

Attendees:

John Griffiths MS (Chair)
Rachel Cable – Oxfam Cymru (Secretariat)
David Beck – Bangor University
Andrew Bettridge – Office of John Griffiths MS
Pearl Costello – Food Cardiff
Karen Davies – Purple Shoots
Tom Davies – The Children's Society
Ryland Doyle – Office of Mike Hedges MS
Martin Eaglestone – Office of Dawn Bowden MS
Steffan Evans – Bevan Foundation
Sarah Germain – Fare Share
James Hall – People in Work
Ellie Harwood – Child Poverty Action Group
Emma Holmes – Cardiff and Vale Health Board
Cerys Jones
Sion Jones – Office of Helen Mary Jones MS
Babs Lewis – The Big Issue
Susan Lloyd-Selby – Trussell Trust
Katie Palmer – Food Sense Wales
Catherine Rees – Save the Children
Sam Rex-Edwards – Together Creating Communities
Chad Rickard – Office of Bethan Sayed MS
Dan Roberts – Wales Coop
Beth Thomas – The Big Issue
Raul Vasir – Swansea University
Carol Wardman – Church in Wales
Therese Warwick – Cafod South Wales
Jamie Westcombe – Equality and Human Rights Commission

Meeting note

1. The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting, which took place during 'Challenge Poverty Week'. The Chair explained he would need to leave the meeting slightly early to attend Committee, so the Chair would move to Oxfam Cymru for the remainder of the meeting.
2. The group agreed to re-elect John Griffiths MS as Chair of the group, and Oxfam Cymru as secretariat.
3. The Chair introduced Challenge Poverty Week – an opportunity to highlight the work being done by community groups around Wales, and to show what can and must be done differently. The Chair welcomed the three speakers invited to share their work as part of Challenge Poverty Week.
 - a. Sam Rex Edwards from Together Creating Communities, a community organising organisation based in North Wales (Wrexham, Flintshire, and Denbighshire). SRE outlined their work, explaining they aim to tackle social injustice by supporting communities to gain the power they need to enact change. TCC does this through community organising: bringing together local groups so they can set their own agenda, take action, and improve their communities. TCC's current thematic priorities include: housing (developing a regional specific housing charter); sanctuary (as part of the Cities of Sanctuary movement and supporting the 'Lift the Ban'

campaign; and stopping school hunger. SRE articulated that many local issues TCC works on are national issues, and urged further progress on the structural causes of poverty.



- b. Pearl Costello from Food Cardiff explained that as one of the founding organisations of the Sustainable Food Network, their driving thinking is that food should be good for people, good for the place we live, and good for the planet, as well as being affordable and tasty. PC explained how Food Cardiff was well placed to respond during the first peak of Covid-19, able to draw together existing and new capacity, and convened a new task-group which included representation from the local authority, local health board, Fare Share, Cardiff Foodbank etc. PC noted sustainability of this work in the long term as a concern. Nerys Sheehan from Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE) outlined their work during Covid-19, and welcomed the Welsh Government's positive moves on Free School Meals (FSM), but urged that further action is needed. NS explained how their food pantry model had been adapted through the pandemic, and that home deliveries had added benefits, for example, carrying out welfare checks on vulnerable people.

The Chair transferred to Oxfam Cymru.

- c. Karen Davies from Purple Shoots explained their not-for-profit micro-finance organisation provides small business loans at fair rates, as well as creating self-reliant groups – providing places for people to get together, share, and learn new skills. KD explained that for many people claiming benefits, and without savings, financial independence and working to save money can seem a distant dream. KD stressed the need for a finance system that works for people, and not one that drives inequality.
4. The Chair thanked all speakers for their contributions, and invited questions. The discussion covered: an increase in interest from people in wanting to setting up food businesses since lockdown; concern about the current eligibility for FSM and suggesting universal FSM; reflections on what support grassroots organisations need to continue; the need for Wales to have more of a voice on influencing decisions on the social security system.
 5. The Chair invited attendees to take part in a 'chat fall' exercise on what one change should we seek on tackling poverty from the next Welsh Government. The suggestions included: a commitment to investigating and implementing a Welsh Living Standards Framework as a measure of success over GDP; universal FSM (from infants to year 13) / removing the earnings limit for accessing FSM; a coherent reducing poverty strategy, with reference to the socio-economic duty; to end the need for foodbanks; continued and bolstered investment in specialist support for social enterprises; all areas of Wales to have a local food partnership (which are resourced and well supported to coordinate action); a commitment to ending child poverty; Universal Basic Income; establishing a Welsh benefits system; further investment in public services; and towards a 'Wellbeing Economy'.
 6. The discussion that followed focused on future tackling poverty aspirations and actions. There was broad agreement for the need to move beyond 'sticking plasters', and an urgent need to tackle long term, structural issues which are keeping people in poverty. A staged approach was suggested – keeping the focus on longer term actions, but setting out the stages needed to reach that point. Concern about our continued focus on GDP was shared, and suggestions that we should move towards a new framework for our economy and society. It was noted that whilst some tackling poverty levers sit with Westminster, Wales has a range of levers and progressive legislation to guide us in the right direction, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Socio-Economic Duty. The discussion moved towards power, and the need to enable people to engage with decision making structures, businesses,

and local authorities in their area, for example, on procurement practices. Various local, innovative approaches were shared, for example, a hyper-local version of Amazon.



7. The Chair invited the group to reflect on whether Wales needs specific tackling poverty measures and targets, and a ministerial portfolio for tackling poverty. A range of issues were raised, including concern about unrealistic targets, and that measuring progress can sometimes be more effective. It was also noted that targets and measures are useful for holding government to account. It was suggested that whilst tackling poverty should be cross-governmental and intersectional, it should also be clear where strategic leadership sits for accountability and scrutiny purposes.
8. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting, and wider Challenge Poverty Week activities.

OXFAM CYMRU