

Cross Party Group on Cancer: Launch of the cancer and inequalities inquiry & AGM

Key details

- **What:** Cross Party Group on Cancer, launch of cancer and inequalities inquiry and AGM
- **When:** 13.00 - 14.00, Thursday 27th October 2022
- **Where:** Teams meeting.
- **Purpose of the session:** To launch the inquiry into inequalities in cancer and to elect a new chair and secretariat for the CPG.

Topic

The aim of the session will be to highlight the impact of cancer inequalities on individuals in Wales and launch the inquiry into how they affect people. Speakers Steffan Evans from the Bevan Foundation and Lowri Jackson from the Royal College from Physicians will speak on the impact of these inequalities and how they manifest in cancer services.

Agenda

1. AGM 13.00 - 13.10
 - a. Election of Chair
 - b. Election of Secretary
 - c. Agreement of Annual Report and Financial Statement
3. Opening the Inquiry of the CPG into inequalities 13.10-13.50
 - a. Presentation by Steffan Evans, Bevan Foundation outlining inequalities in Wales.
 - b. Presentation by Lowri Jackson, Royal College of Physicians outlining inequalities in Wales.
 - c. Questions from members
4. AOB 13.50-14.00

Attendees

1. Katie Till (CRUK)
2. Shaun Walsh (CRUK)
3. Megan Cole (CRUK)
4. Steffan Evans (Bevan Foundation)
5. Lowri Jackson (Royal College of Physicians)
6. David Rees MS
7. Joel James MS
8. Andy Glyde (CRUK)
9. Joan Jeyes
10. Madelaine Phillips
11. Lisa Williams
12. Anna Lewis
13. Greg Pycroft
14. Hannah Wright
15. Stewart O'Callaghan
16. Glenn Page (Macmillan)
17. Emma Stevenson
18. Stephanie Grimshaw
19. Ryland Doyle
20. Mike Hedges MS
21. Joe Kirwin
22. Thomas Brayford
23. Sian Phillips

24. Jemima Reynolds
25. Sinan Eccles
26. Rhun Ap Iorwerth MS
27. Joseph Woollcott
28. Katherine Brain
29. Lowri Griffiths (Tenovus)
30. Tom Crosby (Velindre Trust)
31. Mark Isherwood MS
32. Jon Antoniazzi
33. Jenny-Anne Bishop
34. Louise Carrington
35. Jayne Caparros
36. Maggie Clark

AGM

David Rees MS – Elected as chair after nominations from Mike Hedges MS and Rhun Ap Iorwerth MS

Megan Cole – Elected as secretariat after nomination from David Rees MS

Financial Report is being circulated to members of the CPG and sent to the Senedd after the meeting.

Inquiry Launch

David Rees outlined the desire for the inquiry to explore evidence to highlight the patient experience of cancer, in certain communities. With the inquiry focussing on poverty and the impacts of this on treatment of cancer and access to services.

He then introduced the guest speakers, Dr Steffan Evans from the Bevan Foundation and Lowri Jackson from the Royal College of Physicians.

Presentation by Dr Steffan Evans – Bevan Foundation

Steffan's talk focussed on understanding poverty, the cost-of-living crisis and the impacts of these on health.

He began by discussing poverty and its external effects on health. Issues such as benefits system, housing and cost of living were raised and linked to cancer care.

He also focussed on the makeup of poverty in Wales highlighting children, single parents, disabled people and renters being more prone to living in poverty.

Steffan stated the work done around the cost-of-living crisis in the Bevan Foundation with data from July showing 13% of people of Welsh households don't have enough money to pay for the basics needed to survive.

He then highlighted how these areas intersect, citing that life expectancy and healthy life expectancy is lower in Wales. Over 50% of people said their physical and mental health was being impacted by their financial position.

Questions

Mike Hedges MS – raised concerns about irregular working hours impacting individual's health and financial positions. He also raised the issue of individuals having to pay standing charges on days they do not use any power.

Steffan responded by reiterating these points and citing further stats to consolidate the issue.

Mark Isherwood MS – Highlighted the cancer waiting times stats published last week and discussed that although certain areas seem to be better performing in cancer stats, prosperity plays a role in the services received and there is a complexity to be explored.

Tom Crosby (Velindre) – Spoke about the variation in data and the actual outcomes when inequalities are considered. Suggesting that health outcomes tend to be better in less impoverished areas despite underperforming health boards.

Presentation by Lowri Jackson – Royal College of Physicians

Lowri outlined the work of the “Mind the Gap” Report that was published in July to explore the impact of the cost of living crisis and the rise in inequalities in Wales.

Lowri discussed the need for a cross-government plan to address health inequalities. Citing evidence from the report that suggested a need for every department in Welsh government to work to address inequalities in their own remits. She raised concerns that cross government action wasn't as effective as it could be due to lack of measurement for success and poor evaluation.

She did praise the Welsh Government for having health inequalities on their agenda unlike government in Westminster.

Lowri then discussed the results of the “Mind the Gap” report and its work to look at 3rd and public sector activity revolving inequalities. It concluded that the Future Generation Act was not having the impact that many desired. Meaning health inequalities had led to unfair and avoidable differences in outcomes and access to health care across the population. We know that we are facing an emergency for the vulnerable members of our society. With around 20% of the nations health and wellbeing being dependent on health care services. So, the NHS does not just deal with outcomes but also the issues that arise because of poverty, cost of living, poor housing and poor transport links etc. She then claimed it is difficult for the NHS to deal with these external factors when it already experiences external problems relating to capacity and its ability to fulfil its healthcare role.

She then suggested the FM doesn't understand the need for a cross governmental approach to lift the burden on the NHS. With the FM referring her team to the Health secretary rather than acknowledging all government departments have a role to play in reducing systemic health inequalities and lifting the burden on the NHS. Its important to acknowledge that the widest social determinants of health include income and financial security, availability of work, education, food and drinks. These are all aspects the Welsh government should look to improve to have a tangible impact on people's health.

Lowri then outlined what a cross departmental government plan would look like in action, saying the role of charities is to now appeal to the government not just to repeat the call but to explain why it is needed/wanted, what should be in it, what success should look like and the measurable targets that need to be included. Outcomes must be to find a time scale and to have regular milestones. This must all be underpinned by funding, and taken on by the whole cabinet and led by the FM. There is also a need to bring together existing work on inequalities.

While Welsh government show a commitment to improving health inequalities and we are in a better position than our colleagues cross the border the delivery is not happening. Wales faces an implementation gap time and time again. She discussed how this can be worked on through working on a national level and giving work to smaller teams and organisations who are experts within their local area.

She concluded by reiterating the need for health inequalities to be everyone's business, rather than a narrow approach with little outcomes. To have an impact on people's lives we must push past the narrow perspectives through quality health and social care strategies that work from the roots of the problem.

Questions

Rhun Ap Iorwerth MS thanked Lowri for her talk and reiterated the importance of addressing the cost of living crisis and discussed the work the health and social care committee along with his party are doing to address these issues in the Senedd.

Shaun Walsh (CRUK) asked Lowri how this inquiry would be of value to address the issues raised in her talk.

Lowri remarked on the need for the inquiry to delve further than health itself and look at the bigger picture. With cancer inequalities affecting more than just cancer patients, with families and friends, wider society feeling the burden of inequalities in cancer services and outcomes.

Jemima Reynolds (Trekstock) discussed the impacts of cancer inequalities on young people and highlighted the importance of local services to improve health and wellbeing with exercise being a crucial aspect.

Tom Crosby (Velindre) spoke about the cancer system in Wales and the healthcare system being the worst it has ever been and how Wales is facing the biggest challenges we ever have. He discussed the importance of the inquiry in not just focussing on health and cancer services but also how it should explore inequality in outcomes in regions on Wales. Citing that often outcomes can vary significantly in areas that are only a few miles apart.

Jenny Bishop (Unique) raised the issue of stigma and barriers that face LGBTQI+, ethnic minority, disabled, neurodiverse groups along with the travelling community. With their exclusion in society interlinking to their exclusion from healthcare.

David Rees seconded this point saying it was important to discuss and look at within the inquiry.

Concluding remarks

David Rees thanked everyone for attending and urged members to discuss the inquiry further with their Senedd colleagues.