

1. Introduction

John Griffiths AM provided a welcome to the meeting, and explained that to be [formalised as a Cross Party Group](#), the group must include Members from at least three political parties represented within the Assembly (Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru were present). It was agreed the formal election of Chair and Secretary would be postponed until the second meeting when this threshold had been reached.

2. Context

John Griffiths AM outlined the context for the poverty agenda in Wales, highlighting that: 24% of people in Wales are living in poverty; the Welsh Government no longer has an individual ministerial position with overall responsibility for poverty; that Wales does not have a singular tackling poverty action plan or associated targets; and that poverty levels, particularly that of in-work poverty, are increasing.

It was noted that whilst the National Assembly for Wales does not hold all of the levers necessary for tackling the structural causes of poverty, it does hold significant power in relation to a wide range of areas. The scope of the group would include the range of policy areas covered by the Welsh Government's mandate – on both domestic poverty, and global poverty (for example, through the Wales for Africa programme).

3. Discussion

Members of the group were encouraged in open discussion to raise issues or concerns on their particular area of focus, and invited to shape the future direction of the group's work. The establishment of the group was warmly welcomed by those present, highlighting its importance in facilitating dialogue, and its potential in helping to tackle the root causes of poverty, and translating discussion into action.

Substantive discussion items were focused on:

- a. The intersectionality of protected characteristics and social class.
- b. The uncertain future following the closure of Communities First, and how the serious squeeze on public resources makes providing future solutions even more difficult.
- c. The seeming diluted and reduced Welsh Government effort on tackling poverty (for example, in the scrapping of specific targets on child poverty), and whether it would be beneficial for the First Minister to have poverty in their portfolio. In parallel to this, the concern that the constant movement of Welsh Government officials within and between departments means that progress within the civil service is being hampered. The lack of minister with specific responsibility for poverty, or lack of a national strategy or action plan with specific targets or measures, has made holding the Welsh Government to account very

difficult. The extent to which Assembly Members feel able to hold any cabinet member to account on poverty was called into question.

- d. The impact of and linkages between poverty and health (in particular mental health), disability and mortality rates.
- e. The impact of welfare reform on people living in poverty. It was noted that the Trussell Trust have witnessed a 52% increase of people accessing foodbanks in areas with full Universal Credit roll out).
- f. The concern over the lack of succession of the ministerial poverty advisory group. The group had made progress on: holding ministers to account; building networks; and developing theories of change on early years, early intervention, and employability (particularly in relation to apprenticeships and work based learning). The group was disbanded at the end of the Fourth Assembly.
- g. The lack of resource for smaller organisations working on this agenda, who, because of resources, are less likely to be able to influence government direction etc.
- h. The extent to which the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act impacts this agenda.
- i. The importance of identifying the specific policy levers the Welsh Government has at its disposal to influence this agenda.
- j. The extent to which, and explanation behind, people living in poverty not accessing certain services and benefits which are available to them, for example, the take up of Free School Meals.

4. Next steps

It was suggested that a future meeting on global poverty could be held in partnership with the Cross Party Group on International (which is supported by the British Council).

It was agreed that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales would be invited to the next meeting, for a focused discussion on the ways in which the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act impacts on domestic poverty in Wales, and the opportunities it provides to progress this agenda.

Oxfam Cymru agreed to circulate a brief note of the meeting, including a list of attendees (listed below).

Attendees:

- Samsunear Ali – BAWSO
- Neil Binnell – South Riverside Community Development Centre
- Dawn Bowden AM
- Rachel Cable – Oxfam Cymru
- Tom Davies – The Children’s Society
- David Egan – Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Claire Evans – Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Steffan Evans – The Bevan Foundation
- Sarah Germain – Fairshare
- Emma Gooding – Samaritans
- John Griffiths AM (Chair)
- Emma Holmes – Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
- Duncan Holtom – People and Work
- Vikki Howells AM
- Mark Lang – Cardiff University
- Iona Lewis - Welsh Refugee Council
- Michelle Lewis – Citizens Advice
- Phil Linton – Department for Work and Pensions
- Susan Lloyd-Selby – Trussell Trust
- Anna McVicker – Cardiff Council
- Maria Constanza Mesa – Women Connect First
- Kerry Moore – Cardiff University
- Lynne Neagle AM
- Kieran O’Brien – Cafod
- Becs Parker – John Griffiths AM staff
- Christina Powdrill – Welsh Local Government Association
- Jenny Rathbone AM
- Cath Rees – Save the Children
- Reynette Roberts – Oasis
- Paul Stepczak - Wales Cooperative Centre
- Claire Swann – Oxfam Cymru / DWP
- Beth Thomas – The Big Issue
- Rachel Thomas - Children’s Commissioner for Wales
- Sarah Thomas – National Federation of Women’s Institutes
- Carol Wardman – Church in Wales
- Ginger Wiegand – Ethnic Youth Support Team
- Casia Wiliam – Oxfam Cymru
- Kristina Williams - Red Café, Swansea
- Peter Wong – Jenny Rathbone AM staff
- Leanne Wood AM