



# **Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales**

## **Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 13 Tachwedd 2014  
Thursday, 13 November 2014**

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Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

Peter Black	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Alun Davies	Llafur Labour
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Mark Isherwood	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Gwyn R. Price	Llafur Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Kate Bennett	Cyfarwyddwr Cenedlaethol Cymru, Y Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol National Director for Wales, Equality and Human Rights Commission
Karen Dugate	Pwyllgor Cymru, Y Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol Wales Committee, Equality and Human Rights Commission
Graeme Francis	Pennaeth Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus, Age Cymru Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Age Cymru
Michael Trickey	Ymgynghorydd Cymru i Sefydliad Joseph Rowntree Wales Advisor to Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Iwan Williams	Arweinydd Cymunedau, Llywodraeth Leol a Lles, Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Communities, Local Government and Wellbeing Lead, Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Victoria Winckler	Cyfarwyddwr, Sefydliad Bevan Director, Bevan Foundation

**Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol**  
**National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance**

Sarah Beasley	Clerc Clerc
Chloe Davies	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Hannah Johnson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Matthew Richards	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9:14.  
The meeting began at 9:14.*

### **Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions**

[1] **Christine Chapman:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the National Assembly for Wales's Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee. We have had one apology this morning and that is from Gwenda Thomas.

### **Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1: Y Comisiwn Cydraddoldeb a Hawliau Dynol Inquiry into Poverty in Wales—Evidence Session 1: Equality and Human Rights Commission**

[2] **Christine Chapman:** The first item today is our inquiry into poverty in Wales, and this is the first of several evidence sessions on strand 1 of our inquiry, which focuses on poverty and inequality. I give a very warm welcome to our panel this morning: first of all, Kate Bennett, national director for Wales of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and also Karen Dugate, Wales committee of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Welcome to you both. We have a number of panels this morning and we have had your paper and read it carefully, so if you are happy we will go straight into questions. I just want to start off with a fairly broad question. Last week, first of all, we had an informal session with stakeholders—I know that some of you may have been present—to try to tease out what the issues are on the ground, as it were. On the basis of that, do you think the Welsh Government needs to rethink its approach to tackling poverty?

[3] **Ms Bennett:** I think that the Welsh Government is probably rethinking its approach to tackling poverty. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has been very keen to try to focus on who the people are who are living in poverty and what their composition is, and to look at that alongside the poorest places in Wales, because a lot of the focus of the Welsh Government over the years has been on the most deprived areas. Obviously, there is benefit in that, but there is also the correlation that poor people do not only live in poor areas. It is also the case that particular people—. I think that many of you will have repeatedly seen our chart that indicates that half of disabled people living in Wales are poor, and that half of lone parents are poor. Those groups in particular are not necessarily concentrated in the poorest areas. So, I suppose our big message is, 'Let us look at who the people are, not necessarily only at where they are', and also that different solutions may be needed. Regenerating the local economy may be a good thing, but that is no use if you cannot get there because there is no transport.

[4] **Christine Chapman:** We need to drill down into some of this. Karen, did you want to say anything?

[5] **Ms Dugate:** Just that I think that there are opportunities to look at the good practice

that exists in the work that the Welsh Government is doing in particular areas. One of the areas is the investment in housing and looking at how Welsh Government has tried to ensure that the investment it is making and the Welsh pound are really having an impact across the whole of Wales, on individuals and communities, and exploring opportunities to take that golden thread through other areas of work to begin looking at people who are more dispersed throughout communities, rather than in concentrated areas of multiple deprivation, but obviously not losing that focus as well.

[6] **Christine Chapman:** I know that we will want to look at some of these specific issues. Jocelyn, you had a question, I think.

[7] **Jocelyn Davies:** I was wondering how successful you felt that the tackling poverty action plan is in linking with other portfolios, such as education and perhaps the economy, and whether you had any examples of it linking well or examples of where it does not link so well.

[8] **Ms Bennett:** Regarding the tackling poverty action plan, it is obviously useful to have a plan and a budget. However, that budget is relatively small in comparison with the education budget, the housing budget and so on. For example, on the education budget, you will be aware that we have looked at work in relation to education in Swansea in particular. The education budget, whether it is the Welsh education budget or the budget in a particular school, needs to be focused at all the pupils. The pupils we would be most concerned about are free school meals pupils and special educational needs pupils who get relatively poor results, which have an impact on their later life with regard to employment, but they are not sufficiently at the heart of the planning of schools and a generalised approach to education. What we found in Swansea is that 40% of all pupils have special educational needs or are receiving free school meals. We know that those pupils perform particularly badly. So, it is a question of making sure that the mainstream budgets, such as education and health, are focused on the whole population, and do not miss out what are actually quite large numbers of people.

[9] **Ms Dugate:** Just to reinforce and extend that, in terms of the economy, again, it is about building in the outcomes that Wales and the Welsh Government would like to see in terms of the impact of using the resources, so, the procurement objectives, building in training and employment opportunities, and continuing to reinforce the work that the Government has already done, extending that even more effectively and measuring what those outcomes are in terms of the impact that they are having on individuals and communities.

[10] **Jocelyn Davies:** On the i2i toolkit that you were referring to earlier that was developed in housing, I know that that has been used elsewhere in the UK, but you were saying that it is not used across all the portfolios within the Welsh public sector within Wales.

[11] **Ms Dugate:** I believe that there are huge opportunities to embed those principles more effectively across all of the work that Welsh Government does and how it spends the money.

[12] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, more systematic. What about the Welsh Government's approach to leadership and commitment? Do you think that that is adequate?

[13] **Ms Bennett:** I think that there is a very big determination from the Welsh Government and, indeed, on a cross-party basis, to tackle poverty. That is a very long-term plan, which has been going on for a long time. We have had a lot of money in Wales from Europe, for example. It seems to be very difficult to make the progress that would be wanted and I suppose that is why we have come in and said, 'Look at it in a slightly different way; why don't you think about who the people are?' Money that might be needed to address

somebody in poverty because they cannot get a job might be different to addressing the fact that somebody cannot have a job because they have not got the transport there because they are disabled or something like that. You have to look very closely at what the steps would be that would be needed to meet somebody's needs, whether that is an ethnic minority person, a disabled person, or somebody perhaps who is being bullied in school because they are gay. There are a whole lot of reasons why people do not get the education that they need and the employment they want, and that is not always economically driven. It may be driven by discrimination of some kind or prejudice. So, we need to be addressing those topics as well, because I think that there are just far too many people in those categories where there are additional reasons for them not making progress.

[14] **Christine Chapman:** Gwyn, did you want to come in?

[15] **Gwyn R. Price:** Yes. Good morning. What impact has the removal of a specific Deputy Minister for Tackling Poverty had?

[16] **Ms Bennett:** I think that it is very hard for us to comment on that. Referring back to Jocelyn's question, I think that leadership is absolutely crucial and being determined to tackle the problem and continuing to focus on it, even in difficult times. I think that is called for from the highest levels—the First Minister, the Cabinet, local authority chief executives; everybody has their role to play. This is such a big problem. The equality gaps are potentially widening; the gender gap, for example, is potentially widening and there needs to be a focus on this from every level. So, I think that one change probably does not make so much difference. Of course, it is still a ministerial responsibility—Lesley Griffiths has it within her portfolio.

[17] **Gwyn R. Price:** What role does the private sector have to play in tackling poverty in your opinion?

[18] **Ms Dugate:** It has a critical role and it comes back to leadership again—collective leadership from the Government, but also all of us as individuals, whether we are elected members or chief executives of our own organisations in the public, private or third sector. There are huge opportunities and some really good examples of where the private sector is leading the way in tackling poverty and inequality. When we as a Wales committee visit the different local authorities around Wales, we meet with private sector, local authority and third sector representatives who are bringing examples to us of their practices and how they can be shared. So, one of the roles that we have is to disseminate that through publications like the ones that we make sure that you get. So, again, there are opportunities to work with the private sector through procurement and through the key messages coming from Welsh Government. We need to embed that leadership and ensure that that is a consistent message that is permeating through the whole of Wales.

[19] **Christine Chapman:** Peter, did you want to come in?

[20] **Peter Black:** Yes. Does the private sector actually recognise that role? Does it actually focus on that role?

[21] **Ms Dugate:** I am seeing more of that, yes, where you have the commissioner for Wales, who is a significant business leader, reinforcing that message, but also reinforcing the benefits to their organisations from a commercial perspective. Through local business fora and chambers of trade, there are opportunities to reinforce how the private sector can make a difference and share the best practice that exists there. So, it is not saying that they are perfect; none of us are perfect—there are more opportunities to reinforce that. Again, I come back to Welsh Government as leaders and using the tools that already exist and that are proving to be successful, such as the toolkit.

[22] **Peter Black:** What more can the Welsh Government do to encourage the private sector to take on board this role in terms of tackling poverty?

[23] **Ms Dugate:** Use the procurement rules and incentives and promote best practice, because if you have examples, people often say, 'I want to be like that' or 'I would like to have a bit more of what they are doing'. It needs to be clear about what outcomes we want for Wales as a country, and work with the contracts to articulate and measure those outcomes and then share that widely across all sectors.

[24] **Christine Chapman:** May I just bring in Jocelyn with a supplementary question?

[25] **Jocelyn Davies:** We should be making this a core part of an agreed public sector contract and then more businesses might—. I notice that, and I do not know if you are aware of this, sometimes when companies—and you mentioned this—actually quite like something, they start to use it when they do not need to use it. Have you got any evidence of that, of companies that would use the same sort of social clauses even when they are not bidding in a public sector way?

[26] **Ms Dugate:** Sorry, I just need to check on the phrase, 'they use it when they do not need to use it'; I think that we all need to use it all of the time. It is—

[27] **Jocelyn Davies:** I mean when it is not a requirement.

[28] **Ms Dugate:** It is used when there is no contractual requirement because people believe that it is good business. BT is an example of that. I think that housing associations are a very good example of that across Wales. It becomes core to the way in which you do business and is an effective way of involving people in all levels of your business, for example, your staff and your customers and your directors. You start to see improved sickness rates and a reduction in absence, and more effective use of your resources, in that you get higher levels of customer satisfaction because you understand the people that you are providing services to, so there is less waste in the way in which you deliver those. It is good business sense, no matter where you work.

[29] **Ms Bennett:** In terms of the private sector, lack of access to employment is an important factor in terms of poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage. We have got a very uneven picture of who is employed: at least half of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people are not in work and three quarters of disabled people are not in work. There is an awful lot of untapped talent in those areas. So, in trying to have a more inclusive approach to employment, businesses would be able to benefit from the talent pool. Also the fact that those groups are more likely to be living in poverty and less likely to be in work means that there is a really important role for the private sector to step up to here. That can obviously be encouraged by the Welsh Government, but I think that there are other reasons that business should be more inclusive in terms of who it employs. Obviously, that is something that we are advocating as a commission—to be more open-minded, whether it is the public sector, private sector or, indeed, the voluntary sector.

09:30

[30] **Christine Chapman:** I know that I will need to come back to Peter. With supplementary questions on this point, I have Alun and then Mark.

[31] **Alun Davies:** I was going to ask a question on another point, actually.

[32] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Mark, is your question on this point?

[33] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes, it is about employment, particularly around disabled people. First, it is about getting the horse to water, but then getting it to drink. When an employer declares themselves to be disability-friendly, who should be responsible for monitoring that to ensure their understanding? I will give an example: a company employer that has the deaf mark carrying out exercises to decide who might be promoted within an organisation, and having group exercises, where deaf people cannot see the faces of other people in the group and are, therefore, not being the people selected to go forward. There, it is not the intention but the understanding that is the barrier. Nobody appears to be monitoring this.

[34] **Ms Bennett:** Well, certainly, that has not been drawn to our attention. It sounds a fairly strange example. You would think that they would realise that that was problematic. One of the major initiatives that we have taken is around mental health workplace policies, because we know that people with mental health conditions are particularly unlikely to be in work. If they get work, they are likely not to be able to stay in work or to make good progress. So, we have, with employer organisations and organisations representing people with mental health conditions, developed workplace policies that enable employers to state that they are friendly to people with mental health conditions, which means that, if and when people are recruited, they are able to explain what might be needed to support them to stay in work. I think that these have been quite well taken up across public service but also in a range of private companies, which are interested again in tapping into that talent pool. As you say, a little a bit of carelessness and not understanding something quite basic can stand in the way of somebody either obtaining work or remaining in work. So, this is what we are advocating through those policies: you kind of think a little bit more, rather than just saying, 'Oh yes, let us recruit a person who is deaf or let us recruit a person with a mental health condition'. You have to think a little bit more about it in order for those people to stay in work. It is the same—. You can attract women into the workplace, but if there is no flexible working, no arrangements for childcare and so on, people do not stay and do not make the progress that is needed. Work is obviously really important. Work—and well-paid work—is a really important factor.

[35] **Mark Isherwood:** On a very much related point, as you know, people are enabled to earn a little bit and retain their benefits to gain work experience. There are a number of schemes in Wales working with the Welsh Government, where, usually, third sector providers are providing that sort of work. However, the cross-party group on disability has received evidence of the disabled employee not only being treated differently in the workplace—being required to have their lunch separate from the main staff, and all of the rest of it—but being kept there on a long-term basis. So, it was not a work experience placement; it was effectively working for less than £1 an hour. How should we be monitoring those schemes to ensure that they are only being used for work experience and not to keep disabled people in apparent employment when they are not?

[36] **Ms Bennett:** If there are problems coming up, they need to be reported. It depends on what kind of employer it is, and what the circumstances are. These sound like quite significant problems that you would think would be addressable, really.

[37] **Christine Chapman:** So, the message is that, if there are any specific examples, you need to know about them.

[38] **Ms Bennett:** Yes. There are all kinds of disability campaigning organisations that are in touch with us on a regular basis. We do not go around monitoring every single workplace. That is definitely not our role. What we are able to do is receive information about problems and follow them up. However, certainly, that has not been drawn to our attention.

[39] **Christine Chapman:** We need to move on now, because we are looking at this

inquiry. Peter, you are next and then Alun.

[40] **Peter Black:** I have one final question on this particular point, because the example is marked here, but in my experience I have come across quite a few examples of people just not having an understanding about disability and, because of that, the person has been unwittingly discriminated against. You referred earlier to a pool of people who have a particularly high unemployment rate and you said that companies would benefit from employing them. Are you implying that there is deliberate or unwitting discrimination against those particular pools of people?

[41] **Ms Bennett:** Certainly, if you look at the fact that 74% of disabled people are not in work, there are reasons for that. We are in quite a competitive labour market at the moment. What we found is that disabled people have had an even more difficult time. So, it is a whole compound range of reasons. If you do not get the education in the first place, or if education or skills are needed in order to do a particular job and you have been debarred from getting the education or not being attracted into the college—. The other factor is the one that I was trying to talk about in terms of mental health, which is that workplaces can be unfriendly. They can be unwittingly unfriendly. This is the point of our initiative around workplace policies. There are many organisations and consultants around that can give employers advice by pointing out where they may be being unwittingly unfriendly. What very often happens with a person with a mental health condition is that they may be fine when they are recruited but then they may become ill, they do not feel brave enough to speak about it so they stay at home, they are off sick, they are off sick for a long time, the employer may either not know why they are off sick or may be embarrassed to talk about it and you escalate into a position where that person eventually loses their job after the employer has paid them sick leave for a very long time. So, understanding the workforce—I suppose that this is our overall message. It is about understanding people who might be applying for jobs, people who are already working for you and understanding who is living in poverty, so that you can work out the right solution for those people.

[42] **Christine Chapman:** Is that a role for Government? We need to see if this action plan is working.

[43] **Ms Bennett:** Various Ministers, particularly Carl Sargeant and Lesley Griffiths, have been extremely keen and forceful in encouraging parts of the public sector to adopt these workplace policies. We have also worked through the Welsh Government with a number of anchor companies. Sony is one that I would mention that we have been working with very recently, but there is a range of companies in the private sector that we have worked with to encourage them to raise their own awareness. If you are a very large company, you can afford to raise your own awareness. You can get a consultancy or a disability organisation in to talk to you about it. If you are in a smaller company, you may have a local organisation that can give you some help and insight. I think that it is everybody's responsibility to understand who, potentially, you could employ and who, potentially, you are providing services for. If you do not imagine that that is a very diverse group—a lot of people with disabilities, women and men, people from different ethnic backgrounds, gay, lesbian and transgender people; there are so many people with different opportunities and requirements—then you are missing a trick if you just assume that everybody is one category.

[44] **Ms Dugate:** I just wanted to add the importance of supporting and facilitating somebody who has been digitally or socially excluded—or both. From my experience in my own role as well as on the committee, people are often very isolated and do not necessarily have access to the internet to become aware of jobs. They are often socially isolated, so they do not have the networks and the contacts to make them aware of training and learning opportunities and job vacancies that may become available. Getting to a job centre might be quite a challenge for some people, so there are other barriers. As well as making the



workplace a friendly environment, we have a bridge to get people from where they are within their communities into those workplaces in the first place.

[45] **Peter Black:** Going back to the question that I meant to ask: what progress has been made on devolving the socioeconomic duty?

[46] **Ms Bennett:** As far as I am aware, there has been no particular progress recently. When Huw Lewis was the Minister, he was in correspondence with Ministers in Westminster. I am also aware that the Westminster Government indicated in its response to the Silk commission that it would devolve the socioeconomic duty to Wales, but I do not believe that there has been any progress since then, because we are waiting for Silk. Whether that is what will happen or not, I do not know.

[47] **Christine Chapman:** Alun is next.

[48] **Alun Davies:** Apologies for my lateness this morning. I am very grateful, Kate, for the contribution you made last week to the seminar that we had and the information that you have sent me since then. I think that that will significantly contribute to our work here. One thing that struck me, looking at a graph that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published, was that it shows that overall poverty levels have been fairly flat for the last 25 years. We discuss all of these different matters, different aspects of poverty, different experiences of poverty, different causes and the rest of it, but if the hard reality is that, in a quarter of a century, there are as many people in poverty today as there were a quarter of a century ago, is not any rational conclusion derived from that that we have failed? The Government has failed, this place has failed, the UK Government has failed and the whole of the third sector groups of people and local government have failed. If we have failed to reduce the incidence of poverty in this country over a quarter of a century given everything that we have done and everything that we have thrown at the subject, what are we doing wrong?

[49] **Ms Bennett:** That is quite a big question. [*Laughter.*] I suppose that Government, councils, companies and individuals have multiple priorities. So, although you are right that there has been an awful lot of discussion for 25 years about tackling poverty, there is also a whole series of other governmental objectives, which may, from time to time, be given greater priority. Rewarding enterprise, for example—I do not know what the other priorities may be. So, what we would have to conclude is that either this is an impossible problem that cannot be addressed—certainly, there will always be a quarter at the bottom; your point is that a quarter is below a defined threshold of being in poverty—or my assumption is that other priorities have cut across that and—

[50] **Christine Chapman:** To further that point, other countries or regions might be tackling it in a much more effective way than us, so it is a different priority for them. Are you saying that the Government or other agencies should be doing more?

[51] **Ms Bennett:** It is worth remembering that we are the Equality and Human Rights Commission. So, our special expertise relates to equality and human rights. I think that we have come to this agenda to say that, if you wish, as a Government or as an Assembly, to tackle poverty, you need to think who those people are and to realise that they are disproportionately disabled people, disproportionately ethnic minority people and disproportionately lone parents. Therefore, if you want to have a strategy that will eliminate poverty and, indeed, if you are putting quite a lot of money into that, you need to be sure that everybody has a chance to benefit from it, including disabled people, ethnic minority people, lone parents and people who are isolated on grounds of sexual orientation or who are transgender.

[52] There is a whole range of reasons that people end up in poverty and our task, as the

Equality and Human Rights Commission, is to point out that some of these groups have been substantially ignored in the past. It is also to point out, arising from our 'How fair is Wales?' report, which you are aware of, which identifies health, employment and education challenges, that the same people who have poor health and poor education, are not employed and are in poverty are also disproportionately represented in the groups that we care a lot about. So, it is definitely the case that that factor, Alun, has not been sufficiently at the forefront of poverty agendas. However, it is also the case that there are other agendas that might be being pursued more enthusiastically and with greater vigour than the tackling poverty agenda.

09:45

[53] **Alun Davies:** The interesting thing about this graph, of course, is that it goes almost in a straight line, and we know that, over 25 years, other factors have been going up and down. The economy is the obvious example where we have had the largest period of uninterrupted growth in the first part of this century since Napoleonic times, followed by the biggest crash of our lifetimes immediately afterwards. However, from what I can see here, poverty remains at a pretty stable level. So, when we see significant growth in the economy, it is not being shared; I think that we can make that assumption. Also, we are not seeing people living in poverty being able to enjoy the fruits of economic growth that other people will enjoy. I accept what you say about the differential experience point, but where do you think that the Government should be going if we are going to change the next 25 years rather than understand simply the experience of the last 25 years?

[54] **Ms Dugate:** I think that it comes back to leadership and the points that we talked about earlier. I think that it is about understanding who those individuals and protected groups are, and using the powers that you have, the procurement opportunities and the business objectives to embed the outcomes that you want to see, and the ones that we want to see, as a country, in tackling this issue into everything that we do and then measuring the progress from the here and now to five years, 10 years and 25 years on, to see the difference that it has made. It is about having in our consciousness those groups that are disproportionately represented in poverty and what difference we can make through the things that we do on a day-to-day basis in supporting them out of poverty, or supporting them to support themselves out of poverty.

[55] **Ms Bennett:** May I mention a graph that does not go like that? It goes down. This is a graph produced by the World Economic Forum, which shows that, in 2006, the UK, not Wales, was the sixth country out of 136 in terms of gender equality; it was sixth in 2006. We are now in twenty-sixth position in 2014, and that is a very big drop. When you look at some of the detail of that, you will find that we are first out of those 136 countries in terms of encouraging women into higher education. So, out of all of those countries, we are top on women in university. The slump comes when you look at work. We are seventy-fifth on the list in terms of women in ministerial positions. Obviously, we have a fairly honourable exception here in Wales, but, across the UK, women are a very long way down the chart in terms of important Government positions. Pay is also a long way down. I think that it is about access to work and the fact that women's position in the workplace would appear to have significantly deteriorated over the last eight years.

[56] **Alun Davies:** I appreciate that. Do you think, therefore, that neither the Welsh Government nor the UK Government's economic policies have been sufficiently targeted to eradicate poverty?

[57] **Ms Bennett:** I do not think that they have been sufficiently targeted. We can see that very clearly around encouraging women into the workplace. I think that the figures that we have around the fact that three quarters of disabled people are not in work have probably

worsened; that is an important factor. I will mention the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups, because we have a lot of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people in Wales; those people are not working. Where all of those groups are working, we also look at a pay gap; there is a gender pay gap and a race pay gap. One particular place for focusing attention would still be the workplace and trying to make it more inclusive.

[58] **Alun Davies:** So, we need a very, very different-looking economic policy.

[59] **Ms Bennett:** Yes, indeed.

[60] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. We have about 25 minutes left, and I am conscious that not all Members have yet had the opportunity to ask questions. However, we do need to finish in 25 minutes, because of our next panel. Did you have a question, Rhodri?

[61] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Dim ond un cwestiwn sydd gennyf, ynglŷn â'r dulliau o fynd i'r afael â thlodi yn y gymdeithas. A ydych yn credu bod yna unrhyw fath o dyndra rhwng yr ymgais i weithredu mewn ffordd gyffredinol ar draws pob portffolio yn y Llywodraeth a'r angen i deilwra rhai gweithgareddau ar gyfer pobl yn benodol mewn sefyllfaoedd arbennig?

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I have only one question, which is on the means of tackling poverty in society. Do you think that there is any kind of tension between the attempts to proceed in a general way across every portfolio in Government and the need to provide tailored solutions and activities for specific people in certain circumstances?

[62] **Ms Bennett:** I am not sure that there is tension; I think that both need to be done. I think that, as we talked about earlier, there are particular policies targeted at particular areas, and that is fine, but that is not sufficient. We have had quite a long conversation about education and employment, and the need for activity and money to be targeted there, but we also need a generic approach. So, I do not see that there is tension or conflict there. I think that you need to do everything.

[63] Going back to the employment example, or the school example, I think that what we learnt from Swansea is that being an inclusive school that is paying attention, or aiming to pay attention, equally to every pupil and being an inclusive employer, enabling everybody to prosper, is important. However, there may also be things that you need to do, like making sure that the access arrangements in a school are fine to enable disabled pupils to prosper; it might be particularly beneficial to women in the workplace to have a flexible working arrangement. So, I personally do not see any conflict between the generalised approach of inclusive thinking about everybody and having targeted measures.

[64] **Ms Dugate:** I would not disagree.

[65] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much.

[66] **Christine Chapman:** Mike is next.

[67] **Mike Hedges:** I am glad that you mentioned Swansea. [*Laughter.*] I have a couple of questions on that. First, I am very pleased that the work done in Swansea on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child framework and on restorative practice is highlighted. That is good practice that really would be of benefit if it were spread around the rest of Wales. I am sure that you would agree with that.

[68] **Ms Bennett:** Yes.

[69] **Mike Hedges:** I have some specific questions on what is happening in Swansea. I know of the work done in schools—in Cefn Hengoed, for example—of before-school revision classes and after-school revision classes. I know of homework clubs being run by Communities First. I am also aware of the library in Penlan, which provides a whole range of help and support for pupils in terms of revision. Do you actually get down to that level of detail to see how much some of these things are actually helping to deal with poverty and inequality on the one hand, and educational attainment on the other? Did you actually go down to that level of detail of some of what I think are superb schemes in Swansea, which, I believe, are helping? Do you actually do any research into those schemes yourselves? What I have read here is that it is all about numbers and global—. Do you actually go down to look at individual examples?

[70] **Ms Bennett:** No, we did not go to look at specific examples; we talked at a more strategic level than that. The approach that the council has been trying to take through its education work in Swansea is a bit along the lines that we have been describing, which is the restorative approach. These approaches can be beneficial to every single pupil, but they may be particularly beneficial to some children who are coming from homes where there are problems. The homework club can be beneficial to everybody, but it is particularly beneficial to a child who does not have a home where homework is encouraged. So, I think that it is quite a good illustration of the mix there. What Swansea has also done is that it has really emphasised inclusivity, and it has emphasised that they should be seeking, in the classroom, to focus on the needs of every pupil.

[71] **Ms Dugate:** The other thing that I noted from being part of that work was that Swansea was trying to reduce the number of policies and strategies, and focus it down to an umbrella policy that articulated where it wanted to be; that was being rolled out across the whole of the authority. So, there was leadership coming forward about what wanted to be achieved, and that was shared with the schools as well; that was really important.

[72] **Mike Hedges:** Do you think that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill will be effective in tackling poverty and reducing inequalities, or should it be amended somehow?

[73] **Ms Bennett:** I think that it is very difficult to predict in advance whether any particular Bill is going to be effective. Certainly, in terms of promoting equality and human rights, we, as a commission, will seek to use any aspect of that Bill—or of that Act, when it becomes an Act—that enables us to advance that agenda.

[74] **Christine Chapman:** Sorry, I am not sure where we are with that. Have we started the scrutiny of that? I am just wondering whether you, as a commission, would have—

[75] **Ms Bennett:** No, I am not aware that the scrutiny has started.

[76] **Mike Hedges:** Something has been published fairly recently.

[77] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, that is right, but you have not been involved at this point. It is too early, I think.

[78] **Mike Hedges:** It is on my to-read list.

[79] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, okay; fine. It is obviously on mine as well. [*Laughter.*] Mike, have you finished?

[80] **Mike Hedges:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

[81] **Christine Chapman:** We have just over a quarter of an hour. Janet, did you want come in, because I know that you have some questions?

[82] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes. For me, it is more about the crossover in all of the various strategies and how we address that. Different agencies and the Government itself are constantly producing these strategies and policies, and we expect people at the front line to just get on and manage with them. From evidence that we have taken previously on various other things, even with domestic abuse and in terms of equality, we find that it is about the constant production of strategies and how they dovetail and work with each other. Really, what is your opinion on how we get around that and streamline the process, so that all of the money that is going into helping with poverty and all of the strategic thinking are implemented to get this outcome? We are seeing lots of money going in, but we are not seeing any difference to the lives of those blighted by deprivation.

[83] **Ms Bennett:** I think that, in a way, this is where we started trying to get the idea of linking poverty and inequality, because when you looked at schools statistics, employment statistics and health statistics, you saw that the same people who are not getting a good education, not getting a good job and not having good health are the people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and the people with various protected characteristics. So, it seemed to us that, if the target group is the same, and you have a poverty strategy coming this way and an equality strategy coming that way, it would be better if they were more neatly dovetailed. I think that there has been some progress in that direction. I think that, often, though, people in prominent positions still talk about tackling poverty without talking about tackling inequality. So, getting that together would be better. I think that you just said, Karen, that, in Swansea, they indicated that too many strategies were difficult. So, you might have the minority ethnic achievement grant and you might have particular whole series of different measures for different kinds of disabled children. We do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater completely, because you may need very specialised targeted help for some people. However, generally speaking, the approach that they adopted was of being more inclusive and building the capacity of front-line staff, which is both teachers and support staff, in the schools, so that they are aware of being open to every need that a particular child may have. So, I think that that is what they are trying to do, along with a change in the culture to make that happen.

[84] **Christine Chapman:** So, without tackling inequality, then—that is the main message—. You cannot leave that out. It has to be integral to the—

[85] **Ms Bennett:** Yes.

[86] **Christine Chapman:** Right, okay. That is a strong message.

[87] **Ms Bennett:** Indeed, every other aspect of Wales as well—

[88] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, of course. [*Laughter.*]

[89] **Mike Hedges:** On the Swansea figures—I do not know whether you have seen all of them—they show that, in schools that have relatively low numbers of pupils on free school meals, the free-school-meals pupils do substantially less well than some of those schools where they have large numbers. You are seeing that, where there are pockets of poverty, they are being picked up far less well in Swansea than in areas where there are substantial groups of people living in poverty.

[90] **Ms Bennett:** Well, I think that if 80% of pupils, which may be the case, are on free school meals, or 90% of pupils are ethnic minority pupils, it is absolutely clear to that school that it needs to cater for those pupils, and that is, therefore, absolute proof that if you cater for

pupils who are on free school meals, or who are of a particular ethnic minority, and they do really well, it is not the fault of the pupils, but the fault of the system. So, if you have only 1% of pupils on free school meals, you can see how it is tempting for the school to focus its attention on the 99%, and that is why we are saying that you need to focus attention on every pupil.

[91] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, did you want to come in on this?

10:00

[92] **Mark Isherwood:** Yes. Given that poverty is defined as household income below 60% of median income, technically, there will always be poverty—even if we brought the gap to a very narrow range, there is going to be somebody falling below, by definition, the median range. To what extent do you think the Welsh Government’s understanding and definition of poverty reflects the real experiences of people living in poverty?

[93] **Ms Dugate:** I would just reinforce what Kate was saying about linking poverty and inequality—so, a fairer, more equal Wales that really looks at the needs of the people who are disproportionately represented in the poverty category and for our policies and our strategies to focus on that. There should be a more even distribution of the people who we find are in poverty. At the moment, it is not fair. Poverty is not fair. There is not a wide range of different groups represented in that bracket. So, there is an opportunity to really address that. Does that sort of answer your question?

[94] **Mark Isherwood:** I am conscious that the Bevan Foundation pointed out that there is no definition of poverty in the Welsh Government’s tackling poverty action plan, or in its programme for government, and it has said that the definition should broaden to include wider individual household resources and needs. Given that, do you believe that the Welsh Government could provide a better definition of poverty in terms of groups that are disproportionately at risk of poverty? I will give you two examples: fuel poverty, which has a different definition, but which is now in the Welsh Government’s general approach to tackling poverty, and use of terms like the social model of disability, which is accepted by the Welsh Government, recognising barriers to access, inclusion and employment, and yet was not used in the biggest piece of legislation that we have had, namely the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, which used the good old, or bad old, medical model, embracing barriers.

[95] **Ms Bennett:** I am not sure that we have a comment on that, to be honest.

[96] **Mark Isherwood:** Should we redefine?

[97] **Ms Bennett:** Our role relates to equality and human rights, and so I suppose that what we would be interested in, in terms of fuel poverty, is who lives in fuel poverty, where they are around Wales, and what their identity is in terms of the protected characteristics. That might be a pointer as to the best way to tackle that.

[98] **Mark Isherwood:** So, is the Bevan Foundation right to say that the definition should reflect wider individual and household resources?

[99] **Ms Bennett:** I believe that you have the Bevan Foundation coming in straight after us, and I think that it may be in a better position to answer that.

[100] **Mark Isherwood:** You do not have a view. Right. Interesting.

[101] **Christine Chapman:** Alun, did you want to come in?

[102] **Alun Davies:** I am interested that you talk about the distribution of poverty. One of the conversations that we had at the stakeholder event last week, of course, was about the impact of rural poverty and successive Governments' failure, really, to get to grips with understanding how that is exemplified, or experienced, by different people. From your perspective—the perspective from which you come to these matters—do you believe that, in rural Wales, the experience of poverty for the people you have spoken about and have described is more difficult or less difficult or just different from that experienced in urban Wales?

[103] **Ms Bennett:** I think that, in all honesty, I do not really know. One of the things that we talked about at that session is that poverty, and disadvantage generally, may not be an absolute measure. So, if you are continually surrounded by people who are a great deal better off than you, and you are on a particular income, you may feel very bad about it. If you are on that same income, but surrounded by everybody who is more or less in a similar situation, you may not feel so bad.

[104] **Ms Dugate:** The consistent theme that I see and hear is around connections, links, networks and social isolation compounding the experience of poverty that people have. So, whether you are in a rural setting or an inner city setting, you do not have the networks that enable you to hear about jobs or know how to get to somewhere where there might be information, training or support that can help you on the first step out of that. Again, there are issues around digital inclusion being compounded in rural settings.

[105] **Alun Davies:** So, do you think the Government—. The Welsh Government's approach has been, as we discussed, largely place-based in terms of its specific anti-poverty programmes. We know that they are patchy at best, shall we say, in rural Wales. Do you think that we need to move away from a place-based approach to a more person or family-centred approach in terms of how we tackle poverty in rural Wales?

[106] **Ms Dugate:** I think, to reinforce what Kate has said already, we cannot throw the baby out with the bath water. It needs to be a mixture of the two. It is about using the information that is available about the people who are in poverty and looking at how we can address their needs, because they are dispersed more widely than some of the clusters, and the place-based policy does not get to them. So, we need to realign things slightly.

[107] **Ms Bennett:** I think things pass from generation to generation, do they not, whether that is a generation in terms of socio-economic disadvantage—so, if you are born into a family that has little experience of work and little experience of systems, then you probably do not pick those up from your family. Similarly, if you are born into a family that migrated here for some reason, perhaps that family does not have the history. So, I think there is a role for the Government and other parts of the public service, particularly in relation to access to jobs; you have talked about the careers service. It would be very important to try to reach out and explain to people how systems work. If you do not have a family network where you can get a job because your dad will speak to somebody, that is quite a big factor, I think. You know, someone your mum knows might know how to fill in the university application form, and so you might do it better than somebody whose mum does not if you are not getting the support from the school.

[108] **Christine Chapman:** Are there any Members who have any further questions?

[109] **Jocelyn Davies:** May I conclude then that you see poverty as the result of inequality?

[110] **Ms Bennett:** Yes.

[111] **Jocelyn Davies:** So, that is why the two things need to—.

[112] **Christine Chapman:** Alun is next.

[113] **Alun Davies:** I keep referring back to a conversation I had last week, which is probably unfair on everybody who was not a part of it.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** I wish we had sat at your table. [*Laughter.*]

[115] **Alun Davies:** One of the things that I find difficult sometimes is understanding whether we are succeeding. As we discussed, if you look at the straight numbers, we are not; I think that that is pretty clear. However, if you look at the tackling poverty action plan and the refresh of that, are you confident that the Welsh Government has in place sufficiently robust mechanisms and means of understanding—not simply counting what civil servants are doing every day, but actually understanding the impact of that in the communities where there are significant numbers of people experiencing poverty? Are you confident that the Welsh Government has sufficiently robust structures in place to understand the outcomes and the impacts of its policies on people in poverty?

[116] **Ms Bennett:** I think it is immensely difficult to measure that, particularly as people are subject to all kinds of other pressures as well as Welsh Government pressure—UK Government policy, private sector initiatives, world recession, and so on. As you know, we published our ‘How fair is Wales?’ publication in March 2011. This will be updated by a publication in 2015, which will look at how the situation has changed. So, this, obviously, relates primarily to the protected characteristics in terms of access to work and access to employment, pay gaps and that kind of thing. So, next year we will be producing a very robust study of how people with different protected characteristics fare in a whole series of things—health, education, employment, physical security, access to legal advice and those kinds of things. What we will not know is if a gap has widened, and my concern is that some of the gaps may have widened—I think that five years is quite a short period to measure anything, and, if a gap has widened or, indeed, has closed, it is going to be very difficult to tell whether it was the Welsh Government that was responsible for that, or other factors.

[117] **Alun Davies:** Okay, but are you confident that the Welsh Government is measuring its activities sufficiently well? Does that come across to you from your perspective?

[118] **Ms Bennett:** I think that I do not really know sufficient about it. I know that it attempts to evaluate, but I also think that it is an immensely difficult task, so whether it is doing that task adequately, I am not quite sure.

[119] **Christine Chapman:** We have come to the end of this session, so could I thank both of you for attending? We will send you a transcript of the meeting, so that you can check it for factual accuracy. Thank you for attending this morning. The committee will now take a short break until about 10.20 a.m., when we have our next panel.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:11 a 10:22.  
The meeting adjourned between 10:11 and 10:22.*

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2: Sefydliad Joseph Rowntree a Sefydliad Bevan  
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales—Evidence Session 2: Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Bevan Foundation**

[120] **Christine Chapman:** Let us start back then. This is the second evidence session on



strand 1 of our inquiry into poverty in Wales. Could I give a warm welcome to our panel? First of all, we have Michael Trickey, Wales adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and also Victoria Winckler, director of the Bevan Foundation. Welcome to you both.

[121] **Peter Black:** Chair, may I just declare that I am a member of the Bevan Foundation, from a transparency point of view?

[122] **Christine Chapman:** Yes. I think that a number of us are, really. I am as well. Are there any others who want to declare that?

[123] **Mike Hedges:** I am.

[124] **Peter Black:** There are not enough of us.

[125] **Christine Chapman:** I think we have got those noted. We have read the papers that you have sent, so if you are happy, we will go straight into questions. You will probably be aware that, last week, we had a very interesting session with stakeholders, where we just tried to tease out some of the issues to help us with the questions. I want to start off. Obviously, we are scrutinising the Welsh Government's approach to tackling poverty, which is a huge subject. Do you think that the Welsh Government needs to rethink its strategy on tackling poverty, or do you think that what it is doing is generally on the right road? Michael? Who wants to start?

[126] **Mr Trickey:** I think there is a general feeling that Governments everywhere have to rethink their positions on poverty. The basic numbers are that poverty across the UK, as a total number, has not shifted very much over the last 20 years. It is not just a pattern in the UK, but it is a pattern more widely, and yet, we know that the make-up of poverty has changed. For example, pensioner poverty is less of an issue now. It is still an important issue, but it is less of an issue now than it was 20 years ago. On the other hand, we have seen the rise of in-work poverty.

[127] So, the sense from the JRF is that there are things that can be done to address poverty and to reduce it, but probably doing more of the same might not be the right way, which is why JRF is undertaking this major piece of work to develop a UK-wide anti-poverty framework for action. As part of that, it has been conducting a huge amount of research on the current state of the evidence into tackling poverty, and it has published 33 evidence reviews, which take up different dimensions of that. So, it has brought together and analysed the evidence in a way that has not been possible before. It is now into the stage of modelling what that evidence tells us about the different kinds of interventions and areas for action. We hope that that will inform the thinking in Wales, as we hope it will inform the thinking in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland.

[128] **Christine Chapman:** Just to be clear, then, Michael, are you saying that you think that the Welsh Government does need to rethink its approach?

[129] **Mr Trickey:** Well, I think that everybody does. Our headline view is that the tackling poverty action plan is as good as any currently in the system, in the UK and elsewhere. So, it is not a criticism of that, but that the whole approach so far, everywhere, has not generated the kinds of benefits that everyone is looking for.

[130] **Christine Chapman:** Before I bring Victoria in, I want to ask you this. You are saying that we are fairly consistent with other parts of the UK in approach, but I am aware that perhaps there are other countries that seem to have weathered the recession more than we have. Do you think that there are good models across Europe, for example, of where they tackle poverty?

[131] **Mr Trickey:** We have had a look at the international evidence, and JRF has published its analysis of that. I think that it is less helpful than you might hope. So, no country has the answer. There are bits and pieces in most countries that are interesting, and there might be individual things to learn from, but as an overall approach, there is probably less to learn from than we might have hoped. The pattern in Europe is that the countries that have been through serious crisis over the last few years have increasing issues with poverty: it is developing there, rather than reducing. The countries that have been more economically stable have some good examples, though it is patchy.

[132] **Christine Chapman:** Victoria, did you want to come in on this?

[133] **Ms Winckler:** Just to reiterate that, as we come to know and understand more about the nature and dynamics of poverty and the very varied characteristics of people who live on a low income, it raises ongoing challenges for public policy in trying to keep up with the increase in knowledge. What we do know about an appraisal of approaches elsewhere in Europe is that what makes for an effective strategy is leadership and co-ordination, clear targets and benchmarks and, from memory, also a link with economic policy, which is something that we highlighted in our written evidence. There is a full report on that, which I can send you the link to, because I think that that is the best that we have got in terms of effective approaches.

[134] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn, I think that you—

[135] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. Even though you mentioned earlier about pensioner poverty and that that is bucking the trend, we do know that there is a group within that in very severe, very persistent poverty. So, I suppose that we must not think that we have solved things for pensioners, because they have had a specific focus.

[136] What I would like to ask you, really, is how successful you think the link with other Government policies has been from the action plan, and what would you change? That is what we would like to hear, I suppose. What would you change in relation to that so that, if you were saying, ‘Well, look, we have done all this stuff but we still have this unacceptable level of poverty in the UK, which is a relatively rich country, so it is completely unacceptable’, what could we do, going forward now?

10:30

[137] **Mr Trickey:** First of all, just to go back to your pensioner point, I just want to emphasise that the fact that numbers have reduced does not mean that there is not an issue. The issue seems to be most dramatic with older widowed women particularly, absolutely. In terms of what a different approach might look like, which in a sense is a way of thinking about your question, there are two or three elements to that. One is that we have a better sense now of what the dynamics of poverty are like. So, in a sense, there has been a tendency with anti-poverty strategies generally—and I think that you see a bit of that in the Welsh one, too—to treat people in poverty as being a homogeneous group, who are all together and have the same characteristics. What we know is that, actually, it is a term and, within that term, there is a huge amount of complexity and variation. Our sense is that strategies have to get sharper at distinguishing and working out interventions that reflect that. So, people with disabilities typically will face different kinds of challenges, not necessarily the same as those facing minority groups, and not necessarily the same as some of the issues that are more gender based. So, there is a whole range of different issues.

[138] One of the things about poverty is that you have a group of people who are more or less in persistent poverty, so they are in poverty for three years or more, and their situation is

different from that of groups of people who come in and out of poverty. JRF estimates that more than half the population will experience poverty at some point, but there are those people for whom it is a brief, or transitory experience: they come in and come out of poverty. They have gone into poverty because of a particular crisis and, when that crisis resolves, they move out of poverty. Then there is an intermediate group of people who go outside the poverty line throughout quite a lot of their lives. However, they are all people in different situations and circumstances, so one of the things is the extent to which, rather than doing very generalised interventions and generalised policies, we try to get a more complex understanding of people in different situations and of why they are in poverty, and start trying to think about addressing interventions around that. That would be one of the tests that we might look for.

[139] We probably need to get a better grip on the understanding of the labour market at the bottom, because of the issues to do with pay and conditions, security and so on. There is a big issue around the cost of living and the way that markets work for poorer people, and the poverty premium. We can talk about that if you want to, but that is another dimension. It really has not been touched on very much by policy makers. There is a set of issues around the relationship, and the working with business. We have tended to focus poverty engagement around the third sector, Government, local government and so on. There is probably an issue about the relationships involved in business trying to address these problems that really has not been plumbed. So, those are some of the things.

[140] **Jocelyn Davies:** On the leadership and commitment that you mentioned earlier, Victoria, obviously the Welsh Government is committed to it, but is the leadership there in terms of being able to tackle poverty?

[141] **Ms Winckler:** From what I see, I think there are very positive statements from the First Minister and across many, if not all, Ministers as well, and clear directions to public bodies that they should be doing something to tackle poverty. I think that we actually have quite a good political and administrative infrastructure there, and that is very welcome. Going back to the international evidence I mentioned earlier, simply having that commitment and having that strategy is recognised to make a difference. So, I think that is very positive. The message that we must do something is very loud and very clear. I think where the message falls down a little is perhaps that it is less clear what people should be doing. I do not think that that is a fault to be laid at somebody's door. I think that it is difficult to know what the most effective approach is, particularly when we do not control what have, in the past, been the main levers of tax and benefits. So, I think the challenge is not so much around the legislation, the leadership, the structures and the poverty champions et cetera; I think that the challenge is around just what do we do.

[142] **Jocelyn Davies:** If it were easy, we would have done it.

[143] **Ms Winckler:** Exactly.

[144] **Christine Chapman:** Gwyn, you are next.

[145] **Gwyn R. Price:** Going on from poverty champions, have you got any evidence about poverty commissions or any thoughts about poverty commissions internationally? Scotland, I know, has touched on that, Michael.

[146] **Mr Trickey:** Yes. There are several things that sometimes get grouped together, but actually that are slightly different. In Scotland, there is the Poverty Alliance, which is a grouping with very strong third sector involvement, but it is, effectively, an umbrella body, independently advocating on the poverty issues and responses to them. That is slightly different from a separate thing, called the Poverty Truth Commission, in Scotland, which is

much more about trying to give a voice to people in poverty, because one of the things that is often missing from all of these debates is the voice of the people we are talking about. So, the Poverty Truth Commission in Scotland is doing that and there is another example that we heard about recently of a similar thing in Leeds.

[147] So, how you give a voice to the people and learn from their lived experience is one issue that I think probably generally does need to be addressed. However, that is not quite the same thing as the Poverty Alliance, which is much more about experts and practitioners coming together independently of Government, but obviously working with and being engaged with Government, to advocate responses. There is a similar example in the Republic of Ireland. It had a similar mechanism. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action in Wales does do some of that: it brings together bodies and organisations to discuss, but it has not quite moved—and I think that there an open question about whether there is a case for having a separate grouping or independent organisation really focusing on bringing those involved with poverty together. So, I think those are slightly different issues and they both seem to have important lessons.

[148] **Christine Chapman:** Do you want to come in on that, Victoria?

[149] **Ms Winckler:** They are different, as Michael said, and I think that there is scope to strengthen both in Wales. The challenge, as always, is that of resources. We did have, in Wales, the Anti Poverty Network Cymru, which was part of the European anti-poverty networks. Unfortunately, that was wound up a few years ago because of a lack of funding. So, I think that, for me, the particular gap is around hearing the voices of people in poverty.

[150] **Jocelyn Davies:** May I just come in on that?

[151] **Christine Chapman:** I have a couple of others first. I have got Mark, Alun, and then I will call you, Jocelyn.

[152] **Mark Isherwood:** In terms of experts and practitioners coming together, I know that the WCVA has said that the missing link is the community-owned dimension. Last December, Co-production Wales and Cardiff Council co-hosted a conference on co-production, where national and international speakers—one after another—said that this was not an add-on, but a new way of doing things, breaking down the barriers between service providers and service users at individual and community level. Are they right? Do we need that sort of step change to address these issues?

[153] **Mr Trickey:** I think that that co-production approach has got to be part of the mix.

[154] **Mark Isherwood:** Not a new way of doing things, just part of—

[155] **Mr Trickey:** It is a significantly different approach. There are elements of it now in some areas of policy, but it certainly is not mainstream and I think that there are some very big issues that lie behind that. Co-production requires, for example, public servants to be thinking and working in very different ways from the conventional patterns that we have been used to over the last years. So, I think that taking policy in that direction is very important. We should not underestimate just how big a change, and how long, it might take to really get that embedded into the culture of organisations and the way that they think. You are quite right: it offers an important perspective and a potential area for change.

[156] **Christine Chapman:** Victoria, did you want to add anything?

[157] **Ms Winckler:** No.

[158] **Christine Chapman:** Alun is next and then Jocelyn.

[159] **Alun Davies:** Thank you for that. I was taken by some numbers in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, 'A UK without poverty', where you are very clear that poverty levels have stayed fairly flat for the last 25 years. That is a titanic failure of Government, is it not?

[160] **Mr Trickey:** I think that it is a reflection of just how complicated the issue is. That is why we are trying to undertake this major new programme to try to see how the thing could be put on a more fruitful footing. Within those headlines, it is worth noting that there have been some changes so, for instance, the emergence of the tax credit system produced a demonstrable short-term impact, but, unfortunately, that all got taken over by the financial crisis and the recession. So, it is hard to see just how sustainable that was. However, part of the reason why pension poverty, although significant still, is less than it was, is a factor of public policy, so it is to do with pension credit and the protections put in around the old-age pension and the occupational pension and so on. So, you can see where public policy does engage and has made a difference, but you have to say, accepting that, the big picture is that public policy has not really succeeded in making the kind of impact that everyone has been hoping for.

[161] **Alun Davies:** So, what you are saying is, and your numbers do emphasise this, that, where public policy has been engaged, as on pension poverty, we have seen reductions, but, where public policy has not been engaged—. Looking at your numbers, for the number of people in work with children, we have seen either no change or increases in poverty, and that at a time when we have seen very significant economic growth. Certainly up until 2008, we saw successive quarters of growth, year on year, and it does not seem, from the numbers I am looking at in your report, to have had almost any impact at all on the overall incidence of poverty in the country.

[162] **Mr Trickey:** The fact is that the figures have remained intractably high. Most European countries have seen employment and the health of the economy as the fundamental element in all of this. The challenge that we are facing now is that you have got this sort of complex situation where the economy will be growing, but there are still significant bodies of population who seem to be outside the benefits of that.

[163] **Ms Winckler:** Could I just chip in? I think you need to unpick those headline figures a little bit. We did see very dramatic improvements, and a decrease in the number of people in poverty, in the late 1990s and early 2000s and a lot of that was a very fruitful combination of quite large-scale fiscal transfers and a growing economy. Something happened before the recession in 2005-06 and that is when the poverty figures started to stall and the mix of poverty and the nature of poverty started to change. I think, for pensioners, it is quite easy for public policy to intervene, because, for the most part, they are not working. So, it is within the Government's gift to shape pensioner income. For the population of working age and for children, it is much more difficult and, although you had public policy interventions that were arguably helpful in terms of things like minimum wage and tax credits, as well as benefits for people who are out of work, you also had the beginnings of what we now see are quite dramatic changes in the nature of the labour market. So, we begin to see a separation out of, and a widening inequality in, earnings. We begin to see a huge increase in part-time employment and the emergence of things like zero-hours contracts and lot more temporary working. So, I think that it is more difficult for the Government of whatever nature to intervene to affect poverty for people of working age and rather easier for people of pensionable age. Something happened around about the middle of the 2000s that made that intervention much more difficult.

10:45

[164] **Alun Davies:** That is very useful, thank you. In terms of where poverty was being addressed at that period—so, that decade, shall we say, the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s—were there particular groups who benefited from that or was it a more general decrease in poverty levels?

[165] **Ms Winckler:** All groups benefited from quite different approaches. Pensioners benefited from the increase in state pension and pension credit, working-age people, without doubt, benefited from the national minimum wage and tax credits up to a point, and children benefited from increases in child benefit and help for parents. The mantra at that time was, ‘Work is the route out of poverty’. With a growing economy and a big shove to get people into work, that began to work. It clearly did not work completely, because we did not eradicate poverty, but it began to work and you could begin to see progress. Then, around about the mid 2000s, as I said, work stopped being quite such a straightforward route out of poverty, and that approach begins to kind of unravel a little bit.

[166] **Alun Davies:** You seem to be suggesting, from the commentary that you are giving, that you believe that structural changes in the labour market were responsible for that in terms of a more casualised labour market.

[167] **Ms Winckler:** I think that we are only beginning to understand structural changes in the labour market. I think that there are also social changes. We do not think that we should ignore the increase in pension age for women, meaning that a lot more women are retained in the labour market who would otherwise have retired at 60. So, there are a lot of complex things going on. However, certainly, structural change in the labour market is a key factor, in my view.

[168] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn is next.

[169] **Jocelyn Davies:** You mentioned earlier hearing from people who actually experience poverty. Do you think that programmes like *Benefits Street* might make people reluctant to come forward to offer their voice and their experience?

[170] **Ms Winckler:** My own view is that, if it is handled well, probably not. The experience from the Leeds Poverty Truth Challenge was that, if people are treated with dignity and respect and given the support that they need, then, certainly in Leeds in Glasgow, they are very willing to come forward. Clearly, the management of that and the support given to those people is very important and I would sincerely hope that people were not put in a position where they could be vilified if they were vulnerable.

[171] **Christine Chapman:** Peter, did you want to come in?

[172] **Peter Black:** Yes, thank you, Chair. Alun’s questions have largely touched on my section, but in terms of in-work poverty—. This is a two-part question, but the first part is that, given the powers that the Welsh Government has at the moment, is there anything more that it can do to help to alleviate in-work poverty?

[173] **Mr Trickey:** Shall I start and then Victoria will provide some more detail? In-work poverty was not really addressed at all in the original tackling poverty action plan. It looks as though, from the draft of the child poverty strategy that it has just published, there is an attempt to try to claw that back. One of the key issues about this is—. We have had the minimum wage and there is now the debate about the living wage. It is outside of formal Government powers, except where it employs people itself. So, I think that one of the key issues about this is the potential for Government to have influence in a leadership role rather than a legislative and compliance role, and it seems to me that that is—. One of the things that

is essential to that is to get a better understanding of the way that the labour market is functioning. As Victoria says, we are into new territory and getting a clear understanding of what is driving the insecurity and the pay rates and so on, and how that relates to employment in Wales is a fundamental need. One of the early things that would be good for Government to do is to try to get a clear understanding of that.

[174] The second thing is how it relates to employers generally. One of the interesting things—. It is very difficult, and perhaps self-defeating, for a Government simply to announce that employers ought to be doing this or that, but one of the interesting things that came through at a conference that we organised a couple of weeks ago was the potential to help employers to get a better understanding of what the business case for paying staff better is, because there is a business case, as well as a moral case. However, the thing that counts for them is the business case. So, for example, better-paid staff tend to mean less turnover, more consistency and so on. So, there is a business case, and it is about understanding better what that is and promoting that. There is also the potential of other things, such as procurement approaches. There are examples in Wales now of companies that are responding to community benefits issues and the challenge there is now. So, with the Heads of the Valleys, we have a particular company that has been doing quite a lot of work in terms of rethinking its approach to employment and training and the development of staff. However, that is in terms of a commercial context, not so much in terms of a moral context.

[175] So, I think that that potential to start engaging and trying to influence the way the labour market functions is open. Sometimes, it is not always best done by Government. If there was a strong independent poverty alliance in Wales, then there would be good people who could make the case to businesses, as well as to Government in its formal sense. So, I think that those are the kinds of potential that we see.

[176] **Christine Chapman:** May I just come in on that? When you talk about business cases, I know that, for many years, we have talked about better business cases with equality. However, it does not—. I mean, it has been talked about for many years, and, yes, there are good examples, but is it sustainable? Will people really sign up to this for ever and a day? How can we try to keep that message sustainable?

[177] **Mr Trickey:** It is complex in Wales, is it not, because, by and large, in terms of employment, we do not have the big corporates based here? They tend to be smallish businesses. I think that it is partly about consistency of message and building a more interactive relationship with businesses. So, it is partly about getting a stronger perspective from them about what would influence them. With none of the things in poverty is it a question of just doing one thing and that will do. In all these cases, it is a question of following a course of action, pursuing it, keeping it going, refreshing it and keeping the communication up. There are no silver bullets on this one.

[178] **Ms Winckler:** If I could just follow up on what could be done to tackle in-work poverty, I think that the first thing to say is that it is a relatively new question. The mantra has always been that work is the route out of poverty—it still is, but it is sometimes a route into a different form of poverty these days.

[179] There are four things that need to be done. The first thing is that we need enough jobs. So, as long as there are so many people—hundreds of people, sometimes—chasing a single vacancy, there is no pressure on employers to improve the quality of jobs. So, we need enough jobs. We also need to pay attention, in my view, to jobs at the bottom of the labour market. We talk a lot about the growth sectors, and that is absolutely right, but we do not talk much about developing the care sector, the retail sector or all of those low-skilled jobs, which is where most of the in-work poverty sits. So, I think that we do need to make sure that we have effective strategies to support the development and investment in those jobs. We need

good quality help for people to get jobs as well. That is not just for people who might need help with polishing their CV or with their job-search behaviour, but help for the people who are hardest to reach and who are quite some way from the labour market. People who maybe have not worked for 15 or 20 years because of a disability, or those who are not attractive to employers, like ex-offenders or ex-substance misusers. They are in a very different category to people who have perhaps fairly recently been made redundant.

[180] I think that we need to look at job quality. The living wage is a very important factor in that, but it is not just about the living wage; it is about security of work and it is about progression in work as well, and it is about creating pathways for people to get through so that they are not stuck. They might go into an entry-level job, but there needs to be a route forward for them. My own view is that adult learning and adult training are extremely important there. Unfortunately, the statistics on training adults in Wales are not particularly good.

[181] Then, last but by no means least, we need help for people when they lose their jobs. In fact, I think that this is an area where Welsh Government has done quite well with its various programmes. Only in that way do we begin to get a sort of whole-system approach. Then, within that, there are some things that Government can do and do well and there are other things where, at best, it can exhort, encourage and support. This is all very new territory. It sounds very easy just to say, 'These are the four things we should do', but you actually have to break that down. I think that we should be looking at that, because the changes that we have seen in the labour market are here to stay. We have to go into this whole new arena.

[182] **Peter Black:** The second part of my question is this: as part of the Silk process, if the Welsh Government were to acquire one or two extra powers, what powers would it look to deal with this in-work poverty? Are there any extra powers that the Welsh Government needs to do this?

[183] **Ms Winckler:** I would say, without question, that it needs control over the work programme, because that allows more effective linkages to be made between the local labour market and the whole system that we have of employers and training and support. At the moment, we have a disconnect. Sometimes we can build bridges over that disconnect, but I think that having the powers to build more effective pathways would be the one thing I would say was the most important.

[184] **Mr Trickey:** I mean it is known that we are advocating that the work programme needs to be devolved.

[185] **Christine Chapman:** I have got Mark and then Alun.

[186] **Mark Isherwood:** Given your comment about business, how do you respond to the calls by the CBI last week at its conference to Governments for action on cost of living issues? Related to that, how effective do you think that the asserted but voluntary approach to the living wage in London has been?

[187] **Mr Trickey:** It was a very interesting response from the CBI at its conference last week, and it seems to me to mark quite a significant change in the approach that the business sector is beginning to take to the whole issue of poverty and tackling poverty. On the living wage—. London is a city of extremes. The financial sector, the media and so on and the associated businesses are doing very well, but poverty rates in London are also particularly high. It is patchy and it is specific, and London is complex. The living wage has clearly taken off there. It has partly taken off—. It was not led by Government; it came out of different kinds of alliances in London. On its application to Wales, we would see it as a desirable thing and something to be worked for alongside the importance of uprating the minimum wage.



One thing to say about the living wage is that, in terms of its impact on poverty, it would certainly have some impact on poverty; it would certainly have some impact on in-work poverty, and that is good. It would also benefit a lot of other people who are not in poverty at all. So, it is something that is of value in itself, but it is only one element that has an impact on in-work poverty. Some of the things that Victoria was talking about are equally important parts of the mix in trying to address that.

[188] **Alun Davies:** I was very interested in your response, Victoria, to some of the questions on the economy. Do you think that the Welsh Government's approach to the economy is sufficiently attuned to poverty?

11:00

[189] **Ms Winckler:** We put in our evidence that we thought that there could be stronger links, and I would reiterate that. I think that, of all the portfolios, it is probably the most important, together with education, area in which to get those linkages right. There is a view that there is not much that Welsh Government can do to shape employment, wage rates and so on, and I think that there certainly are limits to what the Welsh Government can do, but I do not think that that means that it can do nothing. Paying attention to what is happening in the bottom half of the labour market is extremely important. I am going to do a sort of hand-shaped graph. If you look at professional and managerial jobs since the start of the recession, they have gone upwards like this hand. If you look at semiskilled and unskilled jobs, they have gone in the other direction, like the other hand, and it is people in poverty who are in those semiskilled and unskilled jobs. As a policy community, we need to look at what is going on in those jobs and we need to—. The bigger forces of the economy cannot be changed, probably, certainly not by policies and strategies, but there are things that can be done, and when we have people entering jobs in the care sector and retail and taking various other relatively low-paid jobs, I think that we should be taking a look, in terms of economic policy, at what can be done.

[190] **Alun Davies:** Thank you for that. I accept what you say about the linkages, but I am more concerned about the purpose and the conduct of economic policy. You seem to be saying that you do not believe that there is sufficient emphasis on reductions in poverty in Wales as a part of the way that the Welsh Government delivers economic policy.

[191] **Ms Winckler:** It would be a fact to say that the word 'poverty' does not feature in most economic strategies and statements. The focus has been on growing GDP, for all sorts of understandable reasons, but there is an important issue, I think, around growing employment as well and that, when we look at employment, we need to be looking at the spectrum, not just at the top.

[192] **Christine Chapman:** Rhodri, did you want to ask a question?

[193] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr iawn, Gadeirydd. Rydych wedi dweud yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig a llafar bod grwpiau arbennig o fewn y boblogaeth sydd yn fwy tebygol o fod mewn tlodi, ac mae'r grwpiau hynny yn newid o fod yn bobl a oedd yn ddi-waith i fod, i raddau helaethach y dyddiau hyn, yn bobl sydd mewn gwaith ond ar gyflogau isel iawn. A ydych yn credu bod y cynllun gweithredu ar gyfer trechu tlodi yn cydnabod hynny yn ddigonol? A oes perygl fod rhywfaint o densiwn yn codi

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Thank you very much, Chair. You have said, in your written and oral evidence, that there are particular groups within the population that are more likely to be in poverty, and those groups are changing from being people who were unemployed to being, to a far greater degree these days, people who are in work but are on very low pay. Do you think that the tackling poverty action plan acknowledges that sufficiently? Is there a danger that some tension arises between general cross-

rhwng ymdrechion cyffredinol ar draws y Llywodraeth i fynd i'r afael â'r broblem hon a'r angen i geisio gweithredu yn benodol ar gyfer grwpiau sydd mewn sefyllfaedd arbennig o fewn y boblogaeth? governmental efforts to tackle this problem and the need to try to provide tailored solutions for specific groups of people?

[194] **Mr Trickey:** We have been learning more about the dynamics of poverty recently. I think that the understanding of evidence on it 10 years ago was fairly crude, and we are beginning to get a much clearer sense of why people go into poverty, how its impact relates to their life course and where the solutions might lie. For instance, of people who are, at any one moment, in what you might call transitory poverty, you would expect something like a third of that population to turn over every year. So, it is much more dynamic than I think that we understood it to be, and I do not think that policy makers, either in Wales or elsewhere, have got to grips with the implications of that. It opens up a potentially new way of thinking about poverty and the need, to go back to your point, for much more tailored solutions. So, what we think you might have to do is that, just to use a marketing term, you have to segment the populations in a much more forensic way than we have been used to doing, and then line up the interventions that address that particular group's set of circumstances and situations. The tendency has been to go for very broad-brush interventions, and sometimes that is right. You know, sometimes, particularly when it comes down to fiscal transfers, that can be a very important part of the mechanism, but if fiscal transfer gets more difficult in an age of austerity, it becomes much more difficult, and then you have to think of different models and different approaches into this, and getting a much more forensic and segmented understanding of why people are in poverty.

[195] So, the group that is probably most at risk of poverty is lone parents. If somebody becomes a lone parent, they have a very high risk of going into poverty. Their situation is very different from that of the disabled person who is economically inactive or, if not inactive, a long way from the labour market, and the kind of interventions they need will be different. One of the things that we are developing in a new approach to poverty, and what I think needs to be a feature of that, is understanding that more and focusing the things that Government does much more clearly around individual situations and circumstances. I think that that is one of the things that will start to come through in the JRF work.

[196] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Mae hefyd, onid oes, berygl yn y gymdeithas yr ydym yn byw ynddi y bydd pobl sydd mewn sefyllfa weddol gysurus o ran yr arian y maen nhw'n ei ennill, neu sydd wedi bod mewn sefyllfa gysurus iawn o ran yr arian maen nhw'n ei ennill, sy'n gweld eu sefyllfa nhw'n newid, yn ei chael hi'n anodd dygymod yn ariannol? Hynny yw, mae gamblo wedi dod yn broblem fawr iawn yn y gymdeithas. Wrth inni geisio taclo tlodi, a ydych yn credu bod gennym gyfrifoldeb am bobl sydd wedi eu rhoi eu hunain ar ryw ystyr mewn sefyllfa o dlodi, un ai trwy gamwario neu drwy fynd i ddyledion mawr trwy gamblo, neu a ydyn nhw'n bobl a ddylai fod yn edrych ar ôl eu hunain? **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** There is also a danger, is there not, in the society in which we live that people who are in a comfortable situation in terms of the money that they are earning, or who have been in a very comfortable situation in terms of the money that they are earning, who see their situation change, will then find it difficult to cope financially? Gambling is a problem that has become very prominent in society. As we try to tackle poverty, do you think that we have a responsibility for people who have put themselves, in a sense, in a situation of poverty, either by misspending or by getting into huge debt through gambling, or are they people who should look after themselves?

[197] **Ms Winckler:** I think that it is down to what you understand by 'poverty'. The conventional measure is people whose income is below a certain threshold. So, what they do with that income is not taken into account. So, somebody who might gamble all their income or might, I do not know, do something else with it that puts them in a difficult circumstance,

if their income is above a certain threshold, then there is a view—and I would share that view—that that is not what is generally understood by ‘poverty’. They might be hard up, they might be in crisis, they might be all those other things, but their situation is not caused by having a below-median income—it is 60% of the median income.

[198] There are some serious issues with using only that measure of income, because it does not take account of need, and it does not take account of costs, and there are certainly people whose income is around the poverty threshold, but who have very much higher than normal costs—for example, disabled people have much higher costs, and people in rural areas often have very high costs, because of fuel costs or higher food costs. I think that that is why the cost of living is an important factor. However, our view is that gambling, or substance misuse, or some other kind of behaviour is certainly a social ill that has a very negative impact on people, but it is not something that the majority of people would describe as being a factor in poverty.

[199] **Mr Trickey:** I would just say one thing that has just occurred to me, and we have not said it yet: poverty as a concept is not widely recognised. So, the work that JRF has been doing on public attitudes found that people do not respond to the term ‘poverty’. What they do respond to is the concept of people not having enough resources to meet their needs. Once you start to frame it in that way, you start to bring in the kinds of other issues that Victoria has talked about—access to resources applies to the quality of their homes, their ability to keep warm and a range of associated issues. One of the things that I should have said, in terms of going back to your earlier issue about rethinking, is that the way we define and talk about poverty is a fundamental part of that rethinking process.

[200] **Christine Chapman:** Mike, did you have some questions?

[201] **Mike Hedges:** I have a couple of questions. In your written evidence you highlight the importance of advice service and benefit maximisation. Do you share my concerns that local government cuts may well lead to local authorities reducing the amount of support that they provide within that? Also, as Victoria has heard me say before, being poor is incredibly expensive. It is far more expensive than being well-off. Do you also agree that it is important that work is done, especially in Communities First areas, to try to reduce utility bills and to try to reduce borrowing costs, which are phenomenally high for people in poverty, and which often cost nothing by credit card for those who are not in poverty?

[202] **Ms Winckler:** In terms of advice services, JRF commissioned a review of evidence as part of its UK work, which highlighted the importance of advice and guidance services, perhaps more than some of us had anticipated. They are crucial not only in terms of access to welfare benefits, but also in sorting out disputes with utility bills or debt. I do not know enough about the current state of advice services in Wales to comment on the effect of cuts, but we do know that advice services are important.

[203] The second element of the question was about—

[204] **Mike Hedges:** It was about utility costs and other things—as well as getting people more money, actually trying to cut their costs.

[205] **Ms Winckler:** Yes. What really matters to people on low incomes is the money in their pockets, and work that can cut utility bills and cut the cost of credit is very important; we know that.

[206] **Mr Trickey:** JRF is just starting to do work on how to make markets work more effectively for low-income families for exactly the reasons that you have talked about. The poverty premium roughly looks like it is 5%, so people in poverty will pay 5% more for a

given basket of services than relatively well-off people will pay. So, we try to get a fix on exactly what the figures are. One of the things that we have not thought about in Wales—again, I think this is part of a general pattern—is that if you take the whole issue of energy, credit, phone bills and even transport, these are all areas where poor people tend to end up paying more than others. It is about what we might collectively try to do to address that. It is a difficult area. There are examples of interesting practice in various parts of Wales, but what we have not done is take a look at the whole pattern, and I think that that does need to form part of any future thinking.

[207] **Ms Winckler:** If I could follow up on that, what we do know is that unexpected bills, which might be utility bills, but are sometimes bills from public bodies, are a key factor in tipping people on low incomes into debt. Suddenly having to find x amount for a termly bus pass for a child or a school uniform or whatever, as well as a suddenly high electricity bill because we have had a cold snap, are things that we know may tip people over into very expensive borrowing that compounds the problem.

[208] **Mike Hedges:** Funerals are another thing that causes serious problems.

[209] **Ms Winckler:** Yes.

[210] **Mike Hedges:** The other question I have is: how well do you think the Welsh Government poverty-proofs its budget?

[211] **Ms Winckler:** It is very difficult to poverty-proof a budget because you are dealing with people in so many different circumstances, from the widowed pensioner to the newborn baby, and it is very difficult to do that. At a high level, it does it reasonably well insofar as one can tell, as part of the general equality-proofing. Some of the key decisions are actually made at departmental level in terms of how departmental budgets are allocated. I do not know what sort of poverty-proofing, along with the equality-proofing, goes on at that level. I cannot answer that.

11:15

[212] **Christine Chapman:** Mark, did you want to come in?

[213] **Mark Isherwood:** There have been many comments related to energy costs. Fuel poverty has a different definition again. The cross-party group, which I chair, focuses more on the person as a social justice issue and need, which is what you are defining here. Last night, we had a British Gas event, talking about the sponsorship that it provides for energy advice amongst other things. Last week, I chaired an energy best deal event, and a couple of months ago, a health through warmth event. We have the Welsh Government-sponsored energy advice scheme in Flintshire and I sponsored an event on Warm Wales. All these projects are still investing in providing advice and debt management, but what role should Government have in co-ordinating, not the delivery, but public awareness, so that people who are suffering unnecessarily know where to go?

[214] **Mr Trickey:** The first thing is getting as complete a picture as possible of what is going on because, as you said, there are different kinds of initiatives and different kinds of activities in various parts of Wales and through different channels. What there is not is something that takes all of that and looks at the whole picture and starts to identify where the weaknesses are and where the good practices and so on are. So, the first thing does seem to be the role of the Government in trying to get a better understanding of the way in which these markets are functioning. Its ability to influence the decisions of the big corporations will be difficult, but one of the things, for instance, we tend not to be good at is using what you might call ‘trusted intermediaries’, who will provide the kind of connection between people in

poverty and the corporates in terms of the way that they think about, and relate to, markets for low-income families. So, there is a kind of orchestration process, which I think Government could certainly undertake. However, it needs to work closely with third sector organisations and so on in doing that.

[215] Regulation is primarily not a devolved issue in this area. So, there may be regulatory issues, and it may be that there is a potential to identify to UK Government, in most cases, what the potential for further regulation might or might not be.

[216] **Mark Isherwood:** The next meeting of the cross-party group will include the Competition and Markets Authority, which is carrying out an inquiry into the big six. You may wish to send representatives.

[217] **Ms Winckler:** Could I just follow up on that? I think that we have suggested in something that we have written recently that fuel poverty should have a higher profile in the tackling poverty action plan, because it is a fundamental human need to have a warm home, which is agreed by the vast majority of the population. One of the things that we have flagged up in that is the relatively small impact of the Nest programme against the scale of the problem. It is not clear why the take-up is relatively modest and, in particular, it is not clear how to reach some of the more difficult sectors, particularly around people in privately rented housing. Our suggestion is that fuel poverty should be brought more centre stage. As with income poverty, we need to understand more the circumstances of people who are living in homes that are cold, or spending too much on their fuel, and how we can address them, and particularly in terms of people in hard-to-treat homes, or in privately rented homes, what public interventions can work. I think that it is quite a difficult problem.

[218] **Christine Chapman:** We have about 10 minutes left. Mark, do you have any further questions?

[219] **Mark Isherwood:** I will ask my scripted questions. How do you feel that the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill could be effective in tackling poverty and reducing inequalities?

[220] **Mr Trickey:** The headline in terms of Wales would be that, basically, the assistance and structures for tackling poverty are probably as good as those anywhere, in terms of Government administration and so on. The challenge for Wales has always been not so much about structures and systems, but about what you do. What are the interventions that will make a difference? The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill will reinforce and, I think, further strengthen the systems and structures for tackling poverty, and that is to be welcomed, but unless the thinking about what will make a difference and what will work can be developed at the same time, you will have a system and structure that has still got a challenge about what it is actually going to do and to try. So, I think that, potentially, it is welcome and should add to the capability in Wales to take a long-term and consistent view. One of the things that comes through nearly all thinking about the poverty strategy is that these are complex issues and they require long-term and consistent attention. What they do not require is lots of switches and changes in policy and practice. If you are going to do it, you have to decide on the things that you are going to do and stick with them, because the nature of the issues will require that. So, the future generations Bill, in encouraging that kind of thinking, will be good and, as I said, the structures and systems that it embodies will be helpful, but it still will not deal with the fundamental issue of what you are going to do differently.

[221] **Christine Chapman:** Janet, did you have any questions?

[222] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes. How effective is the Government, really, in evaluating

how well any of the policies or schemes that it brings forward, such as Communities First, are doing?

[223] **Mr Trickey:** Victoria will talk a bit more about that in detail. Our take from the JRF perspective is that they are better than they were. There was a tendency with some of the various earlier interventions—

[224] **Alun Davies:** Damned with faint praise. [*Laughter.*]

[225] **Mr Trickey:** Often, the outcomes were not clear, the basis for evaluating them was not clear and the way that they were going to evaluate them was not clear. I would say that that has changed quite a bit over the last few years. There seems to be a much sharper approach to evaluation and to measuring success and so on.

[226] The other good thing to say, I suppose, is that the research evidence that the Government is commissioning has improved quite a bit. So, for instance, the recent work that the Government commissioned on the dynamics of poverty is good work and I think added value to people's understanding of the situation. The big test is to what extent that evidence gets translated into shaping action in the future. I think that we have to wait and see, but Victoria will have more detail.

[227] **Ms Winckler:** I think that I would agree with Michael that it is getting better. We do have some evaluations of policy and of specific interventions that do not pull any punches, really. I think it is still difficult, when there is a desire to get on and do something, not to necessarily wait for the outcome of the pilot project before you roll it out. There is an understandable wish to make progress, and I think that that sometimes means that perhaps action is taken before all the findings have come in, but I think that things are improving. I think that the biggest challenge is around evidence. The evidence on income poverty in Wales is really weak: we have to combine three years' worth of evidence to get any sort of meaningful numbers, and we can never ever break down below the headline figures of older people, working-age people and children. There are no data on income poverty below an all-Wales level, so we have no idea how things are happening or developing in different parts of Wales. We have to use all sorts of surrogates around benefit claims and around earnings, which are not the same. In some ways, I think that we are working in the dark. What that means is that it is actually quite hard to benchmark and to monitor progress, because we are always looking for an upward curve on the graph, and sometimes simply just holding the line is actually a success, if all the forces around you are going in the opposite direction. So, I think we have a real problem with understanding where we are and benchmarking.

[228] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** In terms of equality and inequality, if you take for example the funding formula for local authorities, the 50 plus point criteria weightings are heavily skewed towards younger people. So, in constituencies where you have an older population, it has been argued that local authorities are not being provided with the necessary funding. In terms of equality, do you feel that the poverty agenda is heavily influenced by the equality thread? We have taken evidence where it is felt that the two do not correlate, so therein lies a problem.

[229] My second question is completely removed from that. Are we over-egging the pudding with the number of strategies that Welsh Government and organisations have to write? How, then, do they dovetail? Sometimes, people do not know which strategy they are supposed to be working towards. There is duplication then in resources, and we could actually be wasting resources that could be going to target absolute poverty. So, they are two different areas, but I would not mind your opinions on those.

[230] **Mr Trickey:** On the too many strategies issue, you have to be quite knowledgeable to

find your way around the whole poverty terrain, because there are always cross-references in the documentation to other strategies and frameworks. On one level, these are all important issues and they all need attention, but I think that, for anyone who wants to comment or get to grips with it, you have to spend really quite a lot of time finding your way through, so anything that simplified and clarified that would be very helpful.

[231] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I get the impression that those charged with the delivery of services sometimes are unsure which to prioritise.

[232] **Mr Trickey:** Yes. So, I think there is an issue about how you pull that together and articulate it without producing something the length of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, because that is not helpful either.

[233] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Then, what about my question on equality and inequality?

[234] **Ms Winckler:** The relationship is complicated. At Welsh Government level, the two strategies cross-reference, and it is possible to see that there are connections, but I think we have put in our written evidence that there is scope to do quite a lot more. As part of the segmentation, if you like, which we referred to earlier, of people who are living in poverty, picking out the different groups of people with protected characteristics is absolutely critical. If you are looking at people who are workless, what you might want to do to support a disabled person into work would be very different from something that you might want to do for a lone parent or a young, black Afro-Caribbean man. That is where we need to get more sophisticated in our approach. If you like, the structures are there, and the last thing we want, in my view, is more strategies and structures. It is about developing policies so that they are appropriate, and that they are nuanced and sophisticated.

[235] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I have one final question on that. Poverty, people automatically assume, is about finance and money all the time. What about older people? They may have the wherewithal to access a service, but they cannot access a service, so those people can become housebound and not able to interact socially outside their home. Although they could afford to pay for a service, that service does not exist. Community transport is one example, where it is not down to a lack of funding or money or income. I know quite a few elderly people who would really like a better quality of life, but they are almost housebound because there are not the services there.

[236] **Ms Winckler:** I think that it is really important that we are very clear what we mean by all these different things. We should be very clear what we mean by 'poverty'. We have suggested that poverty is about resources, so primarily income but also other things such as having food, a roof and warmth.

11:30

[237] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** And social interaction.

[238] **Ms Winckler:** Yes, but my own view is that some of the other issues that you have described, such as loneliness or inaccessible services, are extremely important but if we just shove them in the poverty bag, we actually then make it very difficult to unpick them all and address them all. When we talk about poverty, if we mean low income, let us call it low income. If we mean poor services, let us call it poor services. Unless you know what you are trying to tackle, you cannot tackle it.

[239] **Christine Chapman:** I think that the message that we are getting is that we need to be very specific about this. That seems to be a clear message from today. Okay. Alun, did you want to come in?

[240] **Alun Davies:** Yes. It was on the issue of over-measurement and understanding impacts. I appreciate what you are saying in terms of the Government doing better now than it was some years ago. That is good to hear. I also understand, Victoria, that you say that it is very good at measuring what it does. I am concerned about understanding the impact of what it does, because it is the easiest thing in the world, or it certainly should be, to measure the activities of civil servants, frankly, and measuring what they do here, there and what have you. However, my concern is what impact that then has on the lives of the people whom I represent in Blaenau Gwent or the lives of people elsewhere. Are we understanding what the impact of different programmes or policies actually is?

[241] **Mr Trickey:** The answer, to be honest, is ‘no’. There is always a danger with people like us, when we say that the answer is more research, which is kind of common. However, it does seem to me that we should regard it as it is, which is one of the key social policy challenges that we face, and have faced for a long time—and yes, we do need a better quality of data analysis to underpin exactly the issue. It is the ‘So what?’ question. Do we have it? No. Victoria alluded to one of the challenges about all this, which is that, even in terms of the monitoring of the overall pattern in Wales, we have to aggregate several years’ data together. There is certainly an issue about focused and better data gathering and analysis, and that does seem to me to be the fundamental requirement. If we are serious about this, that is what we need.

[242] **Ms Winckler:** To reiterate, data will tell you only so much, and that is why it is so important to have the voices of people who are living in poverty to go alongside that, because they can tell you things that data never will. One of the most important messages that come out of the poverty truth commission is the feeling of stigma and lack of respect, often from public servants.

[243] **Alun Davies:** Thank you for that. I think that that is very important, actually, in terms of how we enrich a dataset. Michael, you were saying that we needed to understand more about those impacts. Do you have any suggestions of how the Welsh Government would go about doing so, with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation?

[244] **Mr Trickey:** It is both quantitative and qualitative. What Victoria was talking about was the qualitative approach. We have been debating this ourselves quite a bit about how important it is to go down that route. At the moment, we really do not have anything in Wales that does that, and I think that we do really need to do that. It is a lived experience, and people will tell you something very different. So, that is one thing that I think needs to be explored. Whether it is best done by Government is another matter. The Government might want it to happen even if it does not do it itself.

[245] In terms of the data, it seems to me that we have a choice about whether we should do what I think was done with the employment survey, which is simply to boost the Wales content in any sample. At the moment, it is so high level that it does not allow you any degree of interpretational analysis. Certainly, going down to the local area, it is not helpful at all. I think that there is an issue about whether we should be looking at things like the average income families survey and so on. There are two or three surveys, where there would be a good value-for-money argument in boosting the Welsh sample in some of those, just to try to get that greater degree of detail and understanding.

[246] **Alun Davies:** Okay, thank you.

[247] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn, you had a final question.

[248] **Jocelyn Davies:** Just on this issue of focusing on people in specific groups, like the



pensioner widows, lone parents and people with disabilities, how do we focus on specific groups without them feeling as if they are a problem? If we constantly say, 'Oh, there's a specific issue with lone parents', if you are lone parent, how do you not feel that stigma then, because you feel like you are in a group that is a specific problem? How do we do that without the stigma?

[249] **Ms Winckler:** You do not use the 'p' word for a start, because, very often, people who we would say were living in poverty do not recognise that they live in poverty, and they do not accept that term, which they associate with international poverty. If you talk to people about low incomes, about being short of cash, about being hard up, about there being things that they cannot afford, certainly the evidence shows that that is the language that they will understand.

[250] **Jocelyn Davies:** They do not feel stigmatised by that.

[251] **Ms Winckler:** Not that I am aware of, no.

[252] **Christine Chapman:** Victoria, you said, 'Do not use the 'p' word'. This is difficult, is it not?

[253] **Ms Winckler:** It is.

[254] **Christine Chapman:** We have the Government strategy on this, and I think that this is something that we have to consider, really. How do people recognise what it is without using the word?

[255] **Ms Winckler:** The research that Ipsos MORI did for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is very powerful; it says that the general public does not like and does not feel sympathetic towards the word 'poverty', because it is mostly associated with international circumstances. People also do not like the inequality-based way that poverty is measured. They do not necessarily accept that somebody who is just below 60% of the median income is in poverty. What they do very strongly understand and sympathise with is people not having enough money or other kinds of resources in order to meet their needs, including their needs for food, housing and having enough to have a little bit of social activity and so on. That is strongly supported, and that is why the Joseph Rowntree Foundation is now talking about sufficient resources. That term could very quickly become stigmatised, I suppose, as well. However, there is strong evidence that there is a real consensus on that.

[256] **Mr Trickey:** The other thing to add to that is that another thing that is coming through the Ipsos MORI work is that public attitudes seem to have changed, which goes back to the stigma point. So, when this sort of work was done in around 2006-07, the public tended to have a very black-and-white attitude. I am generalising now, but the big message was that there was a very black-and-white attitude that, by and large, if people were in poverty, it was probably their own fault. There was a very strong sense of being deserving or undeserving. What the most recent research commissioned by JRF comes out with is a much more nuanced view. Language is important, which is why the language of the research was very much couched in terms of people not having enough resources to meet their basic needs, and that created a very different kind of conversation to the one that existed before when you talked about poverty. It means something to people in a way that poverty just does not seem to.

[257] **Alun Davies:** It is a fascinating piece of research. In terms of the way that we address these issues, I presume that issues like rising fuel bills and rising food bills, which affect the whole population, have actually helped people who are not in poverty to understand some of the difficulties that people in poverty have been experiencing in their everyday lives. If we are looking at exploring some of these issues, perhaps that sort of approach will help that

understanding.

[258] **Mr Trickey:** Yes. People now are more likely to know someone who has experienced, or to have experienced themselves, the pressures than was apparently the case 10 years ago, so you are absolutely right.

[259] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, thank you. I think that we need to close this session now. I thank both of our witnesses today for attending. It has been a very interesting session and it will be very useful in our inquiry. We will send you a transcript of the meeting for you to check for factual accuracy, but thank you once again for attending. I would now like to invite the next panel in.

[260] **Mr Trickey:** Thank you very much.

11:44

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3: Age Cymru a  
Chomisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru  
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales—Evidence Session 3: Age Cymru and Older  
People’s Commissioner for Wales**

[261] **Christine Chapman:** This is the third evidence session on strand 1 of our inquiry into poverty in Wales. May I give a warm welcome to our panel? First of all, we have Graeme Francis, head of policy and public affairs, Age Cymru, and also Iwan Williams, communities, local government and wellbeing lead for the Commissioner for Older People in Wales. So, welcome to you both. The Members will have read the papers that you have sent, so, if you are happy, we will go straight into questions—

[262] **Mike Hedges:** May I declare an interest? I chair the all-party group on age in the Assembly.

[263] **Christine Chapman:** Okay, that is noted, thank you.

[264] **Jocelyn Davies:** If we are declaring an interest, I suppose that I am an older person. [*Laughter.*]

[265] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** I think that most of us are.

11:45

[266] **Christine Chapman:** I want to kick off. We are, obviously, scrutinising the Welsh Government’s approach to its anti-poverty strategy, so I just wondered whether you think that the Welsh Government needs to rethink its approach to this, or are you generally content with the way that things are going with the Welsh Government on this? Who would like to start?

[267] **Mr Francis:** I think that I would start by saying that we welcome the profile and the priority that the Welsh Government has put on tackling poverty. It is one of the major strands in its programme for government, with high-level commitment coming right from the First Minister around this being a major priority. I think that we feel that there are gaps in terms of how the plan seeks to address older people in particular. We have felt that, I think, since the very first tackling poverty action plan was published. Some of our concerns have been addressed during subsequent updates to the plan, but it seems a bit inconsistent. I think that we have come to the conclusion that, because overall levels of poverty among older people have gone down since the early 1990s, although they are very static now, that has led to a

certain degree of complacency, I think, not just within the Welsh Government but, probably, across the United Kingdom—that poverty is somehow not an issue for older people, or should not be a priority. We feel that that is where the Welsh Government’s approach could be improved.

[268] **Christine Chapman:** Iwan, do you want to come in?

[269] **Mr Williams:** Yes, just to back up what Graeme was saying there, I think that the tackling poverty action plan builds on the programme for government and this key issue of reducing the number of older people on low incomes. However, I think that we said in our written response that there is a missed opportunity in terms of addressing the root causes of poverty among older people. It refers to key issues—things like free bus travel, swimming, homecare and other non-residential services. However, there are opportunities to go further.

[270] I think that, in the follow-on document, ‘Building Resilient Communities’, published last year, there is a bit more detail about poverty among older people; for example, it addresses employment and skills opportunities for older people. Of course, it is very welcome to see the recent announcement by the Enterprise and Business Committee that it will launch an inquiry into employment opportunities for older people.

[271] Finally, in the annual report this year on the tackling poverty action plan, there is very little detail regarding older people’s poverty. I think that there is one reference to addressing digital exclusion among older people. So, there is more to be done.

[272] **Christine Chapman:** Jocelyn, did you have a question?

[273] **Jocelyn Davies:** I was just going to ask this: if you could change the plan, what would you do?

[274] **Mr Francis:** I think that there are a couple of areas that we would highlight. We did some of this by publishing a report earlier this year called ‘Life on a low income’, which I know that we submitted to the committee as part of our evidence. One of the big gaps that we see, where the Welsh Government could be going further and where the tackling poverty action plan is a missed opportunity as it currently stands, is around income maximisation for older people. We accept that, obviously, a lot of the levers around poverty, particularly around the welfare system, do not lie with the Welsh Government, but the underlying causes of quite a lot of poverty among older people are in unclaimed benefits; we think that that is a major missed opportunity for Wales and for the Welsh Government. It could provide some more national leadership on the importance of older people being given appropriate support to claim more of their entitlements. There are some figures in our report that demonstrate that, in pension credits alone, there is £170 million-worth of unclaimed entitlements among older people. The Welsh Government, through its advice services strategy and through guidance to local authorities, could put a higher profile on helping older people to claim their entitlements. I think that that is the biggest area for us in the plan.

[275] We also think that it could go a bit further and provide a bit more support for those older people who are looking for employment. We think that that is quite a gap in current services—services run both by the UK Government and by the Welsh Government, I should add. It is not simply a Welsh issue. There is more emphasis that we think could be put on helping older people in their 50s and early 60s into work.

[276] **Jocelyn Davies:** Even though, as you mentioned earlier, it seems that poverty in this group is less than in the general population, from the illustrations in the report that you have sent us, I have to say that it seems that there is very powerful evidence there that some people are living in very severe and persistent poverty. Did you have anything that you would like to

change in the action plan, if you were the Minister?

[277] **Mr Williams:** I think that what Graeme was saying about income maximisation is absolutely key; it is something that is identified in the commissioner's work programme for the forthcoming year. I think that it is something that the Welsh Government could address. Over the past few months, we have been convening a working group to discuss this with key partners, including Age Cymru, Welsh Government, Citizens Advice and so on, looking at what can be done to improve the take-up of entitlements among older people. We recently submitted a proposal to the Welsh Government, looking at what can be done in this area, and I know that the commissioner has been inspired by what has been happening in Northern Ireland with the Make the Call campaign—an initiative set up in 2011 that looks to improve the take-up of entitlements, not just for older people, but for all adults. It has made a real difference there on the ground, with older people better off by £65 a week, which obviously goes a long way towards improving their lives.

[278] **Jocelyn Davies:** This is a group that would be easy to identify and we know where they live. Are they easier to find and help?

[279] **Mr Francis:** I think so, to some degree. These things are never completely simple, but a lot of the evidence that would help you to identify where those people are is already held by Government—not by the Welsh Government, but particularly by the Department of Work and Pensions and HMRC—and some co-ordination of that information with what local authorities already know could help with some of the identification of older people. Some of the services that exist in Wales already around income maximisation and welfare rights are extremely successful at getting entitlements to older people. Our own services at Age Cymru, in 2012-13, found £13 million of extra entitlements for older people we worked with, and other organisations have similar levels of success. So, there is work being done in this area, but we would say that it is patchy in terms of funding from local government, and that is where the Welsh Government, in the tackling poverty action plan, could provide more leadership.

[280] **Christine Chapman:** Gwyn, did you want come in?

[281] **Gwyn R. Price:** How co-ordinated and integrated is the Welsh Government's approach to poverty? For example, in terms of fuel poverty and digital inclusion—or exclusion, as Iwan was saying.

[282] **Christine Chapman:** Iwan, do you want to start this time?

[283] **Mr Williams:** Yes, sure. I think that there is more to be done in terms of co-ordination across Welsh Government departments and portfolios. The commissioner often says that there is more to older people than health and social care—the needs, concerns and priorities of older people are relevant to all ministerial departments and portfolios. This issue of addressing poverty among older people is not just something for the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty; it is something for all areas. It includes natural resources addressing the fuel poverty issue. We have too many older people in Wales facing eat-or-heat dilemmas today. It involves public services in ensuring that older people have access to leisure and cultural opportunities through transport, so that they can participate fully in social life, to improve their independence and wellbeing. It also involves education, in ensuring that older people can access lifelong learning opportunities as well, because we now face a situation in which older people need to work for longer and cannot afford retirement at state pension age, and they require learning and skills opportunities to do so. So, it is something that applies to all areas, and it is very relevant to all ministerial departments.

[284] **Gwyn R. Price:** Do you think that the Welsh Government needs more powers

devolved to us to help with old-age poverty?

[285] **Mr Francis:** I think that, with the tackling poverty approach, there is a danger that we take the approach of looking at the powers that we do not have, when, actually, we have levers that the Welsh Government can use, some of which we have already talked about this morning around advice services and helping people to claim welfare benefits. Where I think there would be some further opportunities for Welsh Government is around some of the areas on employment support. Perhaps further responsibility for Welsh Government in those areas may mean that it could have more impact in terms of the services that it provides around that area.

[286] **Gwyn R. Price:** You touched on work and pensions not being under Welsh Government's control. That is what the question was: do you think it would be advantageous for the Welsh Government to have control of it?

[287] **Mr Francis:** That is something that has been discussed, and is something that may have some merit. We have seen some aspects of welfare devolved to the Welsh Government, but maybe not at the Welsh Government's asking, in fairness, around council tax benefit and the social fund. The policies that the Welsh Government has taken forward have been extremely beneficial in helping to protect people, particularly what has happened around council tax benefits in Wales, where the Welsh Government has sought to protect current entitlements to that, which we support. We provided evidence to the Government when it was considering what to do with that support in the future and whether it should be continued for older people. So, there have been some benefits in the Welsh Government's approach. Areas such as pension credit, for example, are such a bigger part of the welfare system that there would be a lot of challenges in devolving something like that further, with the cost that it incurs. However, it is not something that we would rule out looking at.

[288] **Christine Chapman:** Peter, did you want to come in?

[289] **Peter Black:** Yes, it is a question for the older people's commissioner. Can you expand on your point about the introduction of a socioeconomic duty not adequately addressing older people?

[290] **Mr Williams:** This is something that has been discussed and proposed by the Welsh Government in the past; at a UK Government level it is something that has not been taken forward. We make the point in our written response that, should a socioeconomic equality duty be developed, it needs to fully address the needs, concerns and priorities of older people. There is a misconception that this equality duty would not apply to older people. However, it does in different ways. For example, a number of older people are digitally excluded and are therefore paying more for goods and services offline, missing out on much-needed advice and services that are only provided online. So, should this be taken forward by the Welsh Government, we very much want it to fully apply to older people. We fully support what this committee issued in recommendations last year in your report on equality and human rights. If this is to happen, it should fully address older people and be clearly aligned to other strategies and policy drivers.

[291] **Peter Black:** My other question has already been answered.

[292] **Christine Chapman:** We will move on then. Rhodri, did you have a question?

[293] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Rydych wedi awgrymu yn eich tystiolaeth lafar bod ceisio sicrhau yr incwm mwyaf posibl i bobl hŷn yn flaenoriaeth. Rydych wedi awgrymu hefyd **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** You have suggested in your oral evidence that trying to secure the maximum income for older people is a priority. You have also suggested that the

bod y ddarpariaeth ledled Cymru yn amrywio. Mae dau gwestiwn yn codi o hynny: pam mae'n amrywio a beth yn union sydd angen ei wneud er mwyn sicrhau yr incwm mwyaf posibl hwnnw?

[294] **Mr Williams:** O ran y perfformiad anghyson dros Gymru, rydym angen mwy o gydlynw rhwng gwasanaethau ar y llawr sy'n helpu cymunedau lleol ar draws Cymru. Mae hynny'n rhywbeth pwysig i fynd i'r afael ag ef. Rydym yn gweld gwaith da yn cael ei gyflawni gan y gwasanaethau cynghori a darparu gwybodaeth ar hyn o bryd, ond mae angen gwneud mwy, yn enwedig i ateb anghenion pobl hŷn. Felly, mae angen mwy o gydlynw ar y llawr rhwng gwasanaethau ar draws Cymru. O ran pobl hŷn, y prif beth yw gwneud yn siŵr eu bod yn gwybod sut i hawlio eu hawliau ariannol. Dyna un o'r prif rwystrau ar hyn o bryd: nid yw pobl hŷn yn ymwybodol o sut i wneud hyn. Maent yn aml yn gweld y peth yn gymhleth a'i fod yn anodd yn fiwrocraataidd, felly mae angen symleiddio'r broses a gwneud yn siŵr bod yr hawliau ariannol hynny yn cyrraedd pobl hŷn.

[295] **Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Ai Llywodraeth Cymru yw'r corff a ddylai fod yn sicrhau bod hyn yn digwydd?

[296] **Mr Williams:** Rwy'n meddwl ei fod yn rhywbeth i Lywodraeth Cymru ei drafod gyda'i phrif bartneriaid, gan gynnwys yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau. Felly, mae hynny'n golygu gwaith partneriaeth sylweddol rhwng Llywodraeth Cymru a Llundain.

12:00

[297] **Mr Francis:** The only thing that I would add to that is, as I mentioned earlier, the missed opportunity for Wales in terms of funding here. We all know the challenges facing the Welsh Government's budget, because of the impact of the Barnett formula and the changes in funding being made at UK level. However, this is money that should be in the pockets of Welsh citizens and that should come directly from the UK Government. I know that the Welsh Government has some concerns about whether it should be the body funding benefits take-up work—it should, perhaps, be the responsibility of the Department for Work and Pensions; I think that there is some truth in that—but at a time when we know that the amount of money coming into Wales is falling, it is an opportunity for the Welsh Government, in supporting these services, to make sure that Welsh communities benefit from all of the entitlements that they should have. So, I think that there is a strong role for the Welsh Government here. Obviously, most services are funded by local authorities, and that is where I feel that the tackling poverty action plan could provide more leadership in directing local

provision varies across Wales. Two questions arise from that: why does it vary and what exactly do we need to do to secure that income maximisation?

**Mr Williams:** In terms of the inconsistent performance across Wales, we need more co-ordination between services on the ground helping local communities throughout Wales. That is an important thing to get to grips with. We see good work being carried out by the advice and information services at the moment, but more needs to be done particularly to meet the needs of older people. So, there needs to be more co-ordination on the ground between services across Wales. In terms of older people, the main thing is to ensure that they know how to claim their financial entitlements. That is one of the main obstacles at the moment: older people are not aware of how to do this. They often see it as complex and bureaucratically burdensome, so we need to simplify the process and ensure that these financial entitlements get to older people.

**Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** Is the Welsh Government the body that should ensure that that happens?

**Mr Williams:** I think that it is something for the Welsh Government to discuss with its main partners, which includes the Department for Work and Pensions. So, that means significant partnership working between the Welsh Government and London.

authorities towards that type of service. Frankly, it is missing from the current action plan entirely. So, that is why I think that some of our local partners who are providing these services are seeing funding challenges from local authorities, and potentially, the withdrawal of funding in some areas for services that have had huge degrees of success in the past.

[298] **Mike Hedges:** May I carry on from that last point? You talk about—[*Inaudible.*]—facing very difficult pressures. Are you concerned that there might be additional decisions being made by local authorities that will impact on the pensioner poverty due to lack of money?

[299] **Mr Francis:** I think that the potential withdrawal of, or reduced, funding for advice services would certainly be one of our major concerns. Concerns about the things that local authorities fund and the impact of cuts are quite wide-ranging, in terms of some of the services, for example, bus services and other transport services, and things within communities, like libraries, which might help people to get the skills to get online and save some of the additional costs that Iwan mentioned earlier. All of these would be areas of concern to us. Local authorities are clearly in a very difficult position in terms of the services that they should fund, but those kinds of direct information and advice services to older people, which need to be done face to face, or that actually give people support to fill out the application forms, which we all know are highly complex, as Iwan has already mentioned, are things where we would have major concerns.

[300] **Mr Williams:** Just to back up what Graeme was saying there, these front-line information and advice services are absolutely key in helping older people to claim the entitlements for which they are eligible. In addition, the commissioner has said for a long time that community services—our public buses, toilets, libraries and community centres and so on—are absolutely essential to maintaining health, independence and well-being. It is about trying to establish this virtuous circle to get more money into the pockets of older people so that they can help themselves, help local economies and the communities as well, and make sure that they are fully active in communities.

[301] **Mike Hedges:** I spoke for 10 minutes on most of that last week. The other question is this: has the Welsh Government's advice service review worked?

[302] **Mr Francis:** I am not sure that I am best placed to answer that, not having been directly involved in it. We should recognise that Welsh Government has made additional tranches of funding available for advice services on several occasions, the most recent of which, in September, was £2 million for advice services that are affected by increased demand because of welfare changes. Some of that money—about £225,000—came to Age Cymru and our local network. So, we have seen some direct benefits, and older people will see some direct benefits from some of the work that the Welsh Government has done. I do not think that I can offer you an overall assessment of the advice services review, because I simply do not have the evidence.

[303] **Mr Williams:** The same here, I am afraid. However, what I would say is that we are part of the independent advice providers forum, which includes the key partners in this area—Age Cymru, Citizens Advice, Shelter Cymru and so on. It is very encouraging to see the work that they do. I would also like to mention the financial capability strategy recently published by the Money Advice Service, which includes preparing for later life and older people in retirement as key areas to focus on. That is something that we obviously welcome and that we would want to take forward in Wales to help older people.

[304] **Mike Hedges:** For my last question, do you have any comments on the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill?

[305] **Mr Williams:** I think that the commissioner has been consistent in her support of the Bill. If implemented correctly, it could be a hugely influential and transformational piece of legislation in terms of how we address this key issue of wellbeing. One of the commissioner's key priorities is embedding the wellbeing of older people at the heart of public services. Well, this Bill could very much help with that priority.

[306] I think that the six national wellbeing goals identified in the Bill are all relevant to older people, and our challenge now is to ensure that the needs and concerns of older people are fully reflected across those wellbeing goals.

[307] **Mr Francis:** I would just add one area where we believe the Bill could be improved, namely the extent to which it recognises demographic change, an ageing society, as being one of the challenges facing Wales. That is not really present in the Bill as it currently looks. If we are looking at the Wales that we want for the future, responding to the major challenges and the major opportunities that we face as a nation, and if we are looking at future generations, I think we should be looking at the future numbers of older people, as well, as one of the key drivers for that legislation.

[308] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you. Mark, did you want to come in?

[309] **Mark Isherwood:** We heard earlier that neither the Welsh Government's programme for government nor the tackling poverty action plan provide a definition of 'poverty'. We heard from the Bevan Foundation and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that any definition should reflect resource and need. So, to what extent do you feel the Welsh Government's understanding of the definition of poverty reflects the experiences of older people in poverty?

[310] **Mr Francis:** I think, as you say, that the current tackling poverty plan does not include a definition, so, in some senses, it is quite hard to answer that question and to know exactly how the Welsh Government is defining poverty. I would say that the general definition that is used, and the definition that we have used in our own work, is the income inequality definition, comparing 60% of median income as being the poverty threshold. That is quite important in terms of monitoring over time and seeing what progress you are making, but probably in relation to older people it is not the only answer to that. That is because the challenges facing older people might be different from the challenges facing other groups in poverty, and the circumstances are different as well, particularly in relation to housing costs. A lot of older people will have finished paying mortgages, for example, and may have lower housing costs than other groups, but they will have potentially very low incomes coming in and also face different costs. We know that, because older people live on a fixed income generally, things like fuel and food costs are a greater proportion of their income than is generally the case across the population. So, coming back to your question, Mark, if the Welsh Government were looking at a definition, I think that it needs to be a definition that takes into account all of the different elements that impact on a household's budget, so not simply income, but also the costs that you would face in order to have what you would term an adequate standard of income, recognising that that could be different depending on the make-up of your household.

[311] **Mr Williams:** I absolutely agree with Graeme there. I think that it is all about the fact that older people have specific challenges and that a definition of poverty needs to reflect that. Older people are of course facing static incomes, the rising cost of essential goods, services and so on, and also are experiencing static incomes because of unprecedented historically low interest rates, as well. So, it is important that a definition of poverty is consistent and that it fully applies to older people.

[312] **Christine Chapman:** Apologies to you. I know that it is quite cold in here today and people are suffering a bit. Okay, Alun, did you have a question?



[313] **Alun Davies:** Yes, just in terms of the way in which the Welsh Government actually understands the impact of the policies and programmes it pursues, one of the themes that a lot of witnesses have spoken about has been about whether the Welsh Government is good at or understands how it measures the impact of its policies on different groups of people in poverty. For yourselves, in terms of older people, do you think that the Government understands what it is doing? Do you think that the Government understands the impact of what it is doing?

[314] **Mr Francis:** I think that the crux of this is the extent to which the Government is seeking to tackle poverty among older people and therefore to measure its impact. There are certain schemes that form part of the tackling poverty action plan, which absolutely have older people as a target. You will know that, around fuel poverty, the Nest scheme has eligibility for people, and a lot of older people are users of that scheme. I think that they are the biggest group that use it.

[315] In terms of assessing the impact, therefore, I think that you can do it on the basis of individual programmes. We, sticking with the theme of Nest, do have some frustrations around the monitoring reports that come out of that, that they do not always report on the same thing each year, for example. Some things that have been in previous monitoring of the Nest programme were not in the most recent report, for example, so it is quite difficult to track that over time. One of the things that was lacking was which age groups and which demographics the scheme is benefitting.

[316] Overall, I think that the tackling poverty action plan is sometimes quite inconsistent, again over what it measures. Iwan mentioned that, since it first was published, there has been some more identification of employment as being a key area for older people and a monitoring of employment levels, and how many older people have been helped back into work. In the latest iteration, the latest annual report, that was not mentioned at all, where it had been the year before. So, I think that it can be quite inconsistent. That would be my summary.

[317] **Mr Williams:** Just to add on that, we have a strategy for older people, which is a 10 year framework to build on the three pillars: social, environmental and financial. I would say that it is sometimes lacking co-ordination between that strategy and other documents. The strategy mentions that pensioner poverty will be addressed in the tackling poverty action plan. However, as we have discussed, there is very little detail on how that is done. It is also about other strategy drivers, as well, so we have a 2009 financial inclusion strategy, and, in terms of whether we have another one, obviously the needs of older people should be fully reflected in that. So, it is just achieving co-ordination, consistency and linkages between Welsh Government strategies.

[318] **Alun Davies:** I am content with that.

[319] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** How effectively does the Welsh Government evaluate the success of its actions to tackle poverty?

[320] **Christine Chapman:** Graeme, do you want to start?

[321] **Mr Francis:** Yes. I think that some of the things in the answers that we have just given would say that there is a lack of consistency between one year's monitoring report and the previous one, over how it is monitoring those. I know that there are concerns at a local authority level about some of the key performance indicators and how achievable they are to monitor. Sorry.

[322] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** No, no, that is grand. Do you find sometimes that—. The question should really be this. With the outcome deliveries that they are technically performing, do they then shape future policy coming forward? Is there any real evidence of that?

[323] **Mr Francis:** I am not sure. Iwan and I both attended a really interesting conference last week, which I am sure was mentioned by your last witnesses, from the Bevan Foundation. One of the presentations looked at the success of various anti-poverty strategies that were taken forward in Europe in the 1990s. One of the big conclusions from it was that where strategies tend to be least successful is where they are simply collations of existing actions. I do think that some of that criticism could be levelled at the tackling poverty action plan that we currently have. It is a very welcome objective to get all departments to buy in to taking forward this kind of strategic priority, but it can tend to lead to a lack of overall accountability and each department simply contributing what it currently does. We certainly felt that the initial tackling poverty action plan was one of those.

[324] In relation to whether the learning from programmes leads directly into the next new policy, that might happen in some areas, but I do not feel that it happens across the strategy as a whole, because departments are basically continuing with business as usual.

[325] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Okay. We have taken evidence where some witnesses have said that there are too many strategies, and then the cross-cutting nature of those and how they interact with one another can cause duplication and confusion in trying to navigate a way around them. That is one question: what do you feel your opinion is on that? My second question is this. With both your organisations—and I have to say thank you for the work that you do for our older people in Wales—are your strategies taken seriously by the Government, and do they then feed into any strategies that are written here or future policies, do you feel? Or do you feel sometimes that there are too many—that is one question—and the confusion around those? Also, when you spend resources on writing up reports and strategies, do you feel, not that you are not affected but that they are listened to, and then interpreted and incorporated into policy that will support our older people, in terms of poverty and generally quality of life?

[326] **Mr Williams:** I think that we have the strategy for older people as a key driver. I think that we have input into that and how we take that forward. We will have delivery plans to take forward that strategy over the coming months and years. In Wales, we pride ourselves on how we address the issue of older people and ageing. We have a strategy and we have a declaration of rights. At the local government level, we have older people's champions, 50 plus fora, strategy co-ordinators and so on. It is making sure that all that and the voices of older people feed into the whole development around policies and strategies, so that we know from older people themselves what the key issues are.

[327] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Those delivering the services for older people, among the witnesses we have taken evidence from, seem to suggest that there are just too many strategies, and then you have to pay homage to some. There are cross-references to some. How do you think, in the scheme of things, we can overcome those difficulties of duplication and confusion?

[328] **Mr Francis:** I think, on that, that we very much welcome the emphasis that has been put on older people since devolution, with things like having a strategy for older people, having a Minister with responsibility for older people, and the establishment of the office of the Commissioner for Older People in Wales. They are all things that our organisation has campaigned for in the past. I think that we have had some notable successes with that. Sometimes, we do certainly have a large number of strategies and plans in Wales. I do not think that any of them lacks merit. The problem is, sometimes, the co-ordination of them, I

suppose. What we feel, particularly on this issue is this. Iwan has already mentioned the Welsh Government's programme for government referring to tackling pensioner poverty and to the tackling poverty action plan, but there are not a great deal of actions in the tackling poverty action plan. Similarly, the strategy for older people in Wales refers to tackling pensioner poverty as one of its major objectives and refers to the tackling poverty action plan. So, there is a risk that it is sometimes a little bit circular. None of them actually has a great deal of actions coming from it. Partly, that is because the strategy for older people works in a similar way to the tackling poverty action plan, in that it relies on the buy-in of departments around Wales. As someone who has done some of the work with Welsh Government in developing the latest of that strategy, that was a frustration for me: that we were reliant on the commitments from other departments. The big danger is that it just ends up as being a list of current policy and, indeed, a wish list of future policy but with no accountability from departments to actually take that forward. I think that it is a difficult one because you do want that joined-up, integrated policy across Government, but you have got to make sure that there are people who can be held accountable for making actions happen.

[329] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes. Too often, I question myself and I sort of challenge and wonder whether sometimes the emphasis is on writing the strategy and it is then considered 'job done'. It is then a matter of how you make that a living document rather than just one that goes on the shelf.

[330] **Mr Francis:** Yes, absolutely.

[331] **Christine Chapman:** I do not think Members have more questions, so I thank both of you for today's session. We will send you a transcript of the meeting, so that you can check it for factual accuracy. This session will give us a good start to our inquiry into poverty in Wales, so thank you both very much for attending.

12:20

### **Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note**

[332] **Christine Chapman:** Before we close the public part of the meeting, there are a number of papers to note.

#### **Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod**

#### **Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting**

[333] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

*the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting and for item 1 of the meeting on 19 November in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).*

[334] Are Members content with that? You are. On 19 November, we need to consider the legislative consent memorandum on the Modern Slavery Bill, which was referred to the committee by the Business Committee on Tuesday. Are Members happy with that? You are. We will wait until the public gallery has cleared.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 12:20.*  
*The public part of the meeting ended at 12:20.*