

Poverty CPG – 29 June 2023

Attendance

John Griffiths MS (Chair)
Steffan Evans – Bevan Foundation (Secretariat)
Jane Dodds MS
Tawhinda Akbar -EYST
Andrew Bettridge – Office of John Griffiths
Amy Dutton – Citizens Advice
Ryland Doyle – Office of Mike Hedges MS
Catrin Glyn – Carers Trust
Rachel Hart – Action in Caerau and Ely
Rhiannon Henson - Mind Cymru
Izzabella James – Home Start Cymru
Joyce Kay – Purple Shoots
Robin Lewis – Senedd Staff
Susan Lloyd-Selby – Trussell Trust
Maria Marshall – Independent Food Aid Network
Emma Preece – People and Work
Abigail Rees – Barnados Cymru
Cath Rees – Save the Children
Sarah Rees – Oxfam Cymru
Ben Saltmarsh – National Energy Action
Lauren Saunders – Fare Share Cymru
Owen Thomas – Office of John Griffiths
Mary VandenHeuvel – NEU
Sophia Weekes – Welsh Labour Group Office
Melissa Wood – Barnados Cymru

Meeting note

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the latest meeting of the Cross Party Group on poverty.
2. The Chair gave an overview of his recent work relating to poverty, including a recent interview he had given to BBC Wales about the Basic Income Pilot.
3. It was noted that there had been a change to the agenda. The Chair informed participants that Bethan Sayed being unwell so it had been agreed that her presentation would be moved to the next meeting of the CPG in the autumn.
4. The Chair introduced Sarah Rees, Director of Oxfam Cymru to start the first session about Oxfam's new Time to Care Campaign
5. Sarah gave a presentation outlining the background to the Time to Care Campaign, setting out the reasons for why Oxfam are undertaking the campaign and updating members on the progress of the campaign. Among her key points were:

- a. The links between being a carer and poverty are well established. The campaign aims to educate the public on this and to encourage the Welsh Government to invest in care.
 - b. When we talk about investment in infrastructure we should talk about care as much as we need to talk about buildings and roads.
 - c. Placing greater value on care is vital if we are to improve the health service, easing pressure on frontline service.
 - d. The campaign touches on various aspects of care. One aspect that it explores is childcare. Accessing childcare is a major challenge for many. 73% of Welsh families who don't use formal childcare say it's because they can't afford to use it.
 - e. The campaign also explores the challenges faced by paid care workers, in particular the poor pay and conditions faced by workers and the recruitment issues facing the social care sector. 56% of the social care workforce in Wales earned less than the living wage.
 - f. Among the specific asks of the Welsh Government Oxfam are calling on the Welsh Government to:
 - i. reduce income inequalities for paid and unpaid carers
 - ii. extend the childcare offer to all children from the age of six months, whatever the employment status of their parents
 - iii. put in place a living wage for social care and childcare workers alongside better opportunities for career progression
 - iv. ensure that unpaid care work for all ages can be recognized and valued appropriately.
 - g. Oxfam are working with carer groups to bring their campaign to the attention of Senedd members. One of these approaches is craftivism, with carers coming together to express their experiences and calls for change by using dusters creatively. Their work will be displayed together in the Senedd before the end of the year.
6. The Chair thanked Sarah for her presentation and open to the floor for questions. There was a wide range of questions and points raised. Among the issues covered were:
- a. The availability of data on the number of children in care and the relationship between those children, their families and poverty
 - b. The need for data at a more local rather than just national level.
 - c. The need to integrate social care and health services.
7. Following the discussion the Chair introduced the second speaker, Susan Lloyd Selby of the Trussell Trust.
8. Susan gave a presentation sharing the findings of the Trussell Trust's recently published, Hunger in Wales report. Among the key findings of the report were:
- a. One in five people in Wales have had to skip a meal or cut back on food, 753,000 people.
 - b. 6% of the Welsh population have received charitable food support. 74% of people who were facing hunger have not yet reached out for charity support.
 - c. Food banks in the Trussell Trust network in Wales distributed over 185,000 food parcels last year, including over 69,500 emergency food parcels for children under the age of 16. The most parcels the network has ever distributed in a year, a 41% increase compared to the same period the previous year.

- d. Among the groups most likely to use Trussell Trust foodbanks are disabled people, carers, parents and people going through adverse life experiences.
 - e. 92% of people referred to trust or trust food banks are in receipt of a means tested benefit.
 - f. Research by Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation has calculated that the cost of essentials, that's food, utilities and vital household goods excluding rent, is currently at least £120.00 for a single person and £200 for a couple, but the basic rate of benefits is far lower at £85 a week.
 - g. Low pay and insecure work is also a challenge for many. One in five people referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks are in work.
 - h. Susan concluded her presentation with two calls for action:
 - i. Susan called on organisations to support Trussell Trust's calls on the UK Government to enshrine in law the amount Universal Credit payments should be to guarantee that our essential items, such as food and bills, are always covered.
 - ii. Susan called on the Welsh Government to establish a coherent and integrated Welsh benefits system for all the Welsh benefits.
9. The Chair thanked Susan for her presentation and shared his concern about the data Susan had just shared. He noted his support for the Trussell Trust's calls for action and stated that he would be happy to write on behalf of the CPG to both the UK and Welsh Governments to call for the suggested reforms.
10. Having provided his own reflections the Chair opened up to questions from the floor. Among the topics covered were:
- a. The importance of ensuring that people have enough money as the solution to food insecurity rather than focusing on food provision solely.
 - b. The availability of healthy food for people on low incomes.
 - c. The value of Free School Meals.
 - d. The devolution of administrative powers over benefits.
11. The Chair thanked members for their attendance and brought the meeting to a close.