

**Meeting note: Cross Party Group on Poverty, 28.01.20**  
**12:30-13:30, Ty Hywel**

**Attendees**

Heather Pells - People and Work	Huw Thomas - DWP
Sara Woolatt - Wales Co-operative Centre	Susan Lloyd Selby – Trussell Trust
Gill Peace – WCIA	Carol Wardman – Church in Wales
Christina Powdrill – WLGA	Cheryl Martin - Children in Wales
Steffan Evan - Bevan Foundation	Sarah Thomas - Womens Institute
Sarah Germain - Fareshare	Lizzie Swaffield - Consultant
Sarah Way- SRDC	Hilary Watson – WEN
Ioan Bellin – Helen Mary Jones Office	Emma Holmes – NHS Wales
Mark Lang – Cardiff University	Dr Simon Hoffman – Swansea University
Claire Cunliffe – Oxfam Cymru	John Griffiths – Assembly Member (Chair)
Julie James – Minister for Housing and Local Government	Maureen Howells – Welsh Government

**Apologies**

Jen Daffin - PAA  
Kerry Moore – Cardiff University  
Sarah Germain – Fareshare  
Dawn Bowden AM

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

John Griffiths welcomed members to the meetings and provided an outline of the intention for the meeting

**2. Discussion of factsheet with Minister for Housing and Local Government**

John Griffiths welcomed the Minister to the meeting and asked for her reflection on the current anti-poverty initiatives being undertaken within Wales. The Minister expressed the view that there would not be one document that would meet everyone's needs or wishes. The Minister understood frustrations surrounding the lack of a Minister for Tackling Poverty but acknowledged that as poverty is everyone's responsibility there is not a neat answer or solution to this. The Minister announced that there would be an audit of tackling poverty programmes that will be undertaken in the coming months which will enable people to see the budget headings assigned to tackling poverty initiatives and welcomed members views during this process. The Minister recognised the need for an honest analysis of programme effectiveness. Maureen Howells outlined that there will be a written call of evidence and evidence sessions to be run across Wales during the beginning of February with the aim of providing recommendations to Cabinet in April. The intention is to keep this process as open as possible.

Mark Lang commented that there remained a big gap in relation to joined up governance regarding eradicating poverty and the need for a consistent approach. Mark recommended that a Cabinet Committee be set up focused on Eradicating Poverty to be chaired by one Minister who has the ability to pull people and themes together. The Minister agreed that there should be a more joined up experience but that this is difficult to achieve in practice and it takes a long time to shift the ship of government.

Claire Cunliffe highlighted the reasons behind why the group has been calling for a cross governmental strategy and asked if the audit would focus on all tackling poverty initiatives beyond children and young people. The Minister responded that the audit would cover all anti-poverty initiatives. The Minister expressed her frustration with current evaluation processes in which reports do not influence whether a programme continues yet cost up to 10% of programming costs. The audit aims to demonstrate a baseline of where we are and identify the way in which the threshold criteria moves depending on locality across Wales. The Minister said she would like members help in coming to a system which actually works and where provision is co-ordinated across Wales.

Susan Lloyd Selby noted that there was lots of activity which is currently being undertaken which is not making the impact it would like and highlighted the importance of acknowledging the impact of the devolution of benefits. The Minister stated that there were certain 'red lines' she was not willing to cross and her belief that the devolution of benefits was a 'poisoned chalice' which would not come with the funds required to ensure its success. The Minister cited the challenges surround the current fight with the UK government on Housing Allowance.

John Griffiths highlighted the benefits which can come from introducing flexibilities to the administration of benefits such as split payments etc. Maureen Howells noted that the way in which Job Centre Work Coaches work with claimants is also important. Claire Cunliffe raised the success of Oxfam's SLA programme with the DWP which is working to ensure Coaches look at a persons life holistically.

The Minister welcomed members views of practical solutions and input into the audit.

**ACTION:** Claire Cunliffe to contact Maureen Howells to ask for clarity on how members can feed into the audit.

### 3. Presentation of Welsh Economic Doughnut Report 2020 by Lizzie Swaffield

Lizzie Swaffield presented the context and findings of the latest Welsh Economic Doughnut Report along with the three calls to action which the anti-poverty coalition are proposing ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections. The report is yet to be translated and designed but will be ready in time for its launch at the Spring Party Conference

**ACTION:** Claire Cunliffe to circulate slides to members and the report once it has been translated and designed

### 4. Focus for next meeting

Discussion took place on the focus for the next meeting and it was agreed that the anti-poverty audit should be the focus as according to the timescales outlined by Maureen Howells it should be completed by then.

Members highlighted the importance of a co-ordination role within government relating to tackling poverty, specifically the creation of a Tackling Poverty Cabinet with named Chair. It was also noted that there were inaccuracies within the current factsheet from the First Minister which need to be rectified.

**ACTION:** Letter to be written to the Minister asking for clarity on the audit, to raise the fact that there are inaccuracies in the factsheet, to ask what mechanisms are in place to ensure every Minister is cognisant of tackling poverty and what the plans are for those programmes currently receiving EU funding.