

## **CPG Meeting 29/6/22 Minutes**

### **Attendees**

Vikki Howells MS, Chair  
Luke Fletcher MS, Vice Chair  
Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Daniel Roberts  
Derek Walker  
Mike Erskine  
Magi Mattinson  
Alaistar Cope  
Amy Jenkins  
Andrew Davies  
Claire White  
Donna Coyle  
Gethin Rhys  
Hayley Wheeler  
Jackie Dorrian  
John Chown  
Lisa Marie Banks  
Paula Lunnon  
Robin Lewis  
Ryland Doyle  
Tim Newton  
Yasmin Zahra

Derek Walker opened the meeting and acted as temporary Chair as the Annual General Meeting of the Cross Party Group took place. Vikki Howells MS was proposed as Chair and this was seconded by Luke Fletcher MS, so Vikki was re-elected to the position. Vikki thanked everyone and took over as Chair of the meeting. Vikki then proposed Luke Fletcher MS as Vice Chair of the group, which was seconded by Peredur Owen Griffiths MS, and Luke was elected. Luke then proposed Daniel Roberts of Cwmpas to be Secretary of the Group, which was seconded by Peredur, and Daniel was elected. The membership of the Group for the next year was then confirmed, and the Annual Report which had been circulated before the meeting was confirmed.

Vikki then began the main part of the meeting, which was on co-operatives and co-operative values in the social care sector. Vikki discussed the importance of this sector and made specific reference to the demographic challenges it faces – particularly as the recently released census data shows the aging population in Wales – and posed the question of how the social care sector responds to this.

The first guest speaker was Geraint Jenkins from Cartrefi Co-operative, a care charity that transformed into a multi-stakeholder co-operative with over 600 members. Geraint discussed the reasons for the change, including so ensure the people they support have a voice and not just be passive recipients of care and so the workforce could have a voice and not be contracted roles within a hierarchy. In addition to this, they wanted to include families, friends and supports to be involved to increase resources and connections within the community. Geraint said the values of co-operation make sense for social care and that services would be more sustainable if we enable everyone to contribute.

Geraint explained that there has been significant progress so far, with senior buy-in, rising membership, and people inspired to “think and do community and democracy”. There has been participative evaluation and using co-operative values to shape their work. Of course, there has also been challenges. Covid meant there were reduced opportunities to engage and build community, increased demand on services, reduced capacity due to sickness and increased anxiety. In addition, sector-wide challenges in recruitment and staffing has meant market saturation and workforce fatigue. However, there is optimism looking forward. They are building co-operative forums, building co-operative activities into mainstream work, re-connecting with communities and building on the digital journey they have been on. They are creating more opportunities to influence decisions and have fun together.

The next speaker was Meilys Smith from Gwynedd Council. Meilys spoke about her career and her role within the Local Authority, and that she was now responsible for commissioning services in social care. She said that they had come to the realisation that they wanted to improve their practices and their relationship with the market, and that they had started to look differently after the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014. She discussed their experience of using the Vanguard method, looking at where their money was going and what it was being spent on. Meilys said this had been a rude awakening, and they wanted to do things differently. They wanted to look from the citizen’s perspective and the impact the decisions had on well-being. They found that working together and taking this human perspective, using networks of family, friends and community had a hugely positive impact. Meilys said that this had come about through working with Cartrefi Co-operative, but that these organisations didn’t exist everywhere, so how did they create this environment in a mixed market?

Meilys then discussed the work they had done to pilot these values and models in the mixed sector, asking what community can do to help. They ran pilots with other parts of the market including private businesses in Caernarfon, Nefyn and Tywyn. They learned that autonomy and trusting decision-making to staff leads to better outcomes, and that the outcomes achieved in co-operative and community-led structures can be replicated in the private for-profit sector if the right values and models are integrated, and local networks are used to create added value. They found that through investing locally, the same level of staffing can create more and better care. Meilys said it was the human stories that made it worthwhile, with individuals in the community getting more and better care as a result of these changes. They are asking service providers to be part of a community resource team, which is a cross-sector and organisation collaboration, on a local patch-based model. She says that private organisations can still achieve these results but need the platform and support to be able to do it. Now in the tender process they ask important questions on the understanding of the local community and their networks in the local community, to achieve added social value. Slowly but surely, they are re-shaping the market.

The final speaker was Hugh Irwin from Drive Wales, who said that their experience was a similar story to Catrefi Co-operative. He discussed their story and growth to 660 people, and the challenges they have faced through Covid-19, the flooding in south Wales, and other challenges. Hugh discussed the experience they had through traditional commissioning arrangements, saying that the status quo discouraged collaboration, is time-consuming and creates uncertainty, is too prescriptive and assumes expertise is at the top. He added that there is an obsession with outcomes alone, and not principles and values. He added that taking a new approach brought opportunities for a clean slate, co-production, a flexible and dynamic approach that focuses on well-being, human outcomes and is preventative. He said he is often humbled by how knowledgeable and innovative workers and partners are across the sector.

Following the presentations there was an engaging Q&A session, with discussion on the potential of volunteering, relationship-building and the benefits of a co-operative approach in engaging communities and staff. There was also discussion about the importance and process of internal culture change, which can be challenging but is possible through trusting and investing in people. Meilys discussed the importance of developing leadership, mentoring and support, and taking a long-term approach. Meilys also noted that there is a direct link between application of the model in Gwynedd and waiting lists, highlighting its benefits. Derek from Cwmpas asked what is the one thing that we should do to support this across Wales, to be transformational. Meilys said it was about changing culture and mindset, using the Vanguard method. Hugh noted that commissioners want to do the right thing and need to be supported, not constrained by traditional methods. He wants a safe space for dialogue, helping to get the right people around the table and sharing risks and opportunities. Geraint focused on workforce development, paying fair wages and parity of esteem with NHS workers. Finally, there was a discussion of the guidance and how that can be made appropriate to different contexts across Wales. The importance of creating a network of supportive people was essential, and that variety was a challenge but recognising this difference was crucial, and the importance is a consistency in values and ideas.

Vikki thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the meeting and ended the session.