriving, vibrant, resilient, active, caring – you name it, there is nothing that Welsh public policy doesn't want our 'communities' to be.

But I suspect that the liking for 'community' is more apparent than real. Most community-based programmes are aimed at mobilising people, usually to achieve some Welsh Government-defined improvement. Communities First is the prime example, but pretty well every reference to 'community' is accompanied by an expectation that people will achieve changes that the state either cannot or will not achieve itself. The effect is sometimes that community organisations are 'incorporated' by government, with a loss of independence, a need to comply with external requirements, and financial difficulties when, inevitably, government support is withdrawn.

Accountability can be problematic in community organisations too. Without the ballot box, many community leaders come forward and operate with the informal consent of the community – word soon gets round if an individual does not have community support. But that said, there are nothing like the checks and balances on community 'representatives' as there are on local

The acid test is what happens if as a resident you aren't happy with a regional decision? Exactly which council office do you wave placards outside?

councillors – no register of interests, no published expenses, no codes of conduct, no local scrutiny process. The accountability that does exist is to funders, often against relatively narrow criteria too.

So we have the irony of a Wales which is hugely diverse, which positively cries out for strong, local institutions, coupled with relatively weak and flawed governance structures at local level. This contradiction matters a great deal.

It doesn't help to attract talented individuals to stand for election to local authorities. As Jess Blair's article in this issue shows, one in fourteen wards in Wales was uncontested in the May 2017 elections. In many more, not all

seats in multi-member wards were challenged: for example in Merthyr Tydfil two wards had three seats available which were contested by four candidates – competition, yes, but only just. This state of affairs is hardly a recipe for resilience and renewal. It also raises questions about whether those who do become councillors are up for the big strategic decisions that face local authorities, whether to change the direction of their regional economy, as argued by Mike Harding's article on city regions, or to vary business rates, as argued by Ben Cottam's contribution.

The relative weakness of institutions at the local level means it is more difficult for people to get



their voices heard. There's a dearth of community-level planning and engagement, and even when it does occur there's no mechanism for feeding ideas and action up the chain. Instead, we have provider-led arrangements which doubtless increase efficiency and avoid duplication but sadly take little account of what ordinary people think. Later in this issue, Dave Hagendyk's article illustrates this clearly, in contrasting the provider-dominated Adult Learning Frameworks with the people-focused 'Citizen's Curriculum'. Similarly, Catherine A'Bear's

contribution describes how employability programmes that reflect local needs and circumstances are much more likely to be successful than top-down approaches.

The weakness of local governance affects the delivery of public services. Variation between places is too often regarded as a 'postcode lottery', even though differences that reflect local circumstances may be exactly what is required. I would argue that public policies that attempt to fit everyone, everywhere, are doomed to fail in those areas where they simply don't fit. It's long

been accepted that standard-issue policies do little for some groups of people, but it's much less often recognised that different approaches may be needed for different places. Yet without essential fine-tuning, government policies may well miss the mark.

So, 'local' really matters, whether local authorities, community groups or town and community councils. Far from trying to brigade local structures into clusters, consortia or partnerships, public policy should celebrate and support the importance of place in Wales.

I am not arguing against structures like city regions or GP clusters, but if they are to work they need to have deep, democratic roots in the people and places they serve.

The rest of this issue of Exchange looks at how the idea of locality in Wales is changing – I hope it is of interest.

We have a Wales which is hugely diverse coupled with relatively weak local governance structures.

Hashtags and grime: the power of the youth vote

Jess Blair, Director of ERS Cymru, explores the increased youth vote at the general election and considers its legacy.



Picture courtesy of Andy Miah. Licensed under the Creative Commons.

If there's one endorsement that Jeremy Corbyn had prior to the election that raised eyebrows it was the backing from leading figures within the grime scene, such as Stormzy and JME. #grime4Corbyn came alongside cover stories for the Labour leader in NME and even Kerrang magazine. While certainly not the typical

Yet, this election was different for young people. Manifesto promises were made that specifically appealed to them; no tuition fees for university, the return of housing benefits for under-21s and a rise in the minimum wage.

areas Prime Ministerial candidates would normally head to for support, these moves by Corbyn showed a calculated gamble, and it's a gamble that looks likely to have paid off.

In the General Election on June 8th Labour avoided the wipeout that many had predicted for them and gained 30 seats, bringing their total in Parliament to 262 seats. Crucially they denied the Tories a majority, taking three seats from the Conservatives in Wales alone. What was the secret to Labour's success? Many would suggest it was the youth vote.

While we don't have the exact figures for how many young people turned out to vote just yet, overall turnout in Wales was up 3%. In Merthyr turnout rose by a whopping 8%. What we can say from these figures is that young people will certainly make up some of this increase. Figures from the Electoral Commission released before the election showed 1.05 million 18-24 year olds registering to vote between Theresa May's election announcement on April 18 and the registration deadline on 22nd May. On the day of the deadline 246,487 young people registered compared with 137,400 on the equivalent day in 2015.

According to an ICM poll conducted before the election, 67% of young people were planning to vote for Labour compared with 16% of 18-24 year olds who would be voting for the Conservatives, so any increase in turnout among young people will almost certainly have benefitted Labour.

There has been a long held belief in politics that young people just don't vote. After the EU Referendum last year, there was a widely circulated statistic that only 36% of young people had voted - in fact this turned out to be 64%. However, even this higher statistic didn't compare favourably with turnout levels in different age groups. 90% of those aged 65 and older are thought to have cast their vote last June.

Rather than parties assuming that young people won't vote and being able to keep them as an afterthought, parties will now have to consider how to appeal to all parts of our society.

Yet, this election was different for young people. Manifesto promises were made that specifically appealed to them; no tuition fees for university, the return of housing benefits for under-21s and a rise in the minimum wage. This was Labour's big risk; creating a manifesto that they knew would appeal to young people across the country who might not vote.

This election was also different digitally. In 2015 the Conservatives spent £1.2m on social media campaigning, while Labour spent £16k. This time round both parties look to have spent over £1m and used their data to microtarget voters as effectively as possible. The Conservative's investment appears at this early stage to have been on sharp attack ads focused largely on Corbyn, Diane Abbott and John McDonnell and deployed at a calculated level locally. While the Labour party also used adverts on social media to critique specific Tory policies, there was also, according to some reports, a much more 'organic' campaigning method via social media. BuzzFeed reported on May 7th that Jeremy Corbyn was leading in terms of support on Facebook:

"The most shared stories about the general election during the first fortnight of the campaign have been overwhelmingly positive about the Labour leader. By contrast, the only stories regarding Theresa May and the Conservatives that have gone viral are negative."

The viral nature of Facebook also allowed reports outside of the mainstream media to trend. The same BuzzFeed piece reports that

"six of the 20 most-shared election-related links on Facebook during the first fortnight of the election were from media sources that sit well outside the mainstream media".

A comment piece from the New Statesman on 12th June, written by a young Labour campaigner, cites internet phenomena's incredible reach among young people:

"In the week before the election you'd have been hard pressed to find anything but political memes on my Facebook and Twitter timelines; they reached millions of feeds and engaged thousands of previous non-voters in the debate. #grime4corbyn trended higher than the Labour Party's manifesto on its launch day, and I've seen Corbyn described as "THE ABSOLUTE BOY" more times than I've seen him be called the leader of the Labour Party."

As the dust settles it would not be surprising if more focus were to be paid on the impact that social media had on the outcome of this election, and in particular how social media could have played a significant part in getting more young people involved.

For young people, the challenge will now be to sustain and improve on this increased political engagement. More young people turning out to vote has the potential to be a game changer for our democracy. Rather than parties assuming that young people won't vote and being able to keep them as an afterthought, parties will now have to consider how to appeal to all parts of our society. This could change politics in this country for the better.

Saving Wales' local media

Richard Gurner, editor of the Caerphilly Observer, considers how local media in Wales can find its way out of a black hole.

Caerphilly Observer was established in 2009 as a website covering local news from Caerphilly County Borough. In 2013, with grant help from the local authority, it launched a fortnightly print edition with a circulation of 10,000. The move into print was a catalyst for growth, with Caerphilly Observer moving from a one-man-band working on the kitchen table to a multi award-winning title with its own staff and office.

The media in Wales is currently undergoing an existential crisis. Caught between the noble service it provides to inform citizens and the harsh commercial reality it faces it doesn't know what to do to arrest its decline.

Circulations are down, advertising revenue is down, and as a result, there are fewer journalists around explaining the "important stuff" to the public.

This is being felt on a UK national level, a Welsh national level, but even more so on a local level. Local and regional newspapers are often held up as a critical mirror to the communities they serve. Featuring all aspects of local life they are the essential lifeblood of a community.

In an era of smart phones and social media, where information can be shared at the speed of thought, it can be easy to assume the role of a local newspaper has been diminished. To a certain extent this is true, as local newspapers no longer have the monopoly on information supply in their given geographical area. Want to promote your charity



event? Post it on Twitter.

Want to raise money for charity? Tell Facebook.

These sorts of scenarios are not entirely the full story. Being featured in a local newspaper, and indeed its website, can make something

official. At a time when the validity of social media is being called into question with cries of "fake news", it is the local newspaper brand that can give an event or cause an unofficial seal of recognition.

Everybody these days is a

The internet has conditioned people into thinking that good, quality, relevant content is free and that is simply not true.

publisher. The police can post information directly to its website – as can local authorities – but it takes local media, with professional journalists to sniff out the real story. Without them, council leaders will always be making "efficiency savings" rather than the more brutal, and honest, cuts. A critical eye is always needed to keep local institutions in check.

What happens when a local area loses its voice has been profiled in some excellent research by journalist Dr Rachel Howells. Her 2015 PhD, entitled "Journey to the centre of a news black hole: examining the democratic deficit in a town with no newspaper" looks at Port Talbot, where the Port Talbot Guardian closed in 2009.

Dr Howells also undertook a content analysis of the South Wales Evening Post for Port Talbot related stories. Looking back to the 1970s, she found the number of stories on the locality fell as the decades went on and attributed this to dwindling resources in the newsrooms as newspaper owners sought to shore up their profits by cutting staff.

Interviewing local residents, they reported they were under-informed as to what was happening in the town and found out about significant issues when it was too late to act. Perhaps most significantly however was Dr Howell's findings that turnout for elections in Port Talbot dropped beneath the national average for the first time in 2000.

Port Talbot acts as a warning to what could be around the corner unless something is done. It is an issue which is finally being addressed by Assembly Members. At the time of writing, the National Assembly's Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

is undertaking an inquiry into News Journalism in Wales.

But what are the answers? Well firstly, let's have a look at the real problem – money. The internet has conditioned people into thinking that good, quality, relevant content is free and that is simply not true. There is always a cost to produce it – after all, local journalists need to get paid.

There are two ways to pay for news – consent to being shown advertisements or sign up for a subscription. The success of Caerphilly Observer as an advertising-supported newspaper, distributed for free, demonstrates that this traditional business model is not broken and that there is a

Everybody these days is a publisher but it takes local media, with professional journalists, to sniff out the real story.

demand for local news. But there is a key difference between us and the bigger newspaper groups.

Caerphilly Observer is published by Caerphilly Media Ltd and is a success because we don't have a large cost base and the only shareholder to satisfy is myself. Unlike bigger listed companies, I don't have to worry about the value of my shares or dividend payouts – I simply have to make sure there is enough revenue to cover costs, pay staff and then pay myself.

There is no reason why a news organisation like Caerphilly Observer cannot be replicated elsewhere. I certainly have no current plans to set up elsewhere – my home is in Caerphilly County Borough – my local community.

For a model to achieve similar success will take individuals as passionate as I am to take such project forward - and there is already help available through Centre for Community Journalism at Cardiff University for those wishing to set themselves up publishing independent local journalism.

And of course there is always a role for government to play. Caerphilly Observer made the leap into print thanks to the rural development team at Caerphilly County Borough Council. We successfully applied for a budding business grant to launch the fortnightly newspaper. The grant was for a total of £2,441.60, which went towards 80% of the print costs

for the first four editions and 80% of the cost of three distribution bins. Considering what we have achieved and the reaction we have had from readers to our coverage of local issues, it is money well spent.

For those wondering how we managed to stay impartial when reporting on contentious issues, such as the council's draft Local Development Plan or its senior officer pay scandal, the answer is simple – we just are. Our readers expect it, and our hard-won integrity would be in tatters – and with it our readership and business model.

We're at a crossroads with regards to local media in Wales and it is imperative we act if we want to escape the wider black hole.

An inclusive approach to city deals – looking elsewhere for inspiration

City deals are coming to Wales. But what can they learn from other cities? Mike Hawking, Partnerships Manager (Cities) at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, looks at some of the leading examples.

Welsh cities are getting new powers giving them greater responsibility for driving the nation's economy forward. The Cardiff Capital Region and the Swansea Bay City deals offer local leaders the opportunity to make more decisions about investment in infrastructure, businesses and employment support. But simply driving growth should not be the limit of the ambitions of the city deals. Ensuring that more people are able to share in prosperity should be a key focus. This is often referred to as creating more inclusive growth, and there are a number of initiatives in other cities – both in the UK and internationally – that leaders in Cardiff and Swansea can learn from.

Leading the agenda

The Royal Society of Arts' recent Inclusive Growth Commission made the case for aligning economic and social policy at a local level, where investments in social infrastructure are seen as integral to economic growth. It argued that growth and social reform should be viewed as two sides of the same coin. Local leaders have the ability to make the case for this and not wait for national governments to set the agenda. They can use the powers and influence they already have to make this happen.

Measuring what matters could be a starting point. Traditional measures of economic growth, such as Gross Value Added (GVA), measure the quantity of growth,

but don't consider the quality of it. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation have developed an inclusive growth monitor to try to address this, which considers measures of prosperity and economic inclusion. Cities can do this themselves, setting targets and measures that they can aim for and be judged by, setting the tone for the city.

The Mayor of Louisville, Kentucky, made a pledge to create a more compassionate city. As part of this, he worked with the local University to develop a Compassionate Index which is used to measure the success of his programme. The data, which is publically available, include items such as educational attainment, community disparities and standards of living. The index

has not only helped to keep the city government focused on the Mayor's desired outcomes, but also helped to develop a culture of compassion across the city.

Boosting education and skills

Evidence suggests that increasing the skill levels of a city population can lead to stronger economic growth. A lack of skills can limit people's opportunity in the jobs market, and can also limit business success. Helping people to increase their skills is a crucial part of delivering more inclusive growth. The city deals rightly have a focus on matching skills to areas of investment, but just as crucial is supporting basic skills provision. A survey of adult skills in Wales published by the Welsh Government in 2011 found that around 216,000 adults had low literacy skill levels and some 918,000 adults had low numeracy skill levels. Co-ordinating and focusing basic skills provision on the basis of need and personal circumstance is something that the city deal areas should investigate.

Just under half the people in poverty in Wales live in a working household. Helping people to progress in work should be a key priority for city deals and improving

City deals should not just focus on how to increase the number of jobs in their area, but also how to create better quality jobs.



the skills of people already in work is one way to achieve this. There is a weak evidence base for how cities can do this however, so the onus is on local areas to innovate and test ideas. This is the case in Leeds City Region where they have commissioned a pilot project to learn more about how people can be supported to progress in-work using funding from the European Union. The city deal in Glasgow included funding to support a pilot project to support in-work progression in the care sector. The pilot has been developed with a range of stakeholders, including employers in the sector, and involves dedicated business advisors working with individual employers.

Shaping a more inclusive economy

City deals should not just focus on how to increase the number of jobs in their area, but also how to create better quality jobs. Initiatives to boost productivity and stimulate innovation are already features of the city deals. However, there is little discussion about how low-pay sectors, such as retail and hospitality, could be targeted. Given these sectors make up a disproportionate share of the UK's productivity gap with other countries, a focus on raising productivity in low-pay

sectors should be a priority.

Many cities in the UK and in Europe are using planning and procurement levers to create opportunities for local businesses and people. Including local labour clauses in procurement is one way to achieve this, and has been successfully implemented in places such as Leeds and Birmingham. In the French city of Nantes, the procurement policy stipulates that a certain number of hours (as opposed to a number of jobs) need to be offered to local unemployed people, giving employers a degree of flexibility in how they deliver on the requirement. Flexibilities such as this should be considered by city deal regions to maximise the job opportunities that can be created.

Connecting people to economic opportunity

Ensuring people are able to access the opportunities that are generated from the city deals is essential to their success. Good transport connections are vital, particularly in relation to housing and employment growth areas. The Cambridge City Deal includes funding for additional transport infrastructure, and concentrated on connecting existing and new residential areas to places where jobs were being created.

This included a focus on buses, which are particularly critical for people with a high risk of poverty.

But connecting people to opportunity isn't just about physical infrastructure. The Working Well programme is a pilot in Greater Manchester which focuses on helping people who receive Employment and Support Allowance in to work. The programme provides individually tailored support to help people overcome the issues they face which are holding them back from finding employment. The initial scheme has been successful, and the pilot has been expanded to work with 15,000 people across the city. Wales' city deal areas can learn from the personalised design of the programme, understanding the support structures that need to be put in place to help more people benefit from economic growth.

The Assembly's economy, infrastructure and skills committee recently asked whether the growth and city deals could solve or exacerbate existing inequalities. This is a key question. JRF has consistently argued that city deals should help to reduce poverty. The city deals in Wales have an opportunity to bring greater prosperity to their regions. By learning lessons from other cities, they can put in places programmes and policies to deliver more inclusive growth, ensuring that more people can share in the opportunities that are being created. It is on this measure that city deals should be judged.

Traditional measures of economic growth measure the quantity of growth but don't consider the quality of it.

Time for change on Business Rates

Ben Cottam, Head of External Affairs for FSB Wales, considers the winners and losers of Wales' Business Rates regime, and sets out what should be changed.

For many people, including politicians, the issue of business rates might not be the most attention-grabbing of topics in a landscape filled with dramatic social, economic and political change. However, as has been seen in the political and media attention given to the issue in the past few months both here and over Offa's Dyke, it's a subject which often generates strong views. For many small businesses, it's a fundamental and immediate issue.

Business rates attracted attention following the revaluation which is undertaken every five years. As is invariably the case, there have been some winners and some losers. Some lost significantly, receiving crippling rises in their rates bills. The subsequent debates have raised some fundamental questions about the viability and sustainability of the business rates system in Wales and beyond, as well as casting further doubt on the future sustainability of Wales' high streets.

Business rates, also known as Non-Domestic Rates, are essentially a tax, levied against properties used for business whether shops, offices, garages or any number of other facilities. The rates are collected locally by councils on behalf of Welsh Government and then redistributed to local authorities to help fund important local services. Competence for business

rates is devolved to the national governments across the UK which means that we have four different systems in operation in the UK, which raises its own challenges in ensuring competitiveness.

For smaller businesses, business rates represent the second or third most significant outgoing whereas for many larger businesses, they are proportionately less significant. Indeed, unlike in England, we have a system in Wales which doesn't differentiate between larger and smaller businesses meaning that your local corner shop will be paying at the same rate as the local branch of Tesco (which will reportedly be saving £105million on its UK rates

bill over the next five years as a result of revaluation). For many, it's unfair and unsustainable.

As a scheme of business taxation, business rates are actually a very blunt tool. Clearly, not all businesses are eligible as it applies only those with premises - in an environment of mobile if not increasingly 'virtual' businesses this is perhaps not the most efficient system. For governments business rates are predictable and provide a stable stream of revenue.

Welsh Government applies a range of reliefs to business rates. Since the announcement of the new valuation lists in September last year, it has committed to an



additional £20million of reliefs on top of those already applied as well as a permanent relief scheme to be brought in sometime in 2018. While I'm aware that some may question the level of funding applied to relief, the reality is that such schemes provide important breathing space for many businesses, ensure the viability of others and offer a lifeline to our high streets as their very purpose is being tested by online sales and other changes to the retail environment.

The levels of business rates applied to businesses in Wales from April this year were based on assessment of property values as of 1st April 2015 undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency. The revaluation process is supposed to allow for adjustment of rates to reflect changes to property prices and average rental rates.

However, the last revaluation took place in 2010, based on property assessments from 2008 (during a recession). One doesn't need to be a property expert to realise that the property landscape has changed significantly since then. Understandably, some of the new rates have come as a shock to many businesses and in some cases, threatens their growth and even viability.

Fundamental reform of business rates is a risk in a UK landscape in which Wales is seeking to be the most competitive area, able to attract and retain businesses and therefore create and retain jobs and wealth. There are however measures which could rebalance the landscape and support economic development ambitions in Wales.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, we need more frequent revaluations of properties to allow businesses to plan for changes and

One doesn't need to be a property expert to realise that across communities throughout Wales the property landscape has changed significantly.

to provide the best, most up-to-date assessment of the realities of property rental values - useful information in many other areas of policy-making, too.

To ensure that smaller businesses aren't disproportionately hit by business rates, FSB wants to see a split in the uniform business rates multiplier to differentiate between large and small businesses, as is the case in England.

The local retention of business rates, so problematic in a landscape of 22 local authorities of significantly-varied business stock and size, becomes perhaps more practicable given the proposals within the Local Government White Paper and so this should be explored further. Similarly, in the development of the proposed economic regions, there is an opportunity for a discussion of how business rate reliefs can stimulate or support business growth.

The scale of reliefs applied needs to be re-examined too. Scotland has applied a scheme offering relief to businesses with a rateable value of up to £18,000 - more significant than the Welsh Government's scheme which offers relief up to a rateable value of £12,000 and England's at £15,000. Welsh Government should look at what impact this has had north of Hadrian's Wall and if it's positive, give Wales' SMEs the same opportunity.

More fundamentally, however, is

the need for better engagement with businesses by Welsh Government and local authorities on this issue and the choices going forward.

What businesses often see is an increase in their business rates burden without an obvious, corresponding improvement in the services afforded by local government to businesses such as sanitation services or planning. High street businesses have seen a significant reduction in the amount of council-run parking available and yet supermarkets and other multiples continue to offer free parking on sites which are exempt from business rates.

I have rarely encountered businesses who feel they should not be paying some form of business rates at all and indeed have even spoken to some who have said they wouldn't mind paying more if they saw better services from local authorities and fairness in the treatment of businesses. There is therefore a significant disconnection which needs to be resolved.

There is an emerging consensus across politics and government of the need for change to the business rates system. From FSB's perspective, the Welsh Government appears receptive. Whatever the change may be, it needs to be future-proofed to account for the changing face of business and in particular the dramatically-evolving retail landscape. More interesting will be the level of change the Welsh Government is prepared to tolerate and the creative thinking it is willing to employ. It will need to look at alternatives which not only deliver more effective and fairer business taxation but also help Welsh small businesses grow and thrive.

The system in Wales doesn't differentiate between larger and smaller businesses - your local corner shop will be paying at the same rate as the local branch of Tesco.

Maximising the potential of GP clusters in Wales

Rachel Podolak, Director of BMA Cymru Wales, argues that GP clusters provide the opportunity to innovate and diversify primary care teams – but only if health boards change the way they approach them.



Primary health care provides the first point of contact in NHS Wales and is largely focussed on general practice. In fact, more than 19 million contacts are made with primary care each year in the Welsh NHS, provided by GP's working in local communities.

The structure of how primary care is delivered continues to evolve by necessity. The expanding, multi-disciplinary, primary care now often includes allied healthcare professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational

therapists, pharmacists and nurse practitioners who bring their specific skills to strengthen the team and reduce pressure on GPs. This diversification of the team ensures that patients see the right professional, at the right place at the right time.

As an example of the value of multidisciplinary working, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists has estimated that musculoskeletal health issues are the most common cause of repeat GP appointments and account for up to 30 percent of a GP caseload.

It contends that most of them can be dealt with effectively by a physiotherapist without any need to see the GP. It is therefore a priority for practices to identify how they can expand their primary care team against the backdrop of increasing financial pressures.

How primary care is organised at a local level continues to change too. Local Health Boards throughout Wales have created primary care 'clusters', which simply means the bringing together of several neighbouring GP practices covering a population of between 30,000-50,000 patients. These clusters have the potential to provide the structure and finance to help practices collectively innovate and, if appropriate, diversify their primary care teams.

Clusters are not the merging of practices. Rather, they allow for joint working between practices and key partners to enable patients to have access to services that they may otherwise struggle to access. The aim is to better integrate services in order to meet the local population's needs. Clusters promote and retain high quality general practice, and develop working with primary and community care partners within health and social care sectors. Many also support and facilitate collaboration between member practices, including those which may be struggling to remain financially viable. This type of

Clusters allow for joint working between practices and key partners to enable patients to have access to services.

working takes many forms including the sharing of staff and expertise, peer support and workload management.

It is hoped that the development of clusters will assist with combating the unprecedented challenges currently facing general practice. In 2016, BMA Cymru Wales' Urgent Prescription survey found that 82.1 percent of respondents were worried about the sustainability of their practice. There is no indication that this level of concern has decreased as we move into 2017. The need to place general practice on a more sustainable footing has never been starker. Clusters are an important part of changing the landscape for general practice.

There is widespread support for the cluster model to determine and address the health needs of the surrounding population. However, despite investment, cluster networks are not yet working effectively and the pace of development is not uniform across the country. Nor has the new money truly transformed services. There is widespread concern that LHBs are reluctant to devolve decision making as a consequence. This has led to challenging experiences for those in the early stages of establishing cluster networks.

In our survey of GPs, undertaken in April 2017, we found that:

- 60 percent of respondents did not think clusters had sufficient strategic autonomy from health boards.
- 56 percent of respondents did not

think clusters had enough financial autonomy from health board in spending directly allocated funding.

In April 2016, the Welsh Government announced an extra £43m a year for four years for general practice – with £10m handed to Wales's 64 clusters.

To date, cluster money has been used variably, and going forward, this needs to change. Cluster monies must be used in a targeted way, maximising impact and sharing best practice where it is identified. The BMA's Welsh General Practitioners Committee has urged cluster leads to consider how available funding can be best spent on making their working day less pressured, with the ultimate goal of improving services and access available to patients.

Last year we wrote to cluster leads advising them of the importance of using cluster monies strategically to transform primary care. To support this transformative agenda it is essential that Local Health Boards make the new monies available to clusters to support them to tackle these pressures in innovative ways. Currently, some health boards are not making it easy enough for clusters to draw down funds in a timely and appropriate way.

In addition to the challenges posed by the autonomy and funding of clusters, the time implications for GPs to engage meaningfully with clusters continues to be a barrier. Given that an aim of clusters is to reduce the burden on GPs it is concerning that for many the time they've invested has not been worthwhile. Our survey found that:

- 64 percent of respondents do not feel that the time they spend on cluster work is adequately resourced.
- 47 percent of respondents believe that cluster work adversely affects their clinical time.
- 46 percent said that cluster working had affected their working lives, but not necessarily

in a positive way.

Several respondents noted that cluster work took their (or their GP partners') time away from patients, creating additional paperwork rather than any discernible benefit. On the other hand, some highlighted workload reduction brought about through the establishment of practice-based pharmacy and the employment of advanced nurse practitioners to visit care homes.

Despite pockets of good practice and the obvious potential of the cluster model, it is evident that clusters are not yielding positive results across Wales. It is clear that the use of cluster monies must be improved if outcomes are to be maximised. Cluster leads must consider how available funding can be best spent on making the working day less pressured, with the ultimate goal of transforming services and access available to patients. To support this, training and support must be put in place to enable clusters to deliver effectively

The need to place general practice on a more sustainable footing has never been starker.

Ultimately, clusters will only deliver if there is a fundamental change in approach by Health Boards, which must devolve decision making and provide clusters with sufficient support and resources (personnel and financial). We believe that clusters should become true legal entities with clearer governance and financial frameworks, which will then enable those clusters that are flourishing to have the tools they need to develop further and sustain delivery, while allowing others to get fully off the ground.

Localism, Employability and Anna Karenina

Catherine A'Bear, formerly Regional Manager for Rehab JobFit, explains why statistics only give a partial picture of employment in Wales and how the way forward should be locally tailored initiatives.

These are record breaking times for employment rates in the United Kingdom, with the overall employment rate at 74.6 per cent in February 2017, the joint highest rate since records began in 1971. There are 31.84 million people in the UK in work, 312,000 more than this time last year. Average weekly earnings have increased by 2.3 per cent compared with a year earlier. This is all great news. So why doesn't it feel as great as the statistics suggest it should?

Leo Tolstoy famously wrote; "happy families are all alike, every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." The Anna Karenina Principle, which has evolved from his observation in that novel, dictates that happiness, or a successful outcome, depends upon being successful in every measure that you have set. It only takes failure in one measure to lead to unhappiness.

So if our only measures for success are the employment rate and a small increase in average weekly earnings we would currently be very happy. But the world is more complicated than that: activities which lead to success in one locality do not necessarily equate with those in other areas.

UK-wide employment programmes do attempt to recognise this complexity.

The Work Programme was the UK



Government programme to help job seekers. The measurements of success recognised the challenges faced by different people participating in the programme, depending on the benefit they claim or how close they are to being able to find and keep a job. The Department of Work and Pensions' targets are intended to be "stretching but achievable." It's good news that, for the period up to December 2016, all contracts exceeded the minimum performance levels and that the overall performance is above the expected level. Good to note also that 570,000 participants have spent a minimum of three months in work since the programme started.

Work Choice was a UK-wide programme designed to support people with disabilities whose needs cannot be met through other

work programmes. This type of service has been running in one form or another since the 1980s. 106,440 people have started the programme since it began in in 2010. The proportion of people achieving a sustained job outcome

The Welsh Government has an opportunity to do something radically different - to create an environment where local activity is promoted and supported.

has continued to rise during the contract's lifetime, with 23 per cent doing so within the 12 months up to December 2016.

The Work Programme and Work Choice have now been superseded by a new programme, the Work and Health Programme. Large-scale government programmes inevitably take some time to research, prepare, commission and implement. Getting details such as customer requirements and numbers right for a programme which will start in two or three years' time is a challenge that is hard to meet, leaving government departments facing the criticism that they are forever commissioning new programmes to meet yesterday's problems.

The new programme has been designed during one of the most lengthy periods of high UK employment, after 30-plus years of nationally-funded programmes to support disabled people into employment and after six years of a Work Programme. Yet there is still so much to do. In October 2016 the UK Government published its 'Improving Lives' Green Paper which set out, starkly, the challenges still to overcome if we are to, in the words of the Green Paper, "build a country that works for everyone".

The Work and Health Programme is significantly smaller in scale than those it replaces. It has, as its primary focus, supporting customers with health conditions and / or disabilities into sustainable employment. However, the scale of need is such that even if it is successful it will scarcely make a dent in halving the disability employment gap, which sits at 32 percentage points.

Perhaps the time has come to reconsider the value of nationally commissioned employment programmes and to support and promote locally tailored solutions. In this way, each local area can identify its own measures of success and create and commission its own tailored set of programmes to deliver them.

The Scottish Government has

Even if it is successful, the Work and Health Programme will scarcely make a dent in halving the disability employment gap.

already agreed terms for the transfer of employability powers from Westminster; transitional arrangements are in place and a new Scottish employability programme is being commissioned to run from April 2018. There are some changes from the principles of DWP-commissioned programmes and the funding has been enhanced, but essentially it is still a nationally-commissioned programme for Scotland.

The Welsh Government has an opportunity to do something radically different. It could create an environment where local activity is promoted and supported, integrating multiple funding streams. Here is a four point proposed plan of action:

- Working on the principle that the Welsh Government is best placed to lead skills, employment, housing and health strategies for Wales, it is to be hoped that it will reach agreement with DWP sooner rather than later for the transfer of employability powers.
- It can then set targets for both

how and where these strategies need to integrate at a local level.

- All DWP-employability programme budgets could then be devolved to be commissioned by Jobcentre Plus at a local level, allowing it to be truly responsive to local need.
- Working on the basis that what is needed in Rhyl is highly likely to be different from what is needed in either Cardiff or Brecon, the principle that truly local solutions may provide the key to making greater progress should be properly tested, with local authorities co-ordinating local strategic planning on how these targets will be met.

In this way, by building coherent local solutions to address local needs, with collaborative working across different government departments and agencies and by commissioning specifically tailored services from local providers, we might find that we can both identify the correct measures for success and then provide the solutions to meet them. Which would be a happy outcome for all.



Transforming learning, transforming lives

How can an adult learning framework make an impact at a local level?

Dave Hagendyk, Director for Wales at Learning and Work Institute, explains.



There is an overwhelming case for increasing investment in lifelong learning. It creates jobs, improves productivity, transforms the lives of individuals, rebuilds families and can lie at the heart of the successful regeneration of whole communities. For individuals, it can be part of rebuilding confidence, over-coming mental health problems, battling loneliness, improving well-being and helping people to live independent, active and fulfilling lives.

This isn't a new argument of course but the decision last year to leave the EU moves the argument from compelling to urgent. Without the relative safety net of membership of the single market our economy – and by extension

our communities – will be more exposed. Jobs and investment will be at greater risk if, as a country, Wales doesn't invest in building the world-class skills base needed to meet the productivity challenge. With an ageing population it is estimated that within five years a third of workers in Wales will be aged over 50. The productivity challenge, where Wales still struggles relative to other regions and countries in the UK, can only be met by investing in the skill needs of both the existing and new workforce. If leaving the EU puts a downward pressure on the free movement of people (and skills) to Wales then this, alongside existing demographic pressures, will increase the need for investment in lifelong learning even further.

The prospects for those on low pay are unlikely to improve in the short to medium term once the UK eventually leaves the EU. Already research shows three quarters of those in low pay are still in low paid work a decade later so the success of the Welsh Government's Employability Programme, particularly on sustaining employment and enabling career progression, is more important than ever.

The intention here isn't to make the case for greater investment in lifelong learning. Instead it is to put lifelong learning in the wider context of policy developments in Wales and to argue why integrating with current programmes, alongside a shift in funding, could help increase provision at a local level. The case for reform remains as important as the argument for funding.

In this context, the local is heavily influenced by policies and trends at a national and international level. It all has an impact on what happens

Jobs and investment will be at risk if Wales doesn't invest in building a world-class skills base.

on the ground and, in this case, what learners can expect in their own communities.

The Welsh Government is currently considering the future policy and structure for delivering adult and community learning and the design of the new Employability Programme. The decisions it takes will have a significant impact on the future of local learning provision. For adult community learning the policy direction it sets must include greater coherence, strong partnerships between providers and the opportunity of progression for learners.

Part of the policy solution can be the implementation of the Adult Learning Framework. In July 2013 professionals from across the adult learning sector began collaboration on a framework for the provision of adult learning. The long-term intention was that the framework would be a common tool for the planning of all types of adult learning across Wales, however it is funded. Fundamentally it was an exercise in trying to develop a coherent offer for learners at a local level.

The diversity of provision means there can be variation in quality. The framework would help to standardise access and address concerns regarding curriculum planning and the lack of alignment of that provision with wider regional and national priorities. This isn't an

Where there is a multi-agency commitment and strong local community leadership the impact could be transformative.

attempt to impose uniformity. The framework would allow flexibility to reflect regional priorities as well as local variation.

At a local level providers would collaborate and ensure that learning opportunities fit with local need and demand as well as with national priorities. For learners the impact would be a greater choice and genuine progression pathways into work or towards higher qualifications.

Alongside this is the emerging work being carried out in England on the Citizens' Curriculum. The emphasis here is on co-production with learners in a local community. The curriculum starts with their needs, for example in one community in England it began with a demand from parents to deal with the problems of bullying their children were facing. From this initial discussion, a curriculum focused around the needs of local people has been built.

The Adult Learning Framework has huge merit in that it pulls together learning providers to build a more coherent offer and better progression routes. What it isn't

necessarily is a model to engage the local community in the co-design of a curriculum. However, taken together with the Citizens' Curriculum it could be a template for creating courses and learning that local people want and need.

Consider the impact this approach could have in a community such as Lansbury Park in Caerphilly. Where there is a multi-agency commitment to tackling the problems in the community alongside a strong local community leadership able to articulate local need, the impact at a local level could be transformative.

The risk of frameworks is that they can exist only at a macro level rather than the micro one. For learning providers, the risk is that energy goes into collaboration with other providers and not with the community itself. The challenge is to ensure that they focus as much on their partnerships with their local communities as they do with each other. A combined focus on a common framework and on co-designing provision with communities will give the greatest impact at a local level.



Homelessness is not inevitable. It's time to bring Everybody In

With a passionate rallying call, Nick Morris, Policy & Campaigns Manager for Crisis Wales, says an end to homelessness in Wales is within reach.



The arrival of the Assembly, the boom in service sector jobs, and the changing makeup of our communities all mean that much has changed in Wales since the late 1960s. This year Crisis marks its 50th anniversary in Britain but this is definitely not a cause for celebration. Crisis was founded as an urgent response to an unacceptable situation, where people were living and dying on the streets. The situation was laid bare a

year before in Cathy Come Home, the BBC play directed by Ken Loach, at a time when the issues it raised were not widely discussed.

Crisis' founders never imagined that we would still be here facing a similar crisis 50 years on. We are still here because we are still needed. Homelessness has not gone away and on some measures – like rough sleeping in Wales and beyond – it is rising. Behind those statistics, of course, are many thousands of individuals sleeping on Wales'

streets, on the sofas of friends and family, in squats, or in unsuitable temporary accommodation.

You might be thinking that it was a little naïve to believe that homelessness could have been ended. Could we really stop people losing their jobs, stop families and relationships breaking down, or stop all the damaging effects of drug and alcohol use? Does the prospect of more welfare reform, uncertainty over exiting the EU, and further public spending cuts make ending

We want to work with other people and bring together the huge amount of knowledge and expertise on homelessness in Wales.

homelessness even less likely?

While homelessness remains unsolved, it is not inevitable. The numbers of people affected are shocking but do not represent a problem that is too big to solve. We might not be able to easily affect big social and economic changes but we can ensure there is a quick response when people encounter difficulties. There are cities and countries that have ended some forms of homelessness. In Finland, for example, joint efforts across government departments over recent decades have brought the number of rough sleepers down to effectively zero. Previously in Britain, too, we have come very close to ending rough sleeping.

We know more than ever about the causes of homelessness and what works to end it. Crisis itself has years of research and experience of working side by side with homelessness people. There are organisations across Wales working towards the same goals. As Crisis reaches the end of its first full year of work in Wales – together with our 50th year in Britain – this is a good point to think about a future where we are no longer needed.

Starting at Crisis' first national conference for Wales in May this year we launched a process to produce a long term plan to show what it will take to end homelessness for good in Wales. It will show the practical solutions needed to end it, supported by evidence and examples of the changes that need to happen. The plan will be formed together with people and individuals across Wales and Britain who share the same goal of ending homelessness.

Crisis was founded by a cross-party movement. One of Crisis'

founders, Iain Macleod, then Conservative Shadow Chancellor, said: "We call upon the talents, ideas and enthusiasm of people from all different prejudices and beliefs in a constructive attempt to tackle this growing urban problem. The idea is that people of all the political parties shall come together for the same cause. If there be rivalry between them it will be the rivalry of achievement."

In Wales we are doing well in the 'rivalry of achievement'. The Welsh Government has committed to increase the supply of affordable homes by 2021. The Housing Act 2014 was a pioneering piece of legislation on preventing homelessness that has inspired the recent Homelessness Reduction Act in England. It has meant local authorities across Wales giving priority to preventing homelessness. The work on wellbeing and future generations also holds promise to promote longer-term thinking in government and to bring together public services and partners to work together across traditional boundaries. It is probably a bit of a Welsh political cliché to say 'good work although more to do'. However, in relation to homelessness, that is the situation we face together.

The response so far has been promising. In a film shown at our conference this year Carwyn Jones, the First Minister, pledged his support. He said that homelessness is "wholly unacceptable" in 21st century Wales and said the Welsh Government is "determined to end rough sleeping and all forms of homelessness". Similar messages of support for the Britain-wide work came from Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister, and Theresa May, the Prime Minister. In a political

age that will probably be remembered for its deep divisions, the coming together of the three UK governments of different political stripes with the same message on ending homelessness is remarkable.

At Crisis we cannot come up with a plan to end homelessness alone. We want to work with other people and bring together the huge amount of knowledge and expertise on homelessness in Wales. Over the past 10 years Crisis has provided support to local authorities and other partners across Wales to help increase access to housing for homeless people. Supported by Welsh Government, we delivered training on the best use of the private rented sector as a housing option and provided one-to-one support for a number of Welsh local authorities and charities. In 2016 we established a Crisis Skylight service in Swansea, which is working closely with partners in local government, the voluntary sector, and business

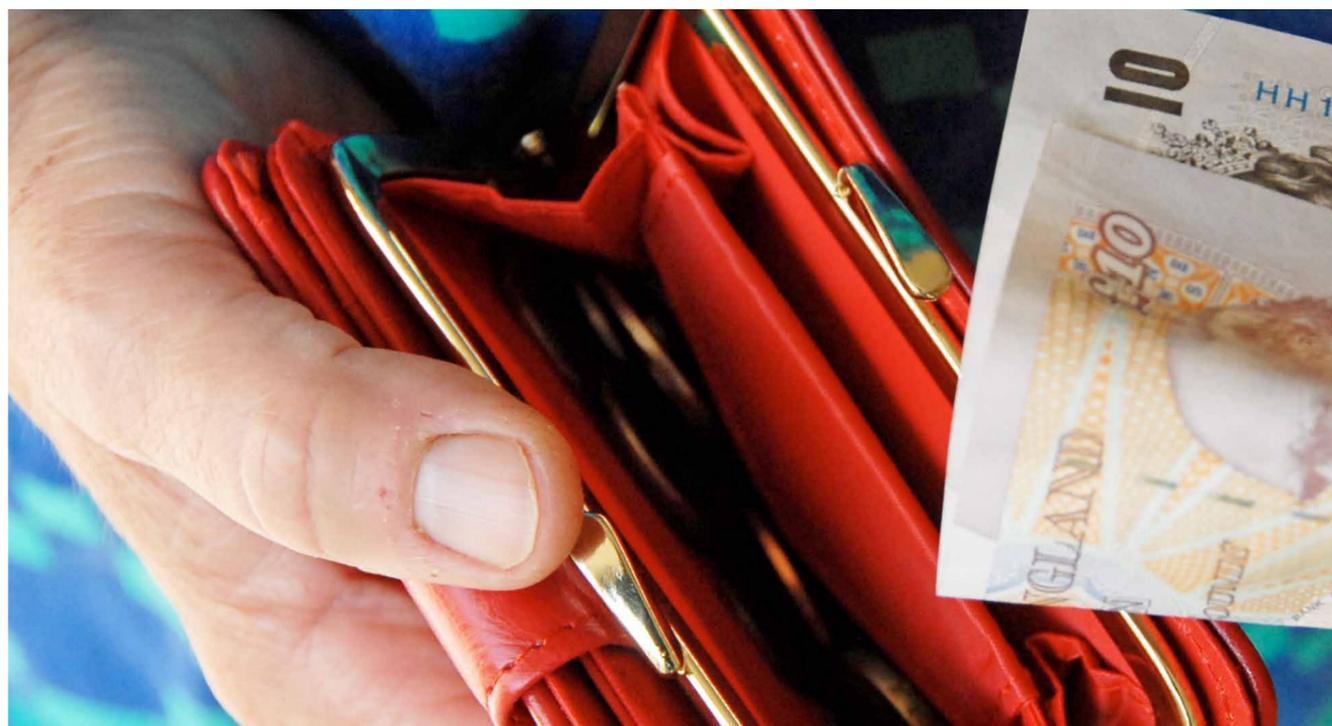
Readers of Exchange – can be part of this plan. Crisis research shows that the average life expectancy of a homeless person is just 47 and that homeless people are 13 times more likely to be victims of violence. The human, social and financial costs of people not reaching their potential is huge – Crisis calculates the cost of a single person sleeping rough for 12 months is just over £20,000.

It's time to put an end to this – but we need your help. Come to our website or find us on Twitter (@crisiswales) and Facebook, join our #EverybodyIn campaign and find out how you can be a part of our work to end homelessness in Wales and Britain once and for all.

There are cities and countries that have ended homelessness. In Finland the number of rough sleepers is effectively zero.

Leading a local authority in 2017

What's in the in-tray of a new local authority leader in Wales? We spoke to Councillor Anthony Hunt, Leader of Torfaen County Borough Council, about the challenges and opportunities he expects to face over the next term.



It's less than a month after the local elections in Wales, and Anthony Hunt has just been re-elected as Leader of Torfaen council at the authority's AGM. Located in south east Wales, the borough includes the towns of Blaenavon, Cwmbran and Pontypool, with the local authority headquartered in the latter. The Labour group makes up around two thirds of the council, with the other members sitting as independents

and Conservatives. Councillor Hunt expressed how pleased he was that no councillors stood uncontested in the borough, and that there are so many new faces. He described how a new generation of councillors are coming through with fresh perspectives and ideas, which will ultimately lead to better decision-making. A range of ages and backgrounds amongst councillors contributes to this, and he's made sure he has a gender-balanced

cabinet. Local authorities are acutely aware that they are the first rung of government many people come into contact with – and dealing with the fallout from policy decisions made by others does cause some frustration. While others may be able to say 'that'll be dealt with further down the line,' local government is effectively the end of that line.

I asked Anthony if he felt like they were becoming increasingly reactive in the work that they do.

He described it more as "picking up the pieces," albeit with a clear plan. Policy decisions are taken in Westminster and elsewhere but the practical impact of these decisions – the negative ones, at least – typically have to be addressed by local authorities. He also observed how certain changes seemed to jar with the reality of people's lives and experiences. The expectation that they should be expected to find work with minimal support when they face five or six significant barriers was used as an example of how policy doesn't seem to be improving people's lives.

And the expectations on local authorities can also be unrealistic. The culture that they can continuously be "doing less with more" is unsustainable, according to Councillor Hunt. The impact that this is having on staff – particularly the next generation of leaders – needs to be recognised.

However, this hasn't stopped Torfaen's Leader from identifying issues he wants to tackle in the borough. High on Anthony Hunt's list is debt. He finds the prevalence of rent-to-own, high interest retailers like Brighthouse particularly troubling, and is interested in how the authority can work with the local credit union to develop alternative models of credit. Along with the Executive Member for Communities, Housing and Anti-Poverty, Councillor David Daniels, he is very keen to develop this sort of preventative work and also thinks there's a bigger role for regulation to curb sharp practices.

The winding up of the

Communities First programme is therefore of great concern to Torfaen's leadership team. They know that their role cannot just be about 'fire-fighting', but Anthony Hunt knows that they have lots of excellent Communities First projects running throughout the borough which they'd like to maintain. He's also weary of putting these various community groups, organisations and schemes through some sort of tendering exercise as this may benefit those who understand how to write a good proposal rather than those who are making the most difference to people's lives.

One way in which councils are doing less with more is through reorganisation. Although the 'big bang' approach to local government reorganisation was abandoned, the reorganisation and upscaling of many of the 'backroom' services is continuing. The focus is on the end goal of delivering better quality public services with limited resources. For example, Torfaen runs its benefit services in partnership with Monmouthshire, and collaborates on public protection services with Blaenau Gwent. This brings about savings and makes services more resilient, while retaining local democracy and jobs. It also avoids the big bill and transition phase the initial reorganisation proposals would have resulted in.

Further opportunities for the borough are expected from the city deal. Torfaen is one of the ten local authorities that form part of the Cardiff Capital Region. Anthony Hunt expects the borough's economic

development and regeneration plans to derive from the city region's plans, although he was keen to highlight how different the Cardiff deal is compared to others in the UK. It includes areas which are culturally and geographically very different from one another, he said, describing it as "concentric circles."

While the city deal offers the potential for significant investment in Torfaen, the uncertainty around post-Brexit arrangements prevails. Anthony was sceptical that Wales will be no worse off because of Brexit and that the level of funding we have benefited from will be maintained. He wondered if he will soon have to decide if he can afford to maintain some of the European Social Fund-ed projects which operate in the borough, such as employability schemes. And again, the idea of 'prevention' came through. He emphasised the need for Torfaen to have a diverse economy that invests in indigenous Welsh businesses as well as trying to attract employers from elsewhere. He thought that more should be done to support micro – and community businesses grow as well, with the end goal being more good quality jobs for residents.

Ultimately, it's a very strange time to be the leader of a local authority in Wales. As we leave the EU, new forms of governance and local devolution are emerging from reorganisation and the city deals, while a huge amount of uncertainty around funding is likely to make authority leaders more cautious with their limited resources. And 'limited resources' is the elephant in the room. Anthony summed up that they are "short of money like never before" – even in areas which they have protected from cuts, they have not been able to keep up with demand. While local government is not unique in terms of being overstretched, it does seem difficult to imagine who would want to be a councillor if this trend of cutbacks persists.

High on Anthony Hunt's list is debt. He finds the prevalence of rent-to-own, high interest retailers like Brighthouse particularly troubling, and is interested in how the authority can work with the local credit union to develop alternative models of credit.

WISERD Civil Society

For this edition, we're showcasing the WISERD Civil Society research centre, which is evidencing the changes in civil society and what this means for social cohesion.



The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) is a national social science research institute and a collaborative venture between five universities: Aberystwyth University, Bangor University, Cardiff University, the University of South Wales and Swansea University.

As the first research centre of its kind in Wales, WISERD was established in 2008 to draw together and build

on the expertise in quantitative and qualitative research methods that already existed in its respective partner universities. Taking comparative and longitudinal perspectives, it undertakes interdisciplinary and policy-relevant research.

WISERD Civil Society

WISERD houses the ESRC-funded research centre, WISERD Civil Society, which was launched in 2014. The centre is undertaking a five-year, multi-disciplinary programme of policy and practice-relevant research addressing civil society in Wales, the UK and internationally.

WISERD Civil Society includes co-investigators from 12 UK universities as well as international collaborators. The centre also works in close partnership with colleagues from the public, private, policy and third sectors.

The centre seeks to provide new evidence on the changing nature of civil society and explains the impact of social change on local forms of civil society and civil society organisations. It also examines what this means for social cohesion and well-being.

The centre's research projects and studentships address four key thematic areas:

- **Theme 1:** Locality, Community and Civil Society
- **Theme 2:** Individuals, Institutions and Governance
- **Theme 3:** Economic Austerity, Social Enterprise and Inequality
- **Theme 4:** Generation, Life Course and Social Participation

Theme 1 case study: Researching civil participation in Wales, in place and over time.

Research team: Professor Howard Davis, Dr Robin Mann, Dr Marta Eichsteller and Dr David J. Dallimore (Bangor University).

This project investigates continuity and change in participation within civil society in two North East Wales localities. Through biographical interviews and ethnographic methods, we have looked at how the experiences of local civil society participants are shaped by context. We have developed a distinctive approach to studying local civil society based on the examination of four inter-linked components:

- The sites in each place are important in examining the levels and range of association. They were found to provide focal points

We need to understand third sector views about their priorities and experiences in relation to shaping policy and welfare as this will further understanding of effective practice and help to identify transferable lessons

for communal activity but also highlighted underlying divisions;

- Findings highlight the importance of actors in each community – those who lead and organise associative activity;
- The success of organisations in each locality can be seen to depend on the importance of both tradition and the ability to manage change;
- The events where residents associate collectively differed, reflecting the history of each place and the different collective identities of the residents. The emerging findings illustrate how local civil societies in Wales have been shaped over time in relation to the changing social and economic fortunes of the places.

Theme 2 case study: Territoriality and third sector engagement in policy-making and welfare provision.

Research team: Professor Paul Chaney, Professor Daniel Wincott and Dr Christala Sophocleous (Cardiff University)

This project explores the changing relations between government and the voluntary sector in Wales over the post-war period. Almost two decades since the creation of the National Assembly for Wales, it will provide insights into the progress and challenges, helping us to answer the key question: what difference has devolution made?

The project uses interviews and archive sources to chart developments before the National Assembly for Wales was founded in 1999. A core strand of the arguments for devolution in Wales was concerned with making politics and policy-making more 'inclusive'

through effective engagement of civil society in policy-making, and notably with third sector organisations developing a key role in the delivery of welfare. This research is pioneering in providing the first analysis of its type, exploring the changing role of the third sector in shaping policy and welfare delivery in Wales.

We need to understand third sector views about their priorities and experiences in relation to shaping policy and welfare as this will further understanding of effective practice and help to identify transferable lessons.

Theme 3 case study:

Trade union membership, associational life and wellbeing.

Research team: Rhys Davies, Dr Steve Davies and Dr Helen Blakely (Cardiff University) and Professor Alex Bryson (University College London)

This project adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the trends in, and sources of, geographical variations in trade union membership, including the persistence of relatively resilient levels of trade union membership in Wales compared to the rest of the UK.

We have undertaken secondary analysis of survey data, conducted 40 biographical interviews with trade union activists in South Wales and carried out analysis of social media data relating to online trade union activity.

Findings include:

- Union membership among parents plays an important role in encouraging membership among younger workers, and inter-generational transmission of membership is strongest in Wales compared to elsewhere in the UK;

- Historical events can hold a powerful symbolic presence for present day trade unionists. Storytelling of these 'defining moments' of labour history can act as a powerful mode for the transmission of collective understandings of trade unionism;

- Twitter use is not uniform across trade unions in the UK but conversations are generally built around retweeting certain forms of content, such as petitions that encourage collective action. This research demonstrates that economic and social history in Wales has created conditions conducive to a different type of trade union organisation, one which has roots in localities and which predisposes both workers and employers to perceive trade unionism in a positive light.

Theme 4 case study:

Ageing, serious leisure and the contribution of the grey economy.

Research team: Dr Jesse Heley, Dr Laura Jones and Dr Sophie Yarker (Aberystwyth University)

The 'grey economy' refers to the contribution of older volunteers (over-65s) to their communities. These volunteers bring with them a lifetime of skills, experience and interests, and this project is interested in considering how far the voluntary pursuits of older people are shaped and informed by their previous work and leisure activities.

To achieve this in-depth account of volunteering, we are engaging a number of qualitative methodologies, including participant observation, individual and group interviews, and the use of participant diaries.

The project seeks to move away from dominant understandings of the health and wellbeing benefits of voluntary pursuits for older people, and instead provide a more nuanced account of the diverse and evolving motivations and benefits of volunteering.

Bevan Foundation News

After Brexit: a plan for Wales

The triggering of Article 50 on 29th March 2017 was the start of an unprecedented period of economic and social change for businesses, public services and civil society as they prepare for a post-Brexit Wales.

We believe it is crucial that businesses, workers, the Welsh Government, other public bodies and the third sector are ready and able to respond to the challenges that Brexit will present, whatever they may be, which is why we are launching a new project looking at what Wales should be doing now in order to have the best possible outcomes from Brexit for all.

We are collaborating with several other organisations to host a series of half-day forums, bringing together expert analysis with key stakeholders, leaders and innovators to identify essential new or revised public policies. The forums will cover a range of policy areas including employment and skills, housing and construction and regional policy, and form the basis of a plan for Wales.

The first session takes place in June in partnership with the WLGA, with further sessions planned with Community Housing Cymru and the Wales Cooperative Centre, amongst others. Keep an eye on your e-newsletter for updates, and contact nisreen.mansour@bevanfoundation.org if you'd like more information.

Making City Deals Inclusive

We are delighted to have Ben Lucas, Director of the RSA's City Growth Commission, delivering the keynote address at an event we are hosting on 6th July on the inclusivity of city deals in the Senedd.

With City Deals now approved for Cardiff and Swansea – and similar deals on the agenda for the rest of Wales – this timely discussion looks at how the proposals should reach all people, in all parts of the city regions.

Ben will highlight why inclusive growth is essential and will bring insights from city deals elsewhere, with lots of 'how-to' tips and ideas. To find out more, visit: www.bevanfoundation.org/events.



Communities First – lessons learned?

Since the announcement that the Communities First programme will be phased out in Wales, the Bevan Foundation has been keen to influence how the Welsh Government's work to address poverty is carried forward.

We recently responded to the National Assembly for Wales' Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry into the lessons to be learned from Communities First. The written submission can be accessed via our website www.bevanfoundation.org/publications or you can watch our Director, Victoria Winckler, take part in an evidence session alongside WCVA: www.senedd.tv/Meeting/Archive/bc91ff0f-a76c-44e0-91e0-86f9565d756e?autostart=True

Projects

The **Carnegie UK Trust's** Twin Towns UK programme is a domestic town twinning initiative, bringing together towns that share similar characteristics and challenges to exchange learning and develop projects to boost socio-economic prosperity. Two Welsh towns are involved: Fishguard and Goodwick (twinned with Berwick-upon-Tweed) and Merthyr Tydfil (twinned with North Shields). Keep up to date on Twitter [#CarnegieUKTrust](https://twitter.com/CarnegieUKTrust) [#TwinTownsUK](https://twitter.com/TwinTownsUK)

Talwrn is a group of people working in the Welsh voluntary sector. Thanks to funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation, it can offer other voluntary organisations peer mentoring support; peer review of funding applications and will be setting up some funding workshops. For more information contact Sarah Lloyd-Jones (People & Work) at talwrn@peopleandwork.org.uk.

The **Open University** is participating in the Welsh Government's 'Seren' programme to provide pupils and teachers with the support they needed to ensure more Welsh students progress to the UK's top universities. In 2016 the network helped 2,000+ students reach their academic potential. Find out more at www.open.ac.uk/wales/seren

Publications

The **Carnegie UK Trust** conducted research in 2011 and 2016 into how people across the UK and Ireland use public libraries and what they think of them. The data shows that around 3/4 of people in Wales say that public libraries are important for their

communities and just under half of people used a library in the previous year. [#shiningalight](https://twitter.com/shiningalight)

Cymorth Cymru held three events in January to listen to the experiences of over 150 people using Supporting People services. Many said they'd be homeless or dead if they hadn't received this support and would be using other costly services instead. Request a copy of the report by contacting enquiries@cymorthcymru.org.uk.

Oliver Hard, aged 11, from Caerphilly, and his friends have published a booklet of poetry called 'We Wrote a Letter', to raise awareness of the Syrian refugee crisis and fundraise for **Save the Children**. Oliver has a Just Giving Page and he is hoping to raise £1,000 to support work with children in Syria: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/B-Hard

News

IC Union - (indycube community) is an independent union for freelancers, gig contractors, remote workers and self-employed business owners. The first of its kind in the UK, indycube will be offering a range of benefits and services aimed at improving representation for the self-employed.

The **Coalfields Regeneration Trust** has taken on a 50 year lease from the local authority on Aneurin Bevan House, Tredegar to develop a new third sector hub to assist with the regeneration of the Town Centre. CRT has invested in a new Credit Union branch office service on the ground floor, the first in the County.

Dawn Bowden AM co-hosted a consultation event with key decisions makers, from the Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly areas, with Gerald Jones MP and colleague AMs, to discuss

how to draw maximum benefit from the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. The next steps will be to consult with residents to ensure local voices are heard in the development the business case for the City Deal.

A **PCS** union survey found that the majority of respondents thought that Wales should have "more devolution". There was particularly strong backing for devolution of policing, workplace rights and greater control over taxation. The survey results will inform the union's future campaigning.

Rehab JobFit has developed its Breakthrough Programme, a 12 day course which runs, flexibly, over 4 weeks and focuses on supporting customers who have not worked for several years and who have a health condition or disability. Breakthrough is proving its worth with 26% of customers moving into employment within 12 weeks of starting the course. Find out more via [0800 111 6116](tel:08001116116) or enquiries@rehabjobfit.com.

Events

For our annual conference this July, **Shelter Cymru** has been looking at the Universal Basic Income concept and asking whether it can be applied within Wales. We'll be hearing from Loek Groot of the University of Utrecht and Cllr Matt Kerr from Glasgow City Council about their pilot projects to introduce Universal Basic Income at city level: www.sheltercymru.org.uk.

Chwarae Teg is once again celebrating the achievements of women from all backgrounds and stages in life or work across Wales. Winners will be revealed on Wednesday 21st June 2017 at Chwarae Teg's Womenspire Award ceremony at the Wales Millennium Centre. Tickets on sales at WMC.org.uk.

Subscribers' News



Spotlight On

Jane Ryall UnLtd

In 140 characters describe what UnLtd does:

UnLtd's mission is to reach out and unleash the energies of people who can transform the world. We call these people "social entrepreneurs".

Each year we support 100s of individuals through our Awards programmes which provide funding, professional support and learning.

What is your role at UnLtd?

Varied. My job title is Award Manager (for Wales). I promote our support to partners, filter applicants, and provide business coaching to successful award winners across Wales, usually for a period of one year. I also organise events and training for our award winners. Through this package of support, our aim is to raise awareness of social entrepreneurs in Wales which will inspire many others to follow.

Right now I am developing an exciting event showcasing our social entrepreneurs in Wales, to be held at the Navigation Colliery, Crumlin near Caerphilly on Sat 17 June. The Navigation is an iconic, derelict coal mine set in 20 acres of woodland. With support from UnLtd, it is being developed and repurposed for local community benefit.

What do you enjoy most about working at UnLtd?

Meeting inspirational people across Wales working in many different sectors. Giving them the chance to shine with just a little money and

plenty of support. Then seeing great results.

Using the UK wide experience of UnLtd to its advantage for Wales – we have lots to learn from each other.

If UnLtd were a biscuit, what would it be?

Our Awards are very competitive, and so we are always looking for exceptional people who have real plans to making long-lasting social change. Our Award Winners are often addressing a current social issue with a new solution.

Perhaps UnLtd is a Hobnob biscuit. We are resilient, surprisingly tough and are there to provide energy. We are popular around the UK, and work best with a nice cuppa!

What are the biggest challenges facing UnLtd?

Allocating support where it has most influence. Ensuring the needs of all regions of the UK are addressed in our work.

If you could invite anyone, dead or alive, to a dinner party who would you invite?

If it's a dinner party, I would definitely invite some of our current UnLtd award winners from Wales. To name a few:

- Vera Jenkins, Caerphilly – retired district nurse, determined to fix the lack of jobs for local people. Turning a derelict coal mine into the

hub of the community, restoring the buildings to commercial and community use.

- Jill Smith, Flintshire – hair and beauty salon owner, has now set up Beyond the Boundaries to give adults with learning disabilities meaningful work and training opportunities.

- Fred Luckman, Pembrokeshire – ex engineer, counsellor and community worker, giving training and confidence to refugees and others without work through woodwork and carpentry.

- Nikki Giant, Cardiff – lifelong commitment to education and young people, providing specialist support to schools, youth groups and community settings to improve youth wellbeing.

Over a glass of wine and my great cooking (!) we would have a fun and thought-provoking meal together. These are all wonderfully genuine people committed to making a difference. I have just picked a few, there are many other deserving guests

Why are UnLtd Bevan Foundation subscribers?

Because we have the same mission – to improve people's lives. The Foundation's research and insight is consistently informative and incisive. Together, we can work to bring a better future for Wales.

Visit www.unltd.org.uk to find out more about UnLtd.



We represent providers of homelessness, housing-related support and social care services in Wales.

We influence policy and campaign on your behalf. This year we successfully campaigned to protect the Supporting People budget, and represented members on a variety of key issues.

We are stronger together; lend your voice to ours and help us make a difference to the people who need it most.

Join Cymorth Cymru.

Contact enquiries@cymorthcymru.org.uk for information.

Dawn Bowden AM/AC Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney



As the Assembly Member for Merthyr Tydfil & Rhymney, I am here to support my constituents and ensure that you have a strong voice in the National Assembly for Wales.

I hold regular advice surgeries around the Constituency.

Please feel free to get in touch with my office at any time.

Tel: 01685 386 672
Address: 110 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AP
Email: Dawn.Bowden@assembly.wales
Web: www.dawnbowdenam.co.uk
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Wales Millennium Centre

Marie Curie lectures 2017/18

Caring for people with dementia at the end of their lives

Wednesday 28 June 2017, 6pm, Life Sciences Hub, Assembly Square, Cardiff Bay

Keynote speaker: Dr Liz Sampson, Reader in Old Age Psychiatry, University College London

Followed by a discussion with Dr Liz Sampson and Sue Phelps, Director of Alzheimer's Society in Wales

Faith and spirituality at the end of life

Wednesday 4 October 2017, 6pm, Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay

Keynote Speaker: Professor Margaret Holloway, Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of Hull

Imminence of death in acute hospitals

Tuesday 27 February 2018, 6pm, Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay

Keynote Speaker: Professor David Clark, University of Glasgow

Registration is free, but essential for all lectures

To register please visit mariecurie.org.uk/WelshLectures

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O Fedi 2017, bydd ein harolygiadau'n canolbwyntio hyd yn oed yn fwy ar y meysydd pwysicaf sy'n helpu dysgwyr i gyflawni.

I gael y wybodaeth ddiweddaraf, trowch at: www.estyn.llyw.cymru/ **NewidArolygu**

Inspections are changing

Education in Wales is changing and so is Estyn's approach to inspection.

From September 2017, our inspections will focus even more on the most important areas that help learners achieve.

To keep up to date, visit: www.estyn.gov.wales/InspectionChanges




Job Fit 

REMOVING BARRIERS, DEVELOPING ABILITY, DELIVERING SUSTAINABILITY

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Rehab JobFit is a third sector led partnership between the Rehab Group and Interserve, which delivers a range of employability services to enable people to progress from long term economic inactivity into sustainable employment.

We deliver our services working with local partners and we are now seeking organisations in Wales and South West England to work with us in the future. We are particularly interested in getting to know local and community-based organisations with expertise in supporting people with low confidence, low skills or lack of recent work experience towards employment.

If you are not already part of our Supply Chain Network and wish to be considered for future business opportunities then please visit <http://rehabjobfit.com> for more information.

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Wales Cymru

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