Cofnod y Trafodion
The Record of Proceedings

Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a Chymunedau

The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

07/06/2017

Cynnwys
Contents

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd. Lle y mae cyfranwyr wedi darparu cywiriadau i'w tystiolaeth, nodir y rheini yn y trawsgrifiad.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included. Where contributors have supplied corrections to their evidence, these are noted in the transcript.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Gareth Bennett	UKIP Cymru
Bywgraffiad|Biography	UKIP Wales
Janet Finch-Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
Bywgraffiad|Biography	Welsh Conservatives
John Griffiths	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor)
Bywgraffiad|Biography	Labour (Committee Chair)
Sian Gwenllian	Plaid Cymru
Bywgraffiad|Biography	The Party of Wales
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru
Bywgraffiad|Biography	The Party of Wales
Rhianon Passmore	Llafur
Bywgraffiad|Biography	Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur
Bywgraffiad|Biography	Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur
Bywgraffiad|Biography	Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Gareth Davies	Rheolwr Perfformiad a Deilliannau, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Torfaen
	Performance and Outcomes Manager, Torfaen County Borough Council
Dr Eva Elliott	Uwch-ddarlithydd mewn Gwyddorau Cymdeithasol, Prifysgol Caerdydd
	Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences, Cardiff University
Tina McMahon	Rheolwr Adfywio Cymunedol, Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili
	Community Regeneration Manager, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Anna Nicholl	Cyfarwyddwr Strategaeth a Datblygu Sectorau, Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru
	Director of Strategy and Sector Development, Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Dr Tim Peppin	Cyfarwyddwr Adfywio a Datblygu Cynaliadwy, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
	Director of Regeneration and Sustainable

	Development, Welsh Local Government Association
Russell Todd	Rheolwr Cymunedau yn Gyntaf, Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru
	Communities First Manager, Wales Council for Voluntary Action
Dr Victoria Winckler	Cyfarwyddwr, Sefydliad Bevan
	Director, Bevan Foundation

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Steve Davies	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol
	Legal Adviser
Chloe Davies	Dirprwy Glerc
	Deputy Clerk
Hannah Johnson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil
	Research Service
Naomi Stocks	Clerc
	Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:05.
The meeting began at 09:05.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1]　**John Griffiths:** Welcome, everyone, to this meeting of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee. Item 1 on our agenda is introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest. We haven't received any apologies today. One of our committee members, Sian Gwenllian, will be joining us from north Wales by video-conference. Are there any declarations of interest? No.

Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf—
Gwersi a Ddysgwyd—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Communities First—
Lessons Learnt—Evidence Session 1

[2]　**John Griffiths:** We will move on, then, to item 2 on our agenda today, which is our inquiry into poverty in Wales, and into Communities First and

lessons to be learned. For evidence session 1, we have Tim Peppin, director of regeneration and sustainable development with the Welsh Local Government Association; Tina McMahon, community regeneration manager, Caerphilly County Borough Council; and Gareth Davies, performance and outcomes manager at Torfaen County Borough Council. Welcome to you all. Okay, perhaps I might begin by asking the first question about the transition period in the approach that will apply, and ask what you think should be prioritised by Welsh Government and local authorities during that transition period for Communities First. Who would like to begin?

[3]   **Dr Peppin:** I'll kick off with some general comments, and perhaps Tina and Gareth will want to come in with a bit more detail. I think, during the transition period, the priority really is having clarity over the forward planning arrangements. So, I think local authorities are in a position where they've been working on these programmes for a good number of years now. Communities have got very used to having that support, and, if we're going to transition to a new form of support, it's really important that local authorities know what that new form of support is going to look like, so they can start to gear up, they can work with their existing staff, to make sure that they're well positioned to take over the new roles as they emerge. But I'm sure Tina and Gareth will want to fill in some of the detail on the local level.

[4]   **Ms McMahon:** I think that, obviously, the communities that currently receive Communities First support are key in relation to this. We need to be able to know what we are informing them of in relation to the future, what we're phasing out and what we're going to be continuing through the legacy fund. I think the transition out of Communities First can't happen in isolation from what is going to come next, because what are we transitioning into? It needs to be very clear, I think, what the legacy fund is actually going to be delivering. The employment fund is very clear, and I think we're very clear on what that is going to be doing, because it just adds to what we already do, but I think more guidance on the legacy fund so that we can actually inform our communities.

[5]   **Mr Davies:** Just to add to that, I think flexibility is going to be key. We've got very different approaches to Communities First across Wales. Some bits work really well, other bits work less well. Some recognition that some things haven't worked so well and we need to look at and improve, and some things that work really well. It's prioritising those legacy funds to make sure that the good work that's gone on, on the ground that's measurable, that can

be evidenced, is continued.

[6]   **John Griffiths:** How would you see the balance, then, between Welsh Government and local authorities in deciding what should happen? Are you telling us that you'd appreciate quite a strong steer from Welsh Government?

[7]   **Ms McMahon:** I think we need to just be clear whether there is going to be a steer, or whether it is to be locally determined. If it's to be locally determined, I think that's fine, and I think we are probably best placed because we understand our communities, particularly after the length of time we've been delivering the programme. But what we don't want to do is start planning at a local level to then have some top-down prescription coming in afterwards, and that all the planning that we've done is actually pointless. So, I think it needs to be very clear. Is it going to be local, or is it going to be—?

[8]   **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. Is there anything you'd like to add in terms of the main challenges of this period of transition and how they might be overcome—anything in addition to those general matters?

[9]   **Dr Peppin:** I think that one of the big challenges, from my perspective, would be the staffing issues, because you create a lot of uncertainty for a group of staff. The sooner we can give some clarity over how these things are going to be taken forward, I think, the better, because the last thing you want on a programme is for good staff to be looking over their shoulder thinking, 'How much time have I got left? Do I need to look for another job?' If we want to progress into a new way of operating—I think everyone accepts that things are changing, and we've got to adapt the way we approach poverty to face changing situations, but in that process it's really important that the staff are kept fully informed and know which way this is going to go.

[10]   **Ms McMahon:** The timescales or the timing from a local government perspective has not been ideal. As you're probably aware, we had a local election, which meant that the submissions had to go in, and from our perspective with a massive caveat on them. We had to send our transition plan in right in the middle of a local election, which meant we had no governance, we had no decision-making process to actually sign off the proposal. So, we did send it in within the timescale, but obviously with the huge caveat that this has to go to members, it has to go to scrutiny and it has to go to cabinet, and obviously we have yet to do that, because we are only just in a position now where our cabinet is up and running. So, the timescales have not been ideal, shall we say.

[11]   **Mr Davies:** Detailed guidance that follows that timescale, really, is quite difficult sometimes. When you're talking to members, particularly new members and new cabinet members—one: they want to see something on a piece of paper, when often the information we're getting is through the lead delivery body meetings rather than anything on paper.

[12]   **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. Rhianon Passmore has some follow-up questions.

[13]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Thank you and welcome. In regard to the very mixed picture that there has been across Wales in terms of Communities First, there's absolutely no doubt that some areas have been exceptional—I know that Caerphilly is one of them. In terms of maintaining—. You've mentioned the clarity necessary around the transition period and timescales, and obviously the context of local government elections has not been ideal, but in terms of maintaining staff expertise and in terms of maintaining local knowledge and that pool of staff that you say are looking at a period of uncertainty, and rightly looking over their shoulders for what's out there, what is it that you feel needs to occur next in terms of maintaining that trust from staff, but also from the communities that are currently being assisted through a whole gamut—where it's working very well—and portfolio of anti-poverty strategies?

[14]   **Dr Peppin:** I think we're starting to see an emerging new way forward around employability, empowerment and early years, and I think, as you say, the communities have got very engaged in the process and there needs to be very good communication with them throughout this whole process, because if you've won the trust of communities and you've got staff that are working well with them, they need to know what's going on so they can make sure that the communities are kept informed. And having ongoing communication and—[*Interruption.*]

[15]   **Rhianon Passmore:** We have an interlude. [*Laughter.*]

[16]   **Dr Peppin:** Having a two-way flow of communication I think is really important as well, because—[*Interruption.*]

[17]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay, I think we've got some interference.

[18]   **John Griffiths:** I know Sian Gwenllian has joined us from north Wales—

welcome, Sian.

[19]   **Sian Gwenllian:** Bore da.

[20]   **John Griffiths:** Please indicate if you'd like to come in at any stage, Sian. Diolch yn fawr. Okay, Rhianon.

[21]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Sorry. Did you want to carry on?

[22]   **Dr Peppin:** Yes. All I was saying was I think it's a two-way form of communication, because it will be really important that the views of people in the communities who we've been working with help to inform the new approach. I think one of the biggest strengths of Communities First was it was actually working with grass roots and helping to make sure they felt they had a say in what was going on. The last thing we want to do in this transition period is make it look like we're now imposing a new solution.

[23]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay, so how will Welsh Government steer that? You mentioned earlier that you don't want heavy prescription, so in terms of the ideal mix moving forward during this transition period, what is the optimum menu?

[24]   **Dr Peppin:** I would have said—. Tina and Gareth will be closer to this than me, but I think the optimum menu would be that there needs to be a very close working relationship between the Welsh Government Communities First people and the local authority staff, so that—and I know you've been having very good discussions, and they've praised the quality of those discussions, but that needs to continue—when the local authority staff are out working in the community they feel confident that what they're saying is going to be what will go forward. Because if they go out and say, 'This is what we'd like to do—what do you think about this?' and they win the community around, but then all of a sudden there's a change of direction, that starts to create uncertainty, loss of trust and a feeling of, 'We've been asked our views and now they've been ignored.' So, we've got to make sure that doesn't happen.

[25]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay. Sorry, Chair, is there any way we can turn that down? Because it's very disruptive and I'm missing some of the narrative, and I'm sure others are. [*Interruption.*] That's better. Okay. Tina, did you want to input on that?

09:15

[26]   **Ms McMahon:** Yes. I think, really—. We have an idea from a Caerphilly perspective how we would like to go forward and what we would like to take forward from within the legacy, and, actually, the legacy, I feel, of Communities First is not individual projects, it's the relationship that we've developed with the local community. It's that that is key, and the fact that the other parts of the public service board rely very much on our engagement at a local level to feed information back from the community. So, that is probably the biggest legacy of Communities First, rather than the small projects.

[27]   We have a very clear view in Caerphilly about how we'd like to go forward, but I think we need to know that that is what the Welsh Government agree. It's the same sort of comment as I made earlier—if it's locally determined, then that's fine, but we need to be given the mandate, then, so that we can go out and speak to our communities. The last thing we want to do is plan and, as Tim said, then have to go back out again and say, 'Well, actually, we were going to do this, but we can't do this anymore.' So, it is very much, I think, timely now. We've submitted the transition plans and we need some clearer guidance on the legacy. The transition plans, from our perspective, are a seamless move from Communities First into what will be next, because it has to be. If that's ratified by Welsh Government, then that gives us the mandate to go out and talk to our communities. But at the moment, we're sort of stuck in limbo, I think.

[28]   **Mr Davies:** Yes, I'd agree with that. In Torfaen, we have a vision for how we'd like to go forward to be tying in with the other anti-poverty programmes to ensure that we're not duplicating or replicating any of the work that they're doing, but ensuring also that we identify the gaps in provision that either we can take forward in a legacy fund, or we need to talk to partners about continuing.

[29]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay, thank you. In terms of the Government's approach, do you feel that it will lead to a more effective, better managed and, crucially, more evidence-based platform and suite of anti-poverty programmes? Obviously, we've mentioned the employability programme emphasis and focus in terms of the changing mandate. I'm just really interested in your individual views on that.

[30]   **Dr Peppin:** I think it's early days at the moment, so it's difficult to

know for sure how the new programme is going to shape up. But I think, you know, what we would say is that there have been some significant changes. We've got Brexit, which is going to have an impact on the funding arrangements and we've got the move towards regional working, which is also going to have an impact on the way regeneration and regional development is taken forward, and we've got the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which is a major new piece of legislation, which impacts on all public bodies and the way they work. So, I think we've got to redefine the way we work in light of that changing macro environment, and I think looking at the—. There's been a lot of work done to look at the evidence around early years. That is seen as being a crucial element in improving life chances in more disadvantaged areas, and that has been very evidence based. So, I think, if the intention is to continue to gather evidence to inform the policy, we would be supportive of that, but it has to be an emerging policy approach, based on the changing environment that we're operating in—as I say: Brexit; the well-being of future generations Act; regionalisation.

[31]   **Ms McMahon:** I think the change from—. Change is always good. I think that it provides an opportunity to relook at how public services are delivered. I think what Communities First has provided is that, actually, local people are best placed to determine and work with the public sector on what services are provided. A lot of the Communities First delivery has been demonstrated to work, and we deliver a lot of stuff with support of our partners in the health board, for example. I think it's important now to see whether they will now come in and continue a lot of the very good work that has been delivered through Communities First.

[32]   **Rhianon Passmore:** Can I, Chair, just intervene on that point? This has been raised on different levels, and it is a theme. So, how confident are you that the health boards are going to take on the mandate? I'm thinking in terms of whether it's smoking cessation, or, potentially, issues around drug rehabilitation, all these types of issues that have been encapsulated in some of the smaller projects where Communities First has been working very well. How confident do you feel that that is going to occur? And what needs to happen to make it occur, if you're not confident?

[33]   **Ms McMahon:** I think the public service board has a key role to play in this and, I think, the engagement with the public service board. I think the conversations need to take place, and we are having them in Caerphilly, around the fact that we deliver a significant number of very locally based,

very successful health-related projects that will not be able to continue through Communities First, or legacy, because the funding for them is just not available—the budget is significantly reduced under legacy. So, it's unrealistic to think that they will continue. But the health boards themselves have evidence of them as being very successful.

[34]   I think there need to be discussions at Welsh Government level with the health boards directly about whether they are intending to look at continuing this level of support, but it also ties in as well, as Tim said, with the future generations. Actually, we have, as public bodies, an obligation: we actually now have to make sure that we're delivering in line with community needs, and co-production and working with our communities on how we deliver at a local level is actually key. It depends on how much pressure from above—and, I suppose, pressure from below, from the community—is put on the public sector, really. But I think this is an opportunity to look at how we better deliver public services.

[35]   **John Griffiths:** Okay, Rhianon? I think, Joyce, you have some questions.

[36]   **Joyce Watson:** A lot of what I was going to ask has been answered, but, I suppose, because you've already talked about the legacy fund, I'm just wondering whether you feel that the employability grant criteria are clear enough. And I also will roll that in to ask you whether existing clusters and projects have enough information about what will happen over the next four years, because this is an opportunity for us to get from you what we need to ask the Minister.

[37]   **Mr Davies:** I don't think we do have enough clarity on what's going to happen over the next four years. In terms of this year, I think we are reasonably confident—and I'd say no more than 'reasonably', until we get feedback on transition plans. Beyond that, I think there's a landscape that's been set out, but there's very little detail on it yet. We're one of the early adopters in Torfaen for the employability fund; we're reasonably comfortable with that. We've met Welsh Government colleagues and other colleagues on how we go forward with the employability fund and how it meshes with Communities for Work. The legacy fund we're less clear on, and we're less clear on the vision for the legacy fund from the Welsh Government, I think.

[38]   **Joyce Watson:** Is that the same? Is everyone agreed?

[39]   **Ms McMahon:** Discussions with Welsh Government officials have been

very productive, and they've been very receptive and they've been very helpful. So, when we've wanted to discuss, they are there. But, to echo what my colleague said, we haven't really got any guidance in writing, and, actually, when you put reports together at local government level and you go to cabinet et cetera, it is very much conversations that we've had that we're interpreting, rather than actual specific guidance in writing, which can be problematic.

[40]   **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[41]   **John Griffiths:** Okay, Jenny.

[42]   **Jenny Rathbone:** You've already said, though, that the well-being of future generations Act obliges you to shape your services around the needs of communities. I'm just wondering how you think you're going to ensure that the hardest-to-reach—who, in some programmes, anyway, Communities First has been successful in getting to engage—how do you think they're going to be able to do that, given that, you know, they find it difficult in any case to be influencing the agenda going forward?

[43]   **Ms McMahon:** I think that's, as I said, the legacy of Communities First, and what we need to retain as a core for the legacy fund is actually those staff and that relationship. And, actually, it isn't about lots of money, in my view; it's very much around whether the community is going to be listened to. We have access to the most—. They are not hard to reach; they're seldom heard. Actually, they're not that difficult to reach if you know how to reach them. We have those relationships, and we have actually over thousands and thousands of individuals who have engaged with the Communities First programme that we actually have contact with. It's how, then, those voices are listened to by the public sector. That's the key. We can seek to consult with them, and we can have their views, but it's whether they're going to listen, and I think that, for me, is what the legacy is, and that's what we can't lose, which is that they trust the Communities First staff, where that trust actually with the public sector is often not there, but they have that trust with staff that they've worked with for many, many years.

[44]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, so you say that in your area you've been successful in that, what's your advice to Government as to how we ensure that that happens across all the Communities First areas?

[45]   **Dr Peppin:** I think, to pick up on what Tina was saying, one of the big

changes with Communities First is that it's helped local authorities to engage in that dialogue. It's worked best when that's been done hand in glove with the locally elected members. Having them as part of that process means that you haven't got conflict between the community partnership and the locally elected member. So, where the locally elected member is working well with their community groups, the level of communication has definitely improved. That is a requirement in lots of the legislation, but it's also seen as good practice, involving the communities, and, as Tina was hinting, it's not just the local authorities that have benefited from that, it's all the public sector, so that when the public services boards are talking collectively about things and they want to engage with local communities, it is a very good way of actually doing that engagement. The concern would be that if you take that mechanism away, how do you maintain that level of dialogue? Because you'll still have your locally elected members, they've still got a hugely important role in their local communities, but I think what the good community work has done is enhance that role. We've just got to find ways of making sure that we continue that.

[46]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, thank you.

[47]   **Mr Davies:** If I can add to that, in terms of service design as well, often the service design is very much led by the information on the ground but also the need of the people we're working with. Our financial inclusion programme's changed radically since we started, based on the need that's come forward, even to the point where the local authority is changing the way it delivers some of its own financial inclusion projects, just because the people that turn up, sometimes in very desperate states, are able to emphasise their needs and then say, 'What you're offering isn't appropriate, here's what we need instead.'

[48]   **John Griffiths:** Okay, Joyce.

[49]   **Joyce Watson:** If you're going to have to choose, and it seems like you might, which projects you're going to take forward through success and which ones might not progress, are you satisfied that the mechanisms for those choices are very much in place?

[50]   **Ms McMahon:** It's like an enormous jigsaw puzzle, to be honest. At the moment, we are having discussions with all the public bodies around what elements they can pick up and deliver, because when we know that, we will know what elements are remaining. It's not so much about individual

projects, it's about a way of working, I suppose, and also around looking at—
. In Caerphilly, we're looking at reducing the areas that we cover, because the programme is huge across Wales—it's massive. By definition, actually, I suppose, it isn't focusing on the most deprived. So, as the money has shrunk, then the areas that we can cover have shrunk. So, we're looking at the most deprived within the Communities First areas and focusing on those areas predominantly. But it is very much around what else will be picked up by our partner organisations, and until we have some clarity over that it's very difficult to know what elements we will then have to continue.

[51]   **Joyce Watson:** Can I ask, further to that—? At the moment, it's quite prescriptive, you know, you have a designated area, but the change is to remove that prescription and that designation and widen the opportunities. Are you satisfied that that really does give the opportunity for you to widen?

[52]   **Mr Davies:** If I could start on that one. Yes, I think it does. I think one of the things that we need to be clear about is you can be area based and it does help, particularly in areas like Trevethin, one of the most deprived areas in Wales, where you know that the vast majority of need in the area is going to be based in that area, but it also gives you the recognition that there are going to be pockets of deprivation sometimes at a street level, sometimes at an individual house level, throughout the area, no matter where they are in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, that you can then address. One of the shifts from Torfaen over the last few years has been the ability for some projects to go outside the boundaries of Communities First, particularly the financial inclusion project, with some local authority money to do that very thing. So, the flexibility to do that on a wider level is welcome.

09:30

[53]   **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[54]   **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[55]   **Jenny Rathbone:** I think there are plusses and minuses here. Obviously, if somebody outside a Communities First area needs support getting a job, then we need to help them. But, if you abolish the area-focus base, do you recognise that there are dangers in officers being deflected by those who shout loudest, rather than those who require a bit of effort to engage with?

[56]   **Ms McMahon:** I believe in spatial targeting; I think it's necessary. I think that we have some areas with such significant complex needs, within a confined area, that to move away from spatial targeting is not the way forward. We obviously recognise that poverty exists outside of those areas, but, actually, if we're going to address some of the major issues that we have in some of our communities, then a targeted spatial approach is actually the only way to do it, and looking at how those services for those communities are actually meeting the needs of those communities.

[57]   A significant amount of public money goes into these areas, but, actually, is that public money effective? And I think what the legacy offers us is an opportunity to actually relook at that, and actually look at those services that are being provided in those communities. Actually, are they cost effective, are they providing what they need? And actually—I mean, if I'm going to be slightly controversial—if they were, then we wouldn't be in a position where we needed to be having these conversations, would we? So, unfortunately, we're in the situation in Caerphilly of having the most deprived community in Wales, and I think to ignore that, and not spatially target resources in relation to it, would be foolish, personally.

[58]   **Dr Peppin:** I think, though, if you take a whole-systems approach, which is what the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 encourages us to do, if you look at the most disadvantaged areas, they've got the most parts of the system where intervention is needed, so they need a multi-agency approach, an intensive piece of work, to put all the bits back, and get them working again. In a more affluent area, where you've got pockets of poverty, the system isn't quite as broken, and, therefore, you need fewer interventions—more specific interventions—to help those people get back up and running again. So I think it's getting that balance, recognising that some areas have got a complex range of needs that need a multi-agency, intensive approach for a period of time; other areas, it could be about addressing some shorter term problems, and helping people in that area with some very targeted initiatives.

[59]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[60]   **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. And Janet.

[61]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Certainly over the past six years here in the Chamber, some of the criticisms coming through, and indeed within my own community, constituency, of Aberconwy, some of the criticisms are about

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performance monitoring, and whether the actual aims were ever achieved, because of the actual reporting back, the accountability; huge gaps in that. Scrutiny of spend: whilst our local authority carried it out, there was always a little bit of ambiguity about who really was responsible for scrutinising the performance and the actual spend of taxpayers' money. I'll sort of bunch them all together.

[62]   And then, finally, duplication, because it's quite clear in our report here: it says about the impact of the end of Communities First on other programmes, such as Flying Start, Communities for Work, Families First, Lift, Parents, Childcare and Employment, which is PaCE. They all use Communities First geography, facilities, networks and staff, which you think, 'Great—that's co-production, that's co-ordination, everybody working together.' But, the WLGA say that, once CF is phased out, the important role played by CF—Communities First—will become clearer. So, how do you address that duplication, and try and make it a tighter, more specific spend, and deliverable outcomes, going back to my point about performance monitoring, and then again of scrutiny of spend, so that those of us Assembly Members can have confidence that the Welsh Government have really got their hand on this, they're not just dishing out money, and that we're not getting the deliverable outcomes that we all want to see in our communities?

[63]   **John Griffiths:** I think there's quite a lot there, isn't there, but we're coming on to other programmes later, in questions. So, if you could concentrate on the performance management and monitoring and measurement, at this stage.

[64]   **Mr Davies:** At a local level, it's very robust. We are scrutinised by Welsh Government on how we deliver. We are asked for evidence of delivery, so there's no option for claiming things that you can't evidence, and, naturally, that's really important. At the local level, we've got oversight from the council, we've got oversight from our deputy chief executive, which is very clear on ensuring that the deliverables that we've committed to are being delivered. I don't feel, certainly in Torfaen, that we've got an issue with not being able to evidence anything we've claimed. We've certainly made an impact for lots of people on the ground, and we're comfortable with our impact and, more importantly, the people on the ground are comfortable with our impact, so I'd like to see some more across-Wales performance measures being shared, so that we can see where areas are working really well and learn from the experience, or see where areas are not working so

well and offer them support. I don't think that it's a cross-Wales thing in terms of outcomes. What has complicated things slightly is that there's been too many outcomes sometimes, so that you're all measuring slightly different things. So, the clearer things are in terms of measurement—a job outcome is a job outcome from north Wales to south Wales, east Wales to west, but then some of the softer outcomes are difficult to evidence in terms of impact, but they're also difficult to evidence in terms of how each area is monitoring them.

[65]   **Janet Finch-Saunders**: Okay. Could you just describe to this committee then what your process of scrutiny of the spend is then?

[66]   **Mr Davies**: The spend is not my particular area of expertise—it's probably more Tina's—but in terms of scrutiny of spend, our finance officer will check that the spend for each individual person is appropriate, so we've got evidence if we want to put someone on the CSCS course that, yes, they're going to benefit from it, so we're not just putting them on it to tick a box that says we've got them an outcome. We're looking at evidencing spend in terms of talking with the cluster manager about why we want to spend money for each individual.

[67]   **Janet Finch-Saunders**: You'll have to forgive my—. I'm just a little bit confused now. I thought that if local authorities were the administrators, then surely the democratic process—. So, what committee is it scrutinised through?

[68]   **Mr Davies**: It's scrutinised through the—let me just check which committees because they've changed, sorry. It's scrutinised at the level of the chief executive—

[69]   **Janet Finch-Saunders**: So it doesn't go through any democratic process with councillors.

[70]   **Mr Davies**: It goes to the executive member and also to the cabinet. So, the spend gets scrutinised by the cabinet as well.

[71]   **Janet Finch-Saunders**: All right. So, even the council ward members are excluded from that process.

[72]   **Mr Davies**: No, they're aware of the spend as well. We meet regularly with board members to talk about outcomes, talk about spend. So, ward

members are crucial in this process.

[73]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** So you've got a transparent—. What I'm asking, Chairman, quite simply: you have a transparent audit that the democratic elected members are able to scrutinise.

[74]   **Mr Davies:** Yes, and that's crucial. I think one of the things that we were concerned about post 2012 when Communities First changed was members feeling excluded from that process, where they'd always been involved in partnership boards.

[75]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I've seen that across Wales, actually.

[76]   **Mr Davies:** But beyond that, I think, certainly in Torfaen, it's been embraced, because they can see that they've had perhaps fewer countables but they've had more people getting into work.

[77]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you.

[78]   **John Griffiths:** Did you want to add anything, Tina?

[79]   **Ms McMahon:** All our spend goes through both performance and resources scrutiny and regeneration scrutiny. Reports to corporate management team go to PDM and then they go to cabinet, so all our spend is internally audited as well, so there is a process for all the finances in relation to Communities First.

[80]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** What about local members on a corporate basis with local democratically elected councillors and members?

[81]   **Ms McMahon:** That's scrutiny, because the way—

[82]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** So, through the members that are on those committees.

[83]   **Ms McMahon:** Yes.

[84]   **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Yes, that's fine.

[85]   **Jenny Rathbone:** Can you just clarify that it is the delivery body that ultimately is accountable for how the money is spent, so that where there has

been fraud—and there has in some individual instances—it is the local authority that has to cover the cost?

[86] **Dr Peppin:** The local authority isn't the lead delivery body in all authority areas—

[87] **Jenny Rathbone:** I appreciate there are other bodies, but in the case of local authorities, where you're the delivery body, then you're responsible for covering the cost of any inappropriate spending.

[88] **Ms McMahon:** And that's very clear in our grant offer letters. It's very clear in there, when we accept the money that we are accountable as a local authority for the grants that we receive, hence why the system is so robust in relation to the finances, because otherwise we're at risk.

[89] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[90] **John Griffiths:** Bethan, did you want to come in at this point?

[91] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. I wanted to come in on a question with regard to evidence that the Bevan Foundation gave, in saying that—. In previous reports it says that Communities First has

[92] 'not achieved significant, measurable reductions in poverty and deprivation in either the designated areas or in Wales as a whole'

[93] and it's had 'marginal' or 'limited' impact. I mean, I wouldn't expect you to come here and say that you haven't done things well, but in relation to poverty, reductions have not—. Well, this alone has said they have stayed at the levels of the 2000s, and really, that's a damning indictment of this programme, that things have not been able to change. So, I'm curious; if you're saying 'well done' to yourselves, how are you going to be ensuring that in any transition, with money being taken away from you as you've exemplified—that if you've not been able to reduce poverty now, how will you be able to do that in the future with significantly decreasing resources?

[94] **Ms McMahon:** Can I just say that to expect a single programme to single-handedly reduce poverty is naive and unrealistic? You will never eradicate poverty—generational poverty—by a single anti-poverty programme. I think Communities First has done—. It has been mixed across Wales. It has been very successful at some things and not so successful at

others, but actually, poverty, fundamentally, is down to economics. Unless you can actually have a growing economy in the areas where poverty is most prevalent, and a decent economic strategy and economic growth, then you're never going to actually eradicate poverty. Poverty is also around services as well, and effective use of public money, and effective use of public services. Actually, we shouldn't require an anti-poverty programme, to be perfectly frank. I think that we should be looking at poverty far more strategically across all the public sector, the private sector, and looking at how we actually develop wealth in our communities. So, you know, anti-poverty programmes and employment support programmes are all well and good, but actually, unless you have a robust economy, then we're never going to eradicate it.

[95] **Bethan Jenkins:** You say it's naive, but this has been the flagship programme of the Labour Government since devolution began, so have you, therefore, raised these concerns over subsequent evaluations where it hasn't been delivering on that anti-poverty agenda? I agree with you that it should be about economic outcomes, so does that reflect, therefore, in your conversations with any new scheme—? You've put in your plans to the Welsh Government; does that reflect in your plans, therefore, for the future development of these programmes?

[96] **Dr Peppin:** The discussions are taking place now, at a regional level, about regional development. So, you've got the two city regions, you've got Growing Mid Wales and you've got the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, and at a regional level now, they are looking at how they take the economy forward. What are the key catalysts to make that area's economy improve? So, if you can get that moving at a higher spatial level, then, as Tina said, for the local communities, where we still need some intensive local work to support people with specific needs and tackle local environmental problems and so on, that needs to go hand in glove with the wider economic development work. I think the key is to get the two processes linked. So, we're looking at areas of need, but one of the criticisms I'd have with the Communities First programme is that there was an exclusive focus on areas of need, and we've also got to look at the areas of opportunity. And it's about how you make the linkages between those areas where you're going in and doing the support work—and through physical links, you know, improved transport, through better broadband links, through training that can give people the opportunity to go and find jobs elsewhere, through better education and so on. It's marrying up the work you're doing at a very localised level, which continues to be important, with an approach that is looking to take forward the economy at the regional level. I think we haven't

had that before. We've had 22 local authorities with their own local strategies. There have been some regional issues, but it hasn't been as focused as it has been today. And I think the work that's now starting to take off at regional level will hopefully give us that sort of lift-up, where the economy starts to see a benefit of cross-authority working, which will then make the work at the localised level more effective.

[97] **John Griffiths:** Gareth, I don't know whether—

[98] **Sian Gwenllian:** A gaf i ddod i mewn fan hyn? Rydw i'n meddwl eich bod chi wedi cyffwrdd ar rywbeth pwysig yn fan hyn o ran y lefel strategol. A ydych chi'n teimlo bod y cysylltiad rhwng yr hyn sydd angen ei wneud rŵan o ran symud ymlaen— sef taclo tlodi a thlodi mewn gwaith a'r ochr economaidd—a oes yna ddigon o gysylltiad, felly, rhwng yr hyn mae Cymunedau yn Gyntaf wedi bod yn ei wneud ac yn ceisio ei wneud a'r strategaeth economaidd cenedlaethol sydd ar y gweill rŵan? Rydych chi wedi sôn bod yna rywfaint o waith yn digwydd yn rhanbarthol, ond onid oes angen i'r agwedd yma— tlodi mewn gwaith—fod yn ganolog i'r strategaeth economaidd y mae'r Llywodraeth ar hyn o bryd yn ei chynhyrchu?

Sian Gwenllian: Can I come in here? I think you have touched on a very important issue here with regard to the strategic level of engagement. Do you feel that the link between what needs to be done now in moving forward—namely tackling poverty and in-work poverty and the economic side of the issue—is there enough of a link being established between what Communities First has been doing and is trying to do and the economic strategy on a national level that is in place now? You've said that there is regional work ongoing, but don't we need this aspect of in-work poverty to be at the heart of the economic strategy that the Government is currently producing?

09:45

[99] **Dr Peppin:** Yes, I would totally agree with that. We certainly need to work on making the links between the different spatial levels, and in-work poverty is part of the employability approach as well. It's not just about getting people into work, but it's about that progression: giving people support once they find a job to make sure that you don't just see getting someone into a job as the end of the process. For a lot of people, it's a sort of merry-go-round of going into short-term employment or the gig economy or whatever, and then they're back out of work again. Part of what

we need to do is to make sure that the types of jobs we're creating are in areas that are moving the local economy to a more resilient base—the well-being of future generations Act again—it's not just any job, it's what jobs are going to help the region move forward in a way that will make it more resilient and sustainable. And if we can make sure we're getting the right types of jobs in, with the right types of job conditions, then by helping people progress into employment and supporting them once they get into that employment, you've got more of a chance that this will be a lasting solution, rather than just a short-term fix.

[100] **Sian Gwenllian:** A ydych chi felly'n teimlo bod y cysylltiad rhwng y grant cyflogadwyedd a'r cynllun cyflogadwyedd—a ddylai fod yn rhan o'r strategaeth economaidd, mae'n debyg—a ydy'r cysylltiad rhwng y pethau yma'n ddigon clir ac wedi cael eu plethu i'w gilydd yn ddigon amlwg?

Sian Gwenllian: Do you therefore feel that the link between the employability grant and the employability scheme—that should be part of the economic strategy, it seems—is the link between these issues being established and have they been dovetailed clearly enough?

[101] **Dr Peppin:** I think we're getting there, but there's a lot more that can be done. I think when we're thinking of regional development, if we use the well-being of future generations Act as the framework in which we look at that set of development proposals, then we start to say: 'Is this actually going to improve things economically, but is it also going to improve it environmentally, socially and culturally?' So, I think the well-being of future generations Act gives you a really good framework to assess projects and certainly, the regional work that's going on now, where they're developing their assessment frameworks, they are using the well-being of future generations Act as part of that assessment process. So, development proposals have to able to demonstrate not only are they good economically, but they've also taken account of potential environmental issues and social issues. But I agree with you; it's an area that needs to be worked on. It's difficult, isn't it, because there's only a limited amount of time in the day. People get given a job or they're trying to deliver a particular programme and they see it as their responsibility to get on with that programme. You get a load of people coming in and saying 'Have you considered this? Have you considered that?' It makes it more complicated, but do we want good projects that take a bit more time to work up and get right or do we want to rush projects and find that we haven't thought them through properly and they're not very sustainable? So, I think there's a lot more that needs to be

done, but I think we can be quite positive that there are signs that the Act is starting to influence practice.

[102] **Sian Gwenllian:** Roeddwn i jest yn mynd i ddweud mai gwaith y Llywodraeth ydy gosod y cyfeiriad strategol, yn hytrach na phobl sydd wedi gweithio ar y prosiectau. Dyna rydw i'n gweld sydd efallai ar goll. Mae yna lot o bobl yn gweithio ar brosiectau, ond wedyn ble mae'r cydlynu strategol yma'n digwydd? Gwaith y Llywodraeth, mae'n debyg, ydy arwain hynny, nid y rhaglenni unigol.

Sian Gwenllian: I was just going to say that that's the Government's work, isn't it, setting the strategic direction, rather than people who work on the projects. That's what I see is maybe missing. People are working on projects, but where's the strategic co-ordination happening? I would say that's the Government's work. They should be leading that, not the individual projects.

[103] **Dr Peppin:** We recently had a meeting in mid Wales where we brought reps from the four regions together with officials from Welsh Government, because what we were saying was these four regions need to add up into a coherent approach for the whole of Wales. We've started to have that dialogue now so that we've not got four competing regions all looking to do their own thing, but we're starting that dialogue about how can the Welsh Government's programme for government mesh in with what's going on at the regional level and then how can that regional level then feed down to what's going on at the local level. It is an integrated system. You're absolutely right; there needs to be a clear picture of where we're going at the Wales national level, but then the regions need to be doing work that will help to deliver that vision, and then, at the local level, local people need to understand what the opportunities are coming as a result of that type of development, so that we can, through the regional skills partnerships, monitor the skills needs and make sure the training we provide is gearing people up for the jobs of the future.

[104] **John Griffiths:** Sian, I'm going to move on now, and just ask Gareth if he wanted to ask anything further on performance measurement.

[105] **Gareth Bennett:** Oh, on performance measurement; right. We did look at measurable targets; Gareth mentioned that a couple of times. Do you think that the local authorities should be measuring performance, or do you think there should be more of a national attempt to collect that data?

[106] **Mr Davies:** I think there needs to be a balance of local need but national accountability, and I think the accountability is crucial for us as well in terms of ensuring that we're on the right path, ensuring that we're using the right measurables and ensuring, as I said before, that if there is good practice that can be shared, then we recognise areas of success and follow them. I think that's difficult to do in isolation, and it's difficult to do without intelligence coming back from other areas as to how their performance is going. I know that we meet on a regional level and talk about how things are going, but the strong performance measures need to be evidenced across the board and shared across the board, and sometimes that information sharing hasn't been as effective as it could be. So, then, it's difficult to compare like with like.

[107] **Gareth Bennett:** You were also talking just now—Tim was talking about this—about the ways in which it's difficult with the job market, with people going into jobs and then leaving jobs quickly due to various factors. I suppose one of the things that limits these kinds of programmes like Communities First is that a lot of this stuff is covered by the employment service. So, how can you interact with the employment service when that isn't delivered by local authorities?

[108] **Dr Peppin:** I think that there is an argument that some of those services should be devolved down or managed at a local level so that they can be more integrated. But I think, notwithstanding that, at the local level, the local authorities do have quite good relations with the employment service. Tina, in Caerphilly there is quite close working, isn't there?

[109] **Ms McMahon:** Yes. We do have close working relationships with the DWP. Obviously, the programmes that they deliver—we have to ensure that we don't duplicate the provision that they offer. The Work Programme was particularly problematic, but it really is about local relationships and how you ensure that you complement the delivery that should be coming from central Government. But it is down to local negotiation, really, in relation to that.

[110] **Gareth Bennett:** Thanks.

[111] **John Griffiths:** Could I just return briefly, perhaps, to the phasing out period—the transition and how well it's been managed by Welsh Government and local authorities? You know, the initial announcements, the consultation, the final decision and the transition. I think we heard earlier that there were issues about the timing, for example. What's your overall view of the process

and where we are with it now?

[112] **Ms McMahon:** You can't phase out—and it is a transition period—without being clear about what you're moving into, and I think that's—. It's needing more clarity, I think, around what the legacy is. To repeat, really, what I said earlier, if it is to be locally determined, then that's fine, but we need to know that that is the case so that we are very clear about what we're phasing out from and what we're moving into. Ideally, it should be seamless, so that what we do is very clear from the staff perspective and from the community perspective, and I think at the moment we're not clear about what the legacy is, and I think that's the issue. I think we're clear, but we're not clear whether that's what the Welsh Government are going to agree. That's what making the phasing out difficult.

[113] **John Griffiths:** When you say you're clear, Tina, could you tell us succinctly exactly what that clarity involves? Do you have a document, or is there anything that could be—

[114] **Ms McMahon:** I could do, yes, but as that hasn't actually been formally agreed by cabinet, I couldn't share it yet.

[115] **John Griffiths:** But perhaps in short order, or—? What's the timing for the cabinet consideration?

[116] **Ms McMahon:** I'm going to the policy development meeting next week and then scrutiny the week after.

[117] **John Griffiths:** Right. So, yes, it may be a bit difficult for some of our timings, but, if you could let us have it as soon as it's available, that would be useful, but—.

[118] **Ms McMahon:** I think, in essence, really, I suppose what we're looking at is around co-location and better working, neighbourhood working, and looking at how we utilise the legacy of Communities First from a contact perspective to ensure that we make sure the voice of the community is heard through public sector delivery. That's what we're proposing, but the detail is a little bit more difficult for me to provide.

[119] **John Griffiths:** Yes, sure. Okay. Jenny.

[120] **Jenny Rathbone:** Many people have said to me, 'Well, Communities

First is the glue that holds all the other programmes together'—so, for example, the frequent flyers programme to develop alternative programmes for people who are frequently attending accident and emergency, out of hours, et cetera, where Communities First has had a crucial role in supporting individuals to engage with other, more effective, appropriate services. How confident are you that all the other services that are currently in place are going to be flexible in terms of ensuring that nobody falls between the cracks, or nothing—you know, the sorts of things, the glue that is being provided by Communities First—that other programmes are going to be prepared to change themselves to pick up where appropriate?

[121] **Dr Peppin:** I think ways will have to be found, because those programmes have become dependent on those mechanisms, and their effectiveness will be reduced if they can't put similar arrangements in place. So, part of that legacy discussion is how do we make sure that the good things that have come out of Communities First are preserved. I guess, in the local authorities, those are exactly the sorts of discussions that are going on—'How, with a reduced resource, are we going to be able to make sure that those key linkages that we've got can be sustained, so that glue remains?' Because, obviously, if the glue disappears, the impact of all those individual parts becomes much less.

[122] **Ms McMahon:** I do think that you don't know what you've lost until you've lost it. I think there's an awful lot of Communities First delivery that happens and people aren't actually aware that that is what it is, and that that glue is there. As much as you try to inform, both within your own organisation and across your partner organisations, there is part of me that is concerned that, as I say, you don't know what you've lost until you've lost it.

[123] **Jenny Rathbone:** But community hubs at a local level and public services boards at a strategic level have in their remit bringing things together, and—. So, do you think they have the capacity and the intelligence to do that?

[124] **Dr Peppin:** That would be the test, really, wouldn't it? I think, as Tina said, if you get hubs developed, it's how well can they work together. Will they be able to plug that gap? To use a metaphor, it's an invisible glue, isn't it? Sometimes you lose things that are invisible, and you think that it won't matter, but it comes back and bites you. So, I think it will be very important to make sure that the way systems have worked is understood, and the

people running the schemes will need to sit down together and make sure that those connections are not lost.

[125] **Ms McMahon:** The conversations are taking place at all levels to make sure that people are very aware of where we are, and that's the point of the phasing out and the transition period—to give services enough time to look at alternatives. But we won't know, I suppose, really until it happens how successful that is.

[126] **Mr Davies:** I'd echo that. In terms of some things that we assume may be going, we've tried to fit into other areas, we've tried to have conversations with other providers about picking up some of the provision, but also about maintaining some of the expertise that's available in the area to be able to deliver that provision. Often, at community level, the face that they see come through the door is quite important to them, and losing those faces may impact on delivery across the board in quite a distinctive way.

[127] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[128] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Could I just ask—if you could answer briefly; we haven't got a great deal of time left—in terms of the reconfiguration in 2012, what impact that had in your view, positive or negative?

10:00

[129] **Ms Mahon:** It was mixed, I think. I think it was very positive from the point of view of—. Up until 2012, we weren't monitored at all, although we had locally monitored the programme and we had systems in place, but it wasn't monitored directly by Welsh Government, so we had no actual performance indicators, as such. So, I think, from that point of view, it was very welcomed. I think we wanted to—. We welcomed, I think, a bit more of a direction. I think maybe it went a little bit too far, and we ended up with 102 performance indicators, which, by definition, means that you have no performance indicators. We could select which indicators we used from the framework, which meant that there were very, very different models across Wales.

[130] So, whilst we could demonstrate, within Caerphilly, and did, and had to go to scrutiny to evidence that we had delivered, we were not comparable against other areas in Wales, so it was very difficult to demonstrate that the programme was actually successful. I think the programme has probably

been more successful than it's been able to demonstrate. I think that's the biggest issue. But there were lots of positives and there were also some negatives. I felt that communities maybe felt that it had become too prescriptive. The local determination was lost a little bit in 2012, because it became so prescriptive. There were falls and there were positives in there, and there were negatives, really.

[131] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Gareth.

[132] **Mr Davies:** I'd echo that. In terms of performance measures, it's correct, as I've said. But also the longitudinal study that should run alongside these programmes has never really happened. There's always been a snapshot at different points, but that commitment to long-term monitoring and a long-term evidence base that you build up and then compare like with like over time, that's never really been in place. I think any future programme needs to have that longitudinal study running alongside it.

[133] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. Bethan, other programmes.

[134] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes. One of my main concerns is the fact that Communities for Work, PaCE, and other programmes that are tackling poverty, it's assumed that they would carry on without analysing them, whereas Communities First, obviously, has been minded to draw to an end based on various reasons. I've tried to do some work on Communities for Work, working with different organisations, and they find it very difficult to understand the specific successes and failures of Communities for Work. For example, they can find out if somebody gets into work, but they can't find out if they've stayed there longer than a week, and whether, then, that means that that's a success or not. And much of that money is based on European money, as well.

[135] So, I want to understand, when you say that we need to be transitioning into something, for me, at the moment—and probably the Cabinet Secretary can correct me if I'm wrong—I see him seeing these programmes as the future, potentially, but without really looking at whether they can actually work on their own, devoid of Communities First. So, I was wondering if you had comment on that or whether you think that it's going to be sufficient to be able to survive without, potentially, any other funding coming through or any other substantial funding coming through from Welsh Government.

[136] **Mr Davies:** I think in terms of Communities for Work and the relationship with Communities First, certainly in Torfaen, and I'm sure in other areas as well, it's been hand-in-glove; it's been a very close relationship, where some of the outcomes have been picked up by Communities First and then carried on by Communities for Work. So, the two programmes have worked very closely together.

[137] We see a similar thing happening with the employability programme, but in a slightly different way, because the employability programme doesn't work in the exact same way as Communities First has always worked. There's an intention that you'll manage to keep that marriage of convenience in terms of doing separate things with both programmes, but whether that's possible under the guidance, I'm not sure. It can work, but we're not entirely sure how it's going to work yet.

[138] **Ms Mahon:** I manage both the programmes in Caerphilly. I manage the Communities for Work programme as well. It is possible. It's about how we plan it locally. The employment fund does allow us to fill the gap that has been left or will be left by Communities First. We're quite unique in Caerphilly. I think because they've all sat under one management system, I've made sure that the programmes are integral, so we're now moving towards the new employment grant. Communities First has always delivered to complement Communities for Work, and it's just actually a case of shifting that from one grant fund into another grant fund. So, the employment element of Communities First will continue under the new employment grant, and those are conversations I'm having with Welsh Government. The legacy offers us opportunities to actually address the wider issues. Employment support programmes on their own are never going to support people who are furthest away from the labour market. That's what Communities First did. Communities First supported individuals with those barriers that they have; that enables them to move into the labour market, and that's what I see as some elements of the legacy moving forward, to continue providing that support. In relation to—

[139] **Bethan Jenkins:** With regard to Communities for Work, it's obviously—. From what I understand, it would end—. The current funding ends in 2020. So, if that ends, then obviously it can't complement anything then because the money won't exist anymore, so—.

[140] **Ms McMahon:** No, but we have no guarantees of any of the money after 2020, so—. That includes the legacy and the new employment grant.

So, none of us are very clear what's going to be happening beyond 2020, so we can only plan for the timescales that we're aware of.

[141] **Bethan Jenkins:** And what about the other programmes, like Flying Start, Families First? Obviously, some people are saying that they should change in their nature now, and the Bevan Foundation said they need to be reframed. I don't know what they mean by that, but do you have opinions on whether other antipoverty programmes have to radically change now because of the Communities First programme coming to an end?

[142] **Ms McMahon:** I believe Families First has—they have changed and their guidance is different, and they are picking up. In Caerphilly, anyway, they've picked up a number of the programmes that we run through Communities First, and that's part of the conversations around the transition period that I've been having locally. Families First particularly has been able to pick things up, as has Flying Start—not everything, obviously, but there are elements that they have been able to pick up.

[143] **Bethan Jenkins:** Is that the same?

[144] **Mr Davies:** Yes, and, in terms of the early intervention and prevention strategy in Torfaen, it's going the same way in ensuring that the impact is felt across the board for those programmes, but they've got a single vision for how they deliver.

[145] **John Griffiths:** Could I just ask, in terms of community assets, whether you see any specific risks there due to the changes to phasing out Communities First, and what the impact would be on other programmes if there was a risk to those community assets?

[146] **Ms McMahon:** There is a risk. Yes, there is a risk to community assets. Obviously, we deliver locally. We deliver in locally-based venues, and, as a consequence, they have income through the Communities First programme. So, anything that's withdrawn is going to have an effect on locally-based assets. It could potentially have an effect on partner programmes where the venue is funded through Communities First and a wide range of organisations deliver out of that particular venue. It's part of the work that we're doing in relation to the legacy, to look at those key venues and how we continue to support funding them from alternative mechanisms outside of the public sector—we've been looking at private sector sponsorship and all sorts of other types of mechanisms to make sure that those venues are

managing to continue. It's part of the neighbourhood model that we're looking at, and actually looking at neighbourhood working and co-location. Hopefully, if we can do that we can bring in organisations to ensure the sustainability of local venues. But it is difficult, and I do think it's going to be a problem, yes.

[147] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Well, thanks very much for that, and thank you for your evidence this morning. Tim, did you want to add anything? No. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy in due course. Thank you very much indeed. The committee will take a short break and resume at 10:15.

Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:09 a 10:17.
The meeting adjourned between 10:09 and 10:17.

Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf— Gwersi a Ddysgwyd—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Communities First— Lessons Learnt—Evidence Session 2

[148] **John Griffiths:** Okay, we move then to item 3 and the second session of evidence-giving in relation to our inquiry into poverty in Wales and the lessons learnt from Communities First. I'm very pleased to welcome Dr Eva Elliott, senior lecturer in social sciences at the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods, at the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. Welcome, Eva.

[149] **Dr Elliott:** Thank you.

[150] **John Griffiths:** Perhaps I could begin with an opening question, really, talking about the transition period of Communities First and the approach. What do you think should be prioritised by Welsh Government and local authorities during this transition period of Communities First?

[151] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. So, to preface, I can only comment on the priorities as I see them. There are many people within the university, I should say, that have a lot more expertise—or different expertise to me—on Communities First. I think, for me, one of the problems, as I say in prefacing my comments, has been the pushing down of risk and responsibility down towards communities: perhaps some unrealistic expectations as to what can

be achieved at the local level, and what a place-based and, ultimately, I think, a residents programme can do to reduce poverty. So, what I think should be a priority—one of the priorities—at the moment, is to have a clear idea about what can be achieved by national Government, local government and at community levels.

[152] Also, there needs to be a clear understanding of the structure to support how key actors on these different levels can work together to support thriving local economies. I would say, from some of the work that I've done, that these should be underpinned by the principles of co-production. Now, I know this is an unpopular term with some people. Nonetheless, there has been a lot of academic work about what that might look like, and I think that, with the programme, what needs to happen now, moving into a new kind of approach to poverty, is to establish how this is going to work at different levels. But, of course, there are certain things that need to be done now, by local authorities for instance, and I think the mapping of local community assets is really important, and, when I say that, I don't mean just projects. My interest in particular, and more recently, has been on community-based organisations that have their roots in the communities that they serve and have played quite a big part in delivering Communities First activities, I would say, and making them work. Where they work well, I think they are really important bridges for communities to access different kinds of resources and activities—for instance training, getting other project funding, and so on. But they're also bridges for Government to go into communities as well. So, they're really important assets.

[153] So, I would say that it's not just looking at what projects work, but what those community anchor organisations are that have been working for a long time, very well and can be crucial, I think, for part of the success of any anti-poverty programme. I know that Carl Sargeant mentioned the three Es: early years, employability and empowerment. I get a sense that there are programmes underpinning the first two, but I don't know what empowerment looks like or is being planned, but it seems to me that these organisations have been doing empowerment for quite some time and we need to learn a bit more about what that looks like, where it works well and for whom, under what circumstances.

[154] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for that. We'll turn to Rhianon Passmore who has some issues around staffing.

[155] **Rhianon Passmore:** Thank you. We have had it mentioned previously

that no single anti-poverty strategy is going to stop poverty, according to previous witnesses. I'm not asking you to comment upon that, but, in terms of my line of questioning, which centres around current levels of community trust where Communties First is working well and also the local knowledge that has gone alongside that, how do you feel that that is going to map out through this transitional period within Communities First funding over this next period?

[156] **Dr Elliott:** So, trust and local knowledge. I am very concerned about this at the moment, myself, because it seems to me we're trying to plan where there are shifting sands, and at the moment we are seeing—. We know that there are redundancies being made at the moment. We are losing expertise. That has multiplier effects in the communities, who are losing trust, because the activities and the relationships that they've established and they've welcomed and that have given them confidence and sometimes made changes in people's lives, those are going. People don't know what's happening at the moment. So, I think this is a really important question, if I understand the question properly. I'm not sure what can be done.

[157] I can give you examples of things that are—and I don't know whether this will come later or if it's appropriate to talk about it now—. So, for instance—I'll carry on, then—there's a fantastic men's project in north Merthyr Tydfil. I know that Russell Todd is speaking after this session and he will know about it. He has done fantastic work. Everyone knows how difficult it is to engage men in community-based projects. Nonetheless, this is one out of perhaps two projects that have been immensely successful. It gets new men involved—working-age men who've been not engaged, not in employment, without a lot of skills, but some very intelligent, nonetheless— and they've been doing an amazing number of activities to bring up their skills and bring up their confidence. They look after each other as well, and that's really important to see. Some of them are new fathers as well. They support each other in their fathering, in those projects as well. The community development worker who was leading this project, established it and supports the men, has been served a redundancy notice. I find that particularly tragic, actually. Sorry, I feel quite emotional about it. Sorry.

[158] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, you see that there is a concern in terms of the loss of staff expertise—

[159] **Dr Elliott:** I think there is a loss of staff—

[160] **Rhianon Passmore:** And in terms of legacy projects.

[161] **Dr Elliott:** Yes. I understand, for instance, in north Merthyr, 22 people were served redundancy notices last week, but two and a half new posts have been created, which is very welcome in terms of some of the work that I know has gone well, as well. And I understand that that has happened in other areas as well. I can't comment on the whole of Wales; I don't know. But that is a danger if it happening more widely, and I'm sure that you will have heard from other Assembly Members as well in their own areas where that's been happening. So, I think it's a real problem. So, this thing about mapping assets as well is an urgent job. I can't advise on how you'd do that, but I think in this transition period there is quite an urgency in developing—. It's a very untrustful period, and I think something needs to be done to address that.

[162] **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay. So, in regard to the Government's approach, do you think, in regard to that theme that there seems to be in terms of mapping what's out there in terms of cross-correlation of best practice—and it's been a whole issue from the start of Communities First—would you agree or disagree in terms of the way forward as being more effective and better managed, and a more evidence-based approach in terms of the emphasis around employability, bearing in mind the shrinking purse coming into Wales and the whole new mandate around Brexit, around regional working and the new elements that are actually influencing public policy?

[163] **Dr Elliott:** And I can't comment on all of those. I have no doubt that some of those programmes were evidence based. If you look at some of the work on adverse childhood experiences, for instance, I do have some issues with that programme, but I think there has been a good effort to think about going forward in an evidence-based way. I just think that the way it's been—. It's been done at the wrong time and managed in the wrong way. So, I'm a bit concerned that some of the things that Welsh Government would like to do are going to be difficult, because some of the key resources in order to take those programmes forward may not be there.

[164] **Rhianon Passmore:** Could you extrapolate a little bit more in terms of what you mean by that? What do you think is not going to be there?

[165] **Dr Elliott:** We know that some of the other programmes are going to continue. An example—I feel that I don't know what's happening, and I'm getting the impression, when I ask, that very few people know what's

happening with the children's zones, for instance. We do have people who have been working on the ground that could give knowledge and expertise as to how those might work on the ground. That may not be the case anymore. I think there have been good efforts by Welsh Government to look at the evidence in terms of possible programmes going forward, but I think perhaps the phasing out of Communities First should have been managed alongside that a bit more carefully, so you don't lose the kinds of things that you need to actually build those programmes up. As I say, part of that programme seems to be around empowerment. I'm not sure how that's going to happen, or what's happening about that and where the evidence is coming from that, but what is for sure is that many of the resources for building empowerment programmes have been in place, or at least there could have been a platform for taking things forwards, and they may take a long time to build up.

[166] **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay. One final point—in terms of everything you're stating in terms of current projects on the ground, we know that Communities First has had a mixed response in terms of academics and in terms of studies. There's been talk about the need for a longitudinal study of anti-poverty portfolio programmes moving forward. Would you agree that that's important to be able to actually assess and analyse? One of the biggest issues seems to have been that there is nothing to contrast and assess the successes of Communities First, because many of those impacts have been soft, in terms of how we manage or evaluate whether somebody's had a mental breakdown or not. It's very difficult; we can't see that. We can't see if somebody's been stopped from going to prison or not. We can't manage and effectively evaluate some of these points. So, in terms of a longitudinal study moving forward, in terms of how we manage poverty in Wales, do you think that that's of use to Government?

10:30

[167] **Dr Elliott:** I think that it's absolutely essential, and how you do that longitudinal survey is going to be crucial as well. I think one of the things about—. Anti-poverty interventions are, by their nature, highly complex and do not fit well into a randomised control trial kind of form, for instance, because it's difficult to control. Communities First, as well, was interacting with a number of programmes and, actually, it's difficult to assess causality unless you're looking at the interactions between different things that happen and different programmes that are in place. On my side, I'm a trustee of something called the People's Health Trust. We provide—I think we've

distributed around £80 million throughout the UK on anti-poverty projects, some of which are quite small, but we also lead what's called the Local Conversations programme, which, in a sense, looks a bit like Communities First, in a way. We fund small communities with a significant amount of money, but support as well, to build structures for local people to influence and make change. Now, that's currently being evaluated by the New Economics Foundation, but there are other programmes like that, too, and sometimes they interact with Communities First and other anti-poverty programmes in England and Scotland as well. What I think is necessary is for some of those evaluations to be speaking to each other for a start, and with the national Governments, but also I think there is a need for longitudinal research to see how they interact together.

[168] **John Griffiths:** Eva, that takes us into another section of questioning on performance measurement and monitoring, and I believe Gareth Bennett has some questions.

[169] **Gareth Bennett:** Yes. I was just thinking that a lot of the issue was just covered, but you said that it's a complicated patchwork of different programmes. So, say someone gets a job, we don't know exactly which programme did it. So, you did explain some of the difficulties in actually measuring data. What would be your specific advice if people were going to sit down and say, 'Right, this is how we're going to measure it over the next few years and compare one area with another'? Are there any specifics that that programme of measurement should have, do you think?

[170] **Dr Elliott:** I should be an expert, coming from a university, to answer that question, shouldn't I? I'm a qualitative researcher. I think that is a very complicated question that can't be answered in about five minutes. We have—

[171] **John Griffiths:** Eva, perhaps to give you a bit more to—[*Inaudible.*]— there is a debate as to whether the performance measures during the transition period for Communities First should be determined by local authorities or by Welsh Government on a national level, and whether you perhaps might even have some balance between the two. Would you have a view on that?

[172] **Dr Elliott:** Yes, and I've seen that question, and I think some of my quantitative colleagues at, for instance, WISERD—you gave the long name at the beginning—would be better at answering that. I would have thought

some balance between local and national indicators would be sensible, but how those balance, I think, requires a great deal of informed discussion.

[173] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Gareth, are you content with that?

[174] **Gareth Bennett:** I think we've probably taken the measurement thing as far as we can take it at the moment.

[175] **John Griffiths:** Okay, fine.

[176] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can I just say, though, that it would help me to understand if you could give us some information—a paper—to understand, if you did have suggestions, what they would look like? I know you say you can't do it now, because it's quite a long task, but for me to understand what you think would be good to be measured, if you could do that—if you can't, then fine, but to see what you think would be a good balance between local and national in black and white. At the moment, I feel a lot of it is—

[177] **Dr Elliott:** Fuzzy.

[178] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, fuzzy. But I appreciate if you can't—

[179] **Dr Elliott:** I'm concerned that I might be fuzzy if I answer that know.

[180] **Bethan Jenkins:** That's what I mean—you don't have to do it now, but whether you could write to us.

[181] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. Well, I could, or I could consult with some of my colleagues within WISERD who might have the appropriate expertise. I would urge—we do have fantastic expertise throughout Wales in terms of academic research and expertise on that, and particularly in WISERD in this particular case, I think.

[182] **Rhianon Passmore:** Chair, can we clarify what WISERD means?

[183] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. It's the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods.

[184] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. If we move on, then, Eva, one of the issues around Communities First has been about the place-based approach. So, there has been some criticism on the basis that, obviously,

poverty exists outside the Communities First areas and also needs to be addressed. So, I wonder if you could give the committee your view on whether there is a place, then, for place-based approaches to tackling poverty.

[185] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. A lot of the work that I have done has related to place-based interventions, particularly in relation to health inequalities. So, I suppose I would say that there is a place for place-based interventions. However, I do recognise that it's not just about place and if we looked at poverty, we know that a significant proportion of people who are in poverty do not live in poor places. So, there obviously is a need for not just a place-based approach. However, places mean something to local people—that is how people relate. Deprivation is patterned spatially and we need to understand and address how resources are distributed.

[186] On a kind of economic level—and, again, I'm not an expert here—it seems to me that lots of things could be done in terms of, for instance, local labour agreements. I think there's a lot that could be looked at in terms of local commissioning, perhaps particularly in relation to social care, which I think has been done, but not by me, and supporting small to medium-sized enterprises as well. And a focus on good housing and the creation of good local jobs and training are key examples of anti-poverty measures that I think could work at a local level. I know that the Bevan Foundation have particular, perhaps more coherent, views on the need for those kinds of measures.

[187] In terms of empowerment, I think there really is a strong argument for place-based interventions in terms of anti-poverty—where people can come together and identify where there are common concerns as well as common solutions. There just need to be structures that allow that to happen. So, to a certain extent, I think Communities First was successful in doing that.

[188] As I said, there are other place-based interventions. There's the Big Local in England—these are non-Government place-based interventions, obviously. As I said, there's the People's Health Trust place-based intervention, and there's the Building Communities Trust here in Wales as well, and I think we need to learn from them in terms of what works. I just think there were aspects of the place-based approaches that Communities First took, which placed too much expectation on what that approach could achieve, but certainly, I think a place-based programme will be essential, particularly if empowerment is important, because that's often—there are

other ways, too—where people come together, they relate, they can work together, they can see some of the solutions together. And if you're going to be working and engaging with local people, you need to try and build the structures that will enable that to happen. So, yes, definitely, there's place for place-based approaches to anti-poverty, but they're not the only thing.

[189] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for that. Would you have a view on the management of this process of transition—how well managed it's been by Welsh Government and, indeed, local authorities? So, the initial announcement, the consultation, the final decision and the phasing itself— would you offer the committee a view on that?

[190] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. Well, you can probably imagine that I'm going to say that I have been a bit concerned about the way in which the transition has been managed. Having said that, I know that people working in Communities First have been, in a sense, in a phase of transition for some time. I think everybody on the ground—I heard it many times—was aware that the Communities First programme was coming to an end at some point and that there were many aspects of the programme that weren't working. This has had—. So, year by year, people haven't known whether they'll have a job for the following year. So, there's been that kind of anticipation and concern for some time. And that has had an impact on the ability to plan in itself.

[191] When the announcement was made, and I'm sure you've heard this before, I think the first time that many people—I believe the lead delivery bodies, but certainly cluster managers and their staff—heard about the phasing out of Communities First, and it seemed definite, was from the announcement on the BBC. I think one of my colleagues was training up some Communities First staff at the time, and there was a kind of, 'Have you heard? Have you heard the news?' There was a lot of concern. I had some e-mails from Communities First staff who I have been working with. I had a phone call the day afterwards—I was at an event at the House of Commons with the People's Health Trust—completely concerned and worried, both about himself and other staff, but also about the people they were working with. I think it created an awful lot of upset. I have done some work previously on how the announcement of job closures, usually in relation to plants like steelworks and so on can affect the health and well-being of staff, and the multiplier effects of that and the anticipatory phase. This phase where people know that it's going to happen, but they don't know how it's going to pan out is the worst time in terms of mental health and well-being, and I do know—I don't have numbers, but anecdotally—people were going

off sick and were very distressed.

[192] Of course, after that, I do know that people planned to look for other jobs as, of course, many people did; other people did get jobs—that is all to be expected, and for any person who has a family or needs to be looking after their own jobs, it's quite understandable. So, I think the announcement was unfortunate. I think that could have been managed in a much better way. I think it's been unfortunate too because of other events, such as the calling of elections and things, that I understand that some transition boards are finding it difficult to plan because there's been a great deal of uncertainty about. So, there's been prolonged phases—. Since the announcement there's been quite a lot of uncertainty as to what has been happening. Some of it would just have been out of the control of Welsh Government, to be sure. It's difficult to see—to date, I think, I have to say, it's been quite messy, unfortunately.

[193] **John Griffiths:** Okay. If we move on, then: in terms of different approaches between different local authorities, do you consider that to be a good thing or a bad thing?

[194] **Dr Elliott:** I think it's probably inevitable, because different local authorities work in different ways. And if you look at communities too, and people who work in delivering activities, they work in different ways; different histories; different expertise at a local level—I think it's something that needs to be looked at and managed, and I think we need to learn from what works best. I think the crucial thing is the learning that comes alongside that, really, and how you manage that learning process. But I think it's inevitable. People and communities are not fixed entities; it's just the way it is.

[195] **John Griffiths:** Okay. In terms of learning, if we look at the history of Communities First, pre 2012 and post 2012, and indeed now with the decision to phase it out and the transition, do you think Welsh Government has learnt appropriate lessons along the way?

[196] **Dr Elliott:** Again, I cannot possibly comment on that, and adequately. I know a lot of evaluations have taken place, but I have a colleague, whose name I've passed on to the clerk—a colleague of mine, Sioned Pearce—and it's precisely what she was looking at, both in her PhD work and subsequent academic work. She has given a number of presentations, including to Welsh Government, and I'm sure she'd be prepared to share her intelligence on how

Welsh Government has learnt from its work on anti-poverty, in particular the Communities First programme.

[197] **John Griffiths:** Okay, well I'm sure we can go back to your colleague and see if she could furnish us with, perhaps, a paper. Okay. In terms of that 2012 reconfiguration, then, what do you consider the impacts to have been, both positive and negative?

10:45

[198] **Dr Elliott:** I know that many people found it to be positive, because there was a degree of accountability that perhaps was lacking before, with results-based accountability and so on. So, I think that those accountability structures were felt to be a good thing. From my view, perhaps some of the down sides were that it became too top-down a programme, that the empowerment side of it and the engagement side became rather difficult, I felt, from—. I have to say that I was leading one of the pioneer area programmes as well, under the Fusion programme, and, working with the arts-based kinds of interventions, if you like, with the heritage and cultural industries, we found that the accountability structures actually stifled creativity and, you know, doing really great things. So, I think that was a shame, really, but it's always very difficult to manage that relationship between flexibility and accountability, I know, and I understand it, but I think it went too much towards the structures of monitoring and accountability— too rigid, I felt.

[199] I also felt that the new cluster model did not work in some places. It created unhelpful—. There has always been an issue around boundaries, but it created, perhaps, in some areas—. Putting together communities that historically perhaps saw themselves as very different—they worked in different ways—and perhaps putting them together in clusters didn't work very well, and I think in some cases that I have known a lot of time was on trying to build that trust and trying to build a way of working together, but they did feel like different communities that did have different problems. I can understand the reasoning for the clusters, but I think it did create a number of problems.

[200] **John Griffiths:** Okay. And Rhianon Passmore.

[201] **Rhianon Passmore:** In that regard, because obviously lessons learned are absolutely vital, pre-2012, in terms of a lack, perhaps, potentially, of

prescription, there was much criticism. So, therefore, we introduced the prescriptive approach. So, in terms of that cluster model, which was meant to, in a sense, mend the postcode issue, what model do you think would have been preferable in terms of going to that cluster model?

[202] **Dr Elliott:** Right, right. Oh, that's a difficult one to answer, because all I'm saying is what I didn't think worked. It's more difficult to say what would work, really. I don't know, but maybe—. I don't know, rather—. I think, if you're going to have a place-based model, it has to be on meaningful places, meaningful communities. It's how you make that manageable, because there may be many, many, many—there were many, many, many Communities First partnerships before the 2012 change to a cluster model. Having said that, I think maybe clustering could have been done perhaps in a different way, so it maintained that kind of place-based—meaningful place-based—focus, but there were—. It was about how different place-based Communities First areas perhaps clustered together and worked together, but not as single clusters. That would require a conversation. It's difficult to know what would work and to think about—

[203] **Rhianon Passmore:** But it would be, obviously, in terms of local input, and, majoritively, local authorities, as the delivery bodies, would be well-placed to know which areas would cluster together. So, going back to this theme of a model whereby Welsh Government works on a co-constructive basis with local government, would you say that's very important to be able to cluster effectively if we're going to work around a place-based—?

[204] **Dr Elliott:** I think clustering but in a way that maintains the important place-based aspect of communities themselves.

[205] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, local knowledge.

[206] **Dr Elliott:** Yes. Yes. Yes, because otherwise place becomes actually a bit meaningless, because the places aren't really places that mean anything for anybody—they're administrative clusters.

[207] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[208] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just to clarify, what you're saying is that you want the place-based focus to remain, but, obviously, it's important that we share overarching costs like management, administration, auditing. All those things can be done for several communities, can't they, without wrecking the

place-based focus.

[209] **Dr Elliott**: Yes. Yes, I would say so.

[210] **John Griffiths**: Joyce.

[211] **Joyce Watson**: I understand what you're saying about place-based. And, in terms of clustering, could we not, and I'm sure that it is happening, have clusters of communities of interest? If I was to say young mothers, for example—you mentioned young fathers in your opening—could that not bring a different dimension where there is a shared interest, a shared community, even though they might geographically not sit alongside each other, that could benefit from some understanding of a mutual problem and also mutual resolution?

[212] **Dr Elliott**: That's a really interesting question, and an important one, and I think, you know, I suppose one of the things that was lost from the early versions of Communities First—there was a sense in which there were communities of identity and experience that were not place-based, as well. And certainly I think—. So, I think that's important, but that could also be facilitated by a place-based approach too, because, if the place-based areas are networked properly, certain things emerge. So, you know, single parents—you have single parents everywhere, so it creates different kinds of vehicles and spaces for them to work together so that their issues can be made important and to surface, because the problem then is, if you don't do that, they won't surface and they won't become the priority. But they may do if you create a space for them to actually be able to network together to seek common solutions with Welsh Government as to what should be done.

[213] **Joyce Watson**: Can I ask one further question, then? Have you seen any evidence of that?

[214] **Dr Elliott**: Off the top of my head, I can't think of that, but certainly— I'm thinking of the People's Health Trust now, where there are different issues that come out from the different activities and local conversations that we've published. We can see that there are issues around, for instance, older people and isolation that are there in a number of places, but, you know, we ought to be getting them together. We ought to be saying, 'Look, this is an issue in many different places, there are probably common solutions, how do we bring this stuff together?' So, I would say I can't pinpoint anything at the moment, but I think that's actually a really important question to ask.

[215] **John Griffiths:** Okay. And Janet Finch-Saunders.

[216] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Just a quick question: with local government reform going forward onto a more regional working basis, how do you think that's going to impact on this particular programme?

[217] **Dr Elliott:** I have no idea, and there are all kinds of ways in which we can think of regionalisation as well, with the city deal and everything, but I think a place-based approach to anti-poverty should be able to sit with any kind of regionalisation plans. So, I don't see why they shouldn't, but they should be—you have to think about how that would work within those different kinds of structures. But I wouldn't say that I was an expert or had the expertise to answer that in a way that would be sufficient for you, I think. But I certainly think that a place-based approach anti-poverty programme could still work within those changing structures, and would have to, really. It might even strengthen it; I don't know.

[218] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask: how would you characterise the contribution of Communities First in terms of our knowledge of poverty in Wales, our understanding of poverty in Wales?

[219] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. So, that's a similar question, I would say, to the one about Welsh Government's understanding of the anti-poverty programmes. It's difficult to say. I think there's a lot of knowledge around anti-poverty and how you might address it, but it's fragmented and I think it needs to come together better. I don't know—. The what works in poverty—what's it called now, the centre—? The What Works Centre is based in Cardiff University, headed by the Public Policy Institute for Wales, and I think they would be important contributors to that debate. In fact, that's probably what their role is. So, I think we have the potential, particularly in Wales, when, you know, we're quite small. Our university is over the road to Welsh Government; we should be able to create the fora that enables us to come together to understand how poverty is—what the nature of poverty is in Wales and how we can best address it. We have a great opportunity to that. We should take advantage of the smallness and the spaces we have to do that.

[220] **John Griffiths:** Okay. And Jenny.

[221] **Sian Gwenllian:** Cadeirydd, a **Sian Gwenllian:** Chair, can I come in? allaf i ddod i mewn?

[222] **John Griffiths**: Un funud, Sian. Jenny.

John Griffiths: One moment, Sian. Jenny.

[223] **Sian Gwenllian**: Iawn.

Sian Gwenllian: Okay.

[224] **Jenny Rathbone**: You've given us some excellent examples of place-based programmes that have worked, particularly in capturing communities that are hard to work with, like the men's project in north Merthyr Tydfil and the youth projects with the schools. I just wondered how we capture success of programmes in the light of some of the comments from the Bevan Foundation, who we're seeing next, who say that, in some cases, where somebody gets a job often they'll move out of the area, so the success to the individual has been lost to that area. Equally, if we improve the furniture of a community—you know, regeneration, making homes warmer—often new people will move into the area to benefit from that and others who maybe get into debt are sort of pushed out. How do we ensure that we are able to capture the success of the programme in the light of those constantly moving circumstances?

[225] **Dr Elliott**: That's a very important point and I noted that from the Bevan Foundation report. The dynamic between people and place is really important; it's really important to capture. I've been involved in thinking about the health impact of regeneration on places and that's one of the things—I know that there was a report on a major housing intervention, I think it was somewhere in England, in the south of England, and it looked initially as if the health and well-being of people living in the regenerated area had improved dramatically, but what they hadn't actually calculated is actually a lot of the people who had lived there couldn't afford to live there any longer. So, the evaluation was misleading, and I think it's—. How you do that, I mean, there are—. I'm sure there are examples of how you can actually do that, but it is vitally important, it's really important, to note that the successes of regeneration, particularly if you focus on individuals—if individuals manage to get a job and they move out, that doesn't necessarily mean that it's successful in terms of improving the outcomes for the population in that area. So, it's a really important thing, but, I mean, things like—. So, you have to take—that's certainly something that you have to take into account in evaluations. But, of course, we should be looking at good houses for everyone everywhere anyway and good jobs for everyone everywhere. So, that needs to be thought about too. And, yes, the perverse effects of regeneration are important to note.

[226] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Janet Finch-Saunders.

[227] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. The older people's commissioner has highlighted about the loss of CF projects for older people, such as the Add to Your Life health assessments by Age Cymru in Cardiff, and work undertaken by the WCVA to reduce isolation among older people. We do talk a lot about employment and younger people, but what about the impact on our older generation?

[228] **Dr Elliott:** Yes. Yes, and that is certainly something that I think is—

[229] **Joyce Watson:** [*Inaudible.*]

[230] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Sorry. Sorry, what was that, Joyce?

[231] **John Griffiths:** There's no need for anybody to talk across the table.

[232] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you, Chairman.

[233] **John Griffiths:** Eva, would you answer the question, please?

[234] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. I think that's really important actually, and I think perhaps it's not been a priority for Communities First, in its latest phase. And it's great that we've got the Commissioner for Older People in Wales—I don't know enough about what's going on. We know the evidence shows already how older isolation and loneliness, the health impact of loneliness and isolation, is really important.

11:00

[235] I think, in my report, I gave a few links to films, too, that we've done. And one of the films is about the 3Gs building in north Merthyr Tydfil, and it's just two women talking about, 'I don't know what I'd do without the 3Gs', and talking about all the things that they did. It's a really nice little digital story, and it captures so much in a conversation. And I think those kinds of things, they're difficult to capture, sometimes. I don't know, even, if that was captured in any monitoring reports, because the focus has been on employability, prosperity, perhaps health and well-being. But those are, perhaps, you could say the softer outcomes, but actually they do have hard outcomes, those kinds of things. So, I would be concerned, I think. You

know, the issues around loneliness and isolation are really important, actually, and should be an important part of an anti-poverty programme.

[236] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you for that. And Sian Gwenllian.

[237] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch. Yn dilyn o hynny, felly, mae'r Llywodraeth i'w gweld yn mynd ar ôl y cynllun cyflogadwyedd—yr *employability programme*—fel y prif elfen o'r gwaith trechu tlodi o hyn ymlaen. A ydy'r pwyslais yna yn gywir, i bwysleisio y cynllun cyflogadwyedd, wrth i ni symud ymlaen?

Sian Gwenllian: Thank you. Following on from that, therefore, the Government seems to be pursuing the employability programme as the main element within the tackling poverty work at the moment. Is that emphasis correct, do you think, to emphasise the employability scheme, as we move on?

[238] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. Thank you. That's an important question too. Employability is obviously very important—no-one said it wouldn't be, but not at the exclusion of other things. The availability of good, decent, local jobs, I think, is important too. I know that in the Communities First clusters that I'm aware of, they've done quite a lot around employability, actually. Some of the men, for instance, in the men's group, have gone on to employment. I have to say that the jobs that they've got aren't particularly well paid, and they're not the nicest jobs; they're very proud of the fact that they've got jobs, but there are not many locally.

[239] And we have a problem with in-work poverty, which needs to be addressed. I would say, and I know that Carwyn Jones has committed—so he announced—to a living wage economy over the next five years, meaning the real living wage, not the UK Government's current, what they call, a living wage. I think measures like that are really important. But, there are other things that are important, and I think, if you ignore the stages to people becoming employable—you know, building confidence, those softer things that are recognised as perhaps successes of Communities First, but they're soft outcomes; I think those are things that are important as well. For some people, it's a long journey before becoming employable, and you have to recognise that, and we have to sort of look at that as well. But I would say, I think in-work poverty is certainly something that is crucial to be looking at as well.

[240] **John Griffiths:** Okay. I'm afraid we have to move on at this point. We

have further questions from Bethan Jenkins in relation to other programmes.

[241] **Bethan Jenkins:** If we don't have time, I'm happy to not ask them, but if you want them asked—

[242] **John Griffiths:** No, please ask, yes.

[243] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. It was just in regards to Communities for Work and Flying Start, and other projects. I've seen lots of the statements, and it seems to me that the Cabinet Secretary is looking to them to continue with some of the work that's already being done by Communities First that will not be done in future, potentially. But I have some concerns about the fact that it's very difficult to get data on Communities for Work, for example—if somebody gets a job, whether that's a sustainable job, whether they leave that job next week; do we know if that is an outcome that is a success or not? That's a difficulty in some organisations I've spoken to in accessing that information. So, I want to understand whether you think, for example, that these types of programmes are what should be there if Communities First disappears, or whether we should be looking at in a totally different way, having a blank book on the table and saying, 'Well, let's redraw everything if Communities First is going' as opposed to perhaps tinkering around the edges, which it looks to me like is happening at the moment. I don't know if you have a view.

[244] **Dr Elliott:** Okay. Again, I would hesitate to say that I offer an expert view on this at all, and I don't know a huge amount about those programmes, but I understand, from what I've read from some of the other submissions too, that, in some areas, they've been quite interlinked, the programmes, at the local level. So, I don't know what the impact will be on some of those programmes once Communities First has gone. In terms of how you measure success, and what should count as success, I certainly think that the fact that somebody's just got into a job does not necessarily count as success. We need to consider the kinds of—. If you look, for instance, at well-being, a poor job can have just as poor outcomes on that person's life as if they had been unemployed. So, I think the type of employment that people go into is important. Having said that, I did say that some of the men that found employment through the men's project are absolutely delighted that they have got work, but I am concerned about what that might look like, and I don't think that's satisfactory. I think—

[245] **Bethan Jenkins:** I think it's a lot to do with the fact that people can't

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find out if they leave that job after a week, because it may count on paper then that they've helped them, and that statistic is a positive outcome. But if they don't sustain that position, then nobody actually is aware that that's happened, and that doesn't count as a negative or a positive. And, so—

[246] **Dr Elliott:** You can't tell whether they've come into precarious employment, for instance, going in and out of work, and that's not necessarily a positive outcome, and I would agree with that. And that's a problem with a lot of measurements, anyway, and evaluations, is that they track us so far, but you know very little about the long term. I would also say that it works the other way as well, in that, in some cases, over a fairly short period, it might look like someone has not got a job and it's a non-outcome, if you like. But speaking to some of the cluster managers, when they talk about stories of people who they've helped perhaps many years ago, actually, over a number of years, they have actually been very, very successful, in a way they would have never anticipated, because of the various bits of support they've had on the way. That would not be captured either. So, we do need different ways of capturing, and, I suppose, following those stories of success or failure, or whatever. So, it requires a kind of more long-term view, I would say.

[247] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Could I ask one further question about community assets? Do you have concerns that phasing out Communities First, and the transition period, might impact on community assets, whether they're community centres or whatever, and then the delivery of other programmes that take place from those community assets?

[248] **Dr Elliott:** I do have concerns. I hope I am wrong, but I am pretty sure that, in some cases, those community assets will be lost or harmed in some ways. But I think that it'll be essential for Communities First to work to have a sense of what those are and how you can build on them, because they're important platforms for other pieces of work. If you look at the Forsythia project, for instance—and I'm sure some of you are familiar with the Forsythia Youth Project, again in north Merthyr Tydfil, because I've been doing quite a lot of work there—it took many, many years to build up the trust with young people in that area and now it's one of the most successful youth programmes in Wales. And I believe that they've done quite a lot in presenting evidence to the Welsh Assembly as well. That programme, that youth centre, looks as though—. Well, from what I understand, two and a half posts have been created from that youth team, but it won't be Forsythia, the programme will change, the youth leader will no longer have a job, and I

suspect that it'll take a long time to build a similar kind of platform for work with young people again. But, the thing is, when you've got those assets, those community assets, they can do so many different things. That's the thing. It's not just one thing; it's many things, and it's the trust that they've built up. And that's what takes time. So, I would say that that's quite an urgent thing, actually. I'm not sure how you do that, but it is something that now needs to be a priority.

[249] **John Griffiths:** Okay, well, thank you very much, Eva. You will be sent a transcript of your evidence to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much for giving evidence today.

[250] **Dr Elliott:** Thank you very much. Delighted to be invited. Thank you.

[251] **John Griffiths:** Thank you.

[252] Okay, the committee will break for four minutes, until 11:15, for a quick comfort break.

Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:11 ac 11:16.
The meeting adjourned between 11:11 and 11:16.

Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Cymunedau yn Gyntaf— Gwersi a Ddysgwyd—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3 Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Communities First— Lessons Learnt—Evidence Session 3

[253] **John Griffiths:** Welcome everyone. We move on to our third session today, in taking evidence on Communities First and the lessons to be learnt. Perhaps I could ask you all to introduce yourselves for the record, starting perhaps with Victoria.

[254] **Dr Winckler:** Morning. I'm Victoria Winckler, and I'm director of the Bevan Foundation, which is an independent charitable think tank.

[255] **Ms Nicholl:** I'm Anna Nicholl, director of strategy and sector development at the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, which is the national membership organisation for the third sector in Wales.

[256] **Mr Todd:** Bore da. I'm Russell Todd. I manage the Communities First

support service at WCVA, which is under contract to the Welsh Government, and I've worked in the programme, in different roles, since 2004.

[257] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you all very much for that. Perhaps, then, we could move straight into questions. I will begin by asking, in terms of the transition period and the approach, what local authorities and Welsh Government should prioritise during this transition phase for Communities First. Who would like to begin?

[258] **Dr Winckler:** We aren't involved in the transitional arrangements, so, as I explained to the committee clerk, I don't have a lot to say on the questions about the transitional arrangements. So, if you'll excuse me for sitting out those questions.

[259] **John Griffiths:** Certainly. Anna.

[260] **Ms Nicholl:** We were discussing this, and Russell has much more operational knowledge. But, in a sense, we felt that there needs to be a focus on programmes that can demonstrate they've had a positive impact, and actually, with transition, we're looking at the new priorities of employability areas, and also empowerment. We understand that employability, in particular, is more developed at the moment, but, in a sense, it needs to be sort of transitioning—we need to bear in mind we're transitioning to those activities.

[261] **Mr Todd:** Yes. All I hear from people in the programme, whether that's communities, workforce or partners, is 'Transition to what?' I think the lack of clarity at the minute surely doesn't help in terms of planning. It doesn't help in terms of workforce management and some of those sorts of issues. I think the direction of travel for the programme over the last three or four years, with an increased focus on employability, the advent of things like Communities for Work, the role that Lift has had, that focus on employability and coaching and mentoring people into work and closer to the labour market, is well established now.

[262] So, this transition period has sort of imported that direction of travel into it—the stuff around empowerment, around community organising, around engagement, around what role remains there for health-related interventions, education-related interventions—that I think is still a little bit unclear, and I think that then is militating against some of the planning. Some of the operational planning is happening—people given notice periods,

staff consultations, things like that. It's in house; this programme has gone through that churn in the past. But I think, in terms of setting this up, and setting these communities up for what comes after, I think there's—you know, I'm hearing it a lot: 'Transition to what?' And I think that reflects a lack of clarity and understanding on a lot of people's part.

[263] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[264] **Jenny Rathbone:** I understand that organisations can't keep employing people if the money isn't there. But I think the aspiration is that we're going to capture the best of Communities First and embed it into other programmes. So, there's a real tension here, and I just wondered how we ensure that communities are empowered to still have a say in how the benefits of this programme are taken forward by other organisations.

[265] **Mr Todd:** The programme has had a significant and prominent strand around—we call it 'community involvement', but sometimes the terms can be interchangeable. But I think the declining workforce—I think we're probably at around about half of what we had at its height 18 months ago. The focus on some of that employability-related activity and some of those things carrying on means that I'm not sure, if I'm honest, that communities are involved to the same extent in the same way as they were. So, I don't think we can keep talking about empowering and empowerment and working towards this by asking people at the same time to maybe put some things on hold and 'We'll get back to you and we'll be with you with guidance and programme details in due course'.

[266] **Jenny Rathbone:** Some of this is down to the strength of your partnership with other statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and so I just wondered how good those conversations are in terms of talking about how we collectively are going to take these things forward.

[267] **Mr Todd:** I can't speak across the whole programme, but I think disengagement by some of those organisations—those agencies—is a problem. I think there are some very strong relationships in the programme, as you'd expect, after this length of time, but with an uncertainty about what's happening further down the line there is disengagement. That's what I'm hearing, whether that's from the formal education sector, whether that's from communities and residents themselves, whether that's from third sector organisations—a significant doubt about the sustainability of several of these community hubs and anchor organisations, which we've got something else

to say on in due course, I'm sure. But the legacy fund, I'm hearing, is not necessarily being used for the carrying forward of some of those projects. In some cases it's being used, or intended to be used, to complement things like the employability grant and some of the sort of Communities for Work-related activity, all of which, again, is focused on that employability support: back to work, closer to the labour market.

[268] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, what's your role in ensuring that these things are not lost? I appreciate you don't directly deliver services, but your member organisations do in a lot of cases.

[269] **Ms Nicholl:** I suppose we would be pushing, as WCVA, where staff have those community involvement skills et cetera, that that expertise isn't being drained completely from the programme now, as we go forward. Those are going to be important skills to pick up on, and we would be involved with Russell very much in current discussions, through the Communities First support network, on the direction of travel. But WCVA is also working, then, with its members over the summer on looking more, I suppose, at the resilient communities programme and how that needs to be developed so that we are influencing the direction of travel in the way that you're suggesting. As WCVA we have an important role in voicing our concerns and in shaping the future programme.

[270] **Jenny Rathbone:** Indeed. Well, you're here to speak for other voluntary organisations that have been involved in Communities First, so I'm trying to find out what you think your role is in ensuring that the good things are not just disappearing because of the need to make redundancies.

[271] **Ms Nicholl:** Yes. Do you want to say anything about the work that you're doing with sharing learning and—?

[272] **Mr Todd:** Well, the transition plans have gone. They went in last week. So, we've been helping them to ensure that those are clear and robust enough in the amount of detail that lead delivery bodies are setting out—you know, what their plans are through this transition year. It's very early to say how clear those are, but I think those plans should be setting out what they think works and what they're going to nominate to be continued. But I think a lot of work has already happened to sort of park, if you like—for the want of a better phrase—some of the health and education-related projects. I know that we've done some work with Pembrokeshire, for instance—the Pembrokeshire cluster—around how they've already transitioned their health

interventions around healthy lifestyles, activities, doorstep sport, exercise et cetera with local third sector organisations. This transition year, we've known it's coming for a while. The writing was on the wall for the programme some time ago—let's be perfectly honest about this. So, this work has been happening. The transition hasn't started at the start of the financial year. But I think the key milestone is what is in those plans. A lot of that is talking not just about where things are going, but what they think they need to do to achieve that transition. So, it's around the engagement of PSBs and trying to get public service board recognition and understanding of, 'Well, this works because...', and I think that's a critical factor. It's not just, 'Oh, this works, let's send it somewhere else'. Why does it work? Why is it having the impact it's having? The sort of things that we've always had on the support service as a key tenet of ours is that, within the Communities First workforce, within the areas that it's operating in, you've got a massive amount of expertise and experience—to tap into that and to try to share that. I think the frustration I've got at the moment—. I've got a webinar happening at the moment with people from Blaenau Ffestiniog who left the programme in 2012–13. Well, what's their experience? Things didn't just end, you know? They've actually built up a huge social enterprise portfolio, an asset portfolio, and they're turning over an impressive amount of money. It originated—not solely, but to a certain extent, largely—from the Communities First activity. So, let's try and tap into that. What are the lessons learned so we can do that? The problem we've got is this declining workforce who, with all due respect to them, I can acutely sympathise with. Their attention maybe isn't 100 per cent on what's happening in the next financial year or in a future approach that hasn't been set out yet in enough detail.

[273] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[274] **Sian Gwenllian:** Cyn i ni symud ymlaen, Gadeirydd, rydw i'n meddwl ei bod hi'n bwysig gofyn y cwestiwn ar y pwynt yma—. Rydym ni'n sôn am y tri maes yma—y *three Es* yn Saesneg: *empowerment, employment* ac *early years.* A ydy'r tri panelydd, a dweud y gwir—mae hyn yn berthnasol i Victoria hefyd—a ydych chi'n credu bod y pwyslais a'r ffocws ar y pethau iawn yn y cyfnod trawsnewid yma, ac wrth i ni symud

Sian Gwenllian: Before we move on, Chair, I think it's important to ask the question on this particular point—. We're talking about these three Es: empowerment, employment and early years. This is a question for the three panellists—it's relevant to Victoria as well: do you believe that the emphasis and the focus are on the right things in this transition period, as we move forward? Is it these three particular things that we should be

ymlaen? Ai'r rhain, y tri peth yma, yw   prioritising?
beth   ddylai   fod   yn   cael   y
flaenoriaeth?

[275] **Dr Winckler:** Shall I go first? I think the empowerment, employability and so on are important, but it's not clear why those three have been chosen above others. I think they point to a problem that has been evident in the Communities First approach right from the beginning, which is that they're characteristics that are deemed to be a good thing for deprived communities, but in fact, they're a good thing for everybody. Why would you not want people to be engaged and empowered everywhere? Why only those communities? I think what that points to is a bigger policy gap, I suppose, in terms of what the Welsh Government is doing to reduce poverty and deprivation. So, I'm quite sceptical about the three Es, personally.

[276] **Sian Gwenllian:** So, where do you think the focus should be, then?

[277] **Dr Winckler:** Where do I think the—sorry, the emphasis?

[278] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yes.

[279] **Dr Winckler:** I think the emphasis should still, very firmly, be on reducing poverty. I think that's a combination of improving people's incomes, some of which is through work, but it's also reducing costs. But you will not achieve that in disadvantaged communities unless those interventions are linked with a wider programme to create and spread jobs. Trying to expect people in very small neighbourhoods, some distance from any job opportunities, to get work through whatever measures, I think, is flawed. I think there is still scope for place-based activity, but it has to be within a broader framework, and it has to be delivering activities that are best done at community level, and not everything is necessarily best done at community level.

[280] **Sian Gwenllian:** So, the new economic strategy needs to be focussed on in-work poverty. The links with the new economic strategy that the Welsh Government's putting together at the moment need to be clear and intertwined into the anti-poverty work through improving the low-wage sector, and the in-work poverty has to be part and parcel of that. Is that what you're saying?

[281] **Dr Winckler:** Absolutely. Our argument is that there should be an

approach to economic growth that is about inclusivity. That means that everybody, in all places, benefits and can participate. Poverty doesn't come out of nowhere. Poverty is a result of economic and social processes, and so having an approach where inclusivity or prosperity for all—whatever you want to call it—runs through all aspects, at all spatial scales, is the way forward. So, absolutely, yes, I really, really hope that that economic strategy includes really robust steps to make sure everybody benefits from growth.

11:30

[282] **Sian Gwenllian:** John, can we just quickly have the comments from the other two witnesses?

[283] **John Griffiths:** Yes. I think Anna is coming in now, Sian. Anna.

[284] **Ms Nicholl:** So, from my perspective, I agree with what Victoria's saying there, that if this is an anti-poverty programme, we have to be clear about what contribution this particular programme is making towards the overall goals of tackling poverty or increasing prosperity. That's got to also be through your economic strategy, and it's got to be integrated into Government's activities. Otherwise, we're setting up a kind of relatively small programme to always fail if you think it's going to completely solve poverty in Wales through this sort of programme. But I think, then, that we mustn't lose the importance—. For us, we think that, actually, empowerment does have an important role to play, not least through people getting engaged and involved in their communities, through voluntary action, through coming together to influence things, with third sector activity et cetera. So, that sort of empowerment element is important, and it's got a contribution to make to the wider anti-poverty agenda. But we've just got to be really clear going forward about where that fits and where that contribution is, so that we also manage expectations properly as well.

[285] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny.

[286] **Jenny Rathbone:** The UK is rather a long way from Scandinavia, if that's what we're trying to get to. So, I just want to probe Victoria's comment in her paper about how the programme hasn't achieved significant measurable reductions in poverty and deprivation, either in the Communities First areas, or in Wales as a whole. Well, how could they possibly in the context of a UK Government pursuing austerity policies that were bound to increase poverty? I find it difficult to agree with that particular criticism, and I

just wondered if you could come back on that.

[287] **Dr Winckler:** I think we need to unpick some of those things. Some of the UK Government's policies, particularly on benefits, have reduced families' income and increased poverty. There have been changes in the economy, in the labour market, which you may or may not attribute to the UK Government, but they're to do with the depression of wages and changes in contractual arrangements. I would suggest those are part of a wider shift, not just down to Government. But, then, there are changes in individual circumstances, where people and places can buck the trend. And I think the very fact that we have Communities First shows that the Welsh Government and others believe you can achieve change. And I don't think that is, if you like, throwing up your hands and saying, 'We can't do anything about it.' I think some of the context in which Communities First has been working has made it more difficult. I would accept that, but I think the model of changing individuals' lives and somehow expecting that that translates into an area-wide benefit, when, actually, one of the first things that a lot of people do when their life improves is move out, is the fundamental problem, I think, with Communities First.

[288] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. But you're not going to stop that—you know, somebody will want to move closer to the job that they've managed to hold down et cetera. So, how then can we capture the success or otherwise of the Communities First programme? The Welsh Government says it's not been working, but, in the context of what you were saying about how support for individuals has then possibly led to them moving out, and, equally, improvement in the fabric of the area has then led to new people moving in, we're in danger of comparing apples and pears. How then, in that context, are we able to accurately and fairly assess the success of Communities First?

[289] **Dr Winckler:** Well, that's an interesting question, because there hasn't been an assessment of the impact of Communities First since 2011. So, as to some of the assumptions that are being made about the impact of Communities First at the moment, there is actually no independent evidence about that, which I think is a great shame. You also asked how some of the benefits can be captured. What we suggested in a paper that we published on our website a couple of months ago was that the best Communities First projects should be taken forward as freestanding organisations that receive core funding from Welsh Government for a transition period, and that they do what they do best, which is to be brokers, to engage people, and to advocate for that community and for the individuals. And I think the example

that Russell gave of the project in Blaenau Ffestiniog is a very good example. I don't quite know the mechanism for that, but that shows that there is life after Communities First. I think it will be a challenge to decide which of those organisations justify that funding and which don't, but I think that is the way forward, which is to have those kind of vibrant, almost anchor organisations in the community.

[290] **John Griffiths:** Rhianon.

[291] **Rhianon Passmore:** Thank you. It's a very interesting discussion, actually. In terms of the almost overarching huge portfolio of projects across Wales that previously have come under the Communities First banner, we mentioned at the very beginning clarity, moving forward, and Welsh Government I'm sure would argue that they're clear that there's got to be an employability focus. The purse is less than it was and we have to adhere to that purse and move in a strategic direction whilst attempting to recognise some of the issues that we've had with Communities First. I think no-one is going to argue that that assessment and evaluation is absolutely key to be able to steer the programmes, moving forward. My question, really, is: in terms of that overstuffed suitcase, we can argue, moving to something that's more manageable and more strategic and more focused, would you agree or disagree that the Government's strategic approach, around an economic basis, in terms of producing wealth and prosperity, which is what you mentioned at the beginning, Victoria, is an effective way to move forward, or should we be moving towards a more empowering, engendering programme of different packages that will empower people on a more local level? So, are you interested more in the employability route, or would you be more interested in an empowerment package or portfolio of different projects working in different directions? Is there a view on that? And I have a further question that I'd like to ask in a moment.

[292] **Mr Todd:** My background is a community development background. I've worked in these communities, and supported people to work in these communities over the last few years. And I think that we've talked about the merits of collective action in these communities to affect change, and to alter, and to challenge those power relationships. That sounds all a bit 'up there', but the reality is just getting lots of people into work isn't going to bring about empowered communities. It might be empowering some of those individuals to make better, more informed choices about lifestyle and about relationships, and all that sort of stuff, and give them more income and disposable income to affect some of those choices. But the question—I think

the question came from north Wales about in-work poverty. That's not an empowering situation for people to be in—to be working more and more hours for increasingly less and less pay. Or, as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published not so long ago, after housing costs, increasingly people are below the poverty line, or at risk of falling below the poverty line, from month to month to month. That's not an empowering situation, I don't think.

[293] And so, working on an individual basis, and working along the lines of exclusively—. I don't think that is necessarily where Welsh Government is going, but, certainly, with what's on the table so far with Communities for Work, for Lift, for the employability grant, and what I know about it, it's coaching and mentoring those individuals to get into work. And I think that is fine and there's a place for that, but how do we create those conditions for the third sector organisations, the anchor organisations, to develop, to expand, to even be initiated—all of that social capital that's required to sustain those things and to get those things off the ground.

[294] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, you would tend to side with the empowerment project in terms of working against poverty rather than on the wealth creation?

[295] **Mr Todd:** I don't think they're mutually exclusive. I think what you do is you give space for people to come together, to sort of say, 'This is what we want to achieve in this programme.' And Communities First did some of that in the early years. Now, whether it did enough after getting people together is open to debate, and has been evaluated and debated around these tables endlessly. But I think we have lost sight of that since we've moved into the cluster configuration. So, we're operating over a broader canvas. Economies of scale makes it easier for organisations and agencies and statutory service providers to engage with the programme, and that's fine. And I think that has been a positive and a lesson to be learnt, but it means that we've perhaps lost the neighbourhood and the community element in some clusters, in some cases.

[296] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, you would side with the agenda that empowerment through projects that give confidence around the softer targets and outcomes that have been given to some Communities First projects as outcomes as being very important?

[297] **Mr Todd:** I think it's critical. And I think if you look at something like

the Lift programme, where it talks about job opportunities, it's not just, 'Is someone in work or not?' It's about volunteering. It's about apprenticeships, placements and things like that. And I think those are some of the softer things, or those are the things that bring about some of those softer outcomes in people that are critical.

[298] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, in terms of Welsh Government strategy moving forward, and through this transitional period, obviously we've mentioned staffing earlier and some of the issues that are attached to that in terms of community trust. But, moving on from that, in terms of targeting our focus around employability, is there a view, Victoria or Anna, in terms of whether that is the strategic direction of travel that Government should be focusing upon, or is there room and space within that suitcase for a wider collection of programmes and projects, bearing in mind the reality of the purse strings that are attached to it?

[299] **Dr Winckler:** I think employability is important, but it's like having half the story. Unless you look at where the jobs come from, where the jobs are that people are being supported into, what those jobs are like that people are being supported into, then you're fighting against the wind, in some ways. And what we're interested in is ideas around things like community wealth, and how you can generate and sustain jobs in the community, get income streams into the community. So, it's moving away from the idea that there's something wrong with the people who are in those places, who somehow just need to be given a bit of a poke with a sharp stick and encouraged to look harder for jobs. It's about taking a whole-community approach and thinking, 'Well, where are the jobs?' 'What are these jobs like?' 'Have people got the health and skills, as well as the motivation to look for work?' and addressing those in their entirety. And I think you can only do that within particular small places, up to a point.

[300] **Rhianon Passmore:** So, you would agree that the spatial targeting approach has a place.

[301] **Dr Winckler:** I do agree. I think there is a definite place for place-based approaches, provided that they're within a wider framework, and that all other policies—Welsh Government policies, and local authorities, and health board policies, and college policies—are all working to harness that. At the end of the day, we are talking about small amounts of money for small groups of people, and to expect them to change the world with those tiny budgets and tiny amounts of effort, I think is unrealistic. So, yes, have place-

based approaches to be the catalyst, I suppose.

[302] The difficulty that I have with empowerment is that although it is a principle that we would support very much, I'm not so sure that it's something you can give people. And I think it's very hard to—

[303] **Rhianon Passmore:** But you can provide environments and projects, and support frameworks.

[304] **Dr Winckler:** Yes.

[305] **Rhianon Passmore:** We can all list hundreds of projects that we can see, visually, have empowered people. We can't give a certificate for it, but we know that it's given that person the confidence to go to that job interview because of a programme and an intervention—that's a good. So, we know it exists, and very, very difficult to manage, and sort of tick the box a lot.

11:45

[306] **Dr Winckler:** Yes. And there's another side to that coin as well, which is that, it's all very well empowering people, but you also need to require the institutions to listen to people. So, if people are empowered, okay, are employers giving people interviews, are local authorities listening to the views of residents, et cetera, et cetera?

[307] **Ms Nicholl:** One thing there, I suppose that, again, I definitely feel that empowerment needs to be in there, and strengthening local communities, and it's not just about employability skills, or people then being able to go and access a job that somebody else has put there. It's also about communities coming together and shaping their local economy, and creating jobs through some of the social enterprise activity, et cetera. So, it's about people being involved in shaping their own communities as well. We're doing some work with Carnegie UK Trust around its work on Turnaround Towns, looking at great examples of how people, whether it's from the business perspective, or from the third sector, or a great councillor, really had a major role in regenerating their particular towns, rather than there always being some kind of top-down approach.

[308] **Rhianon Passmore:** And some would argue that, where Communities First has been very successful, that has occurred. And we've mentioned earlier the theme around the longitudinal necessity of studying what has

worked, and making that accessible, and learning those lessons from that. Sorry, Chair.

[309] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask the WCVA? In terms of empowerment or disempowerment, in your evidence, you stated there is a danger that Communities First areas will be less empowered, as a result of fewer community hubs coming about, due to the decisions that have been made. Would you like to add a little to that statement?

[310] **Mr Todd:** Yes. One of the specific remits that I've got as the support service manager this year is to support third sector organisations, those providers, deliverers within the programme who are going to be affected by the decision to phase the programme out. We were tasked with that. I think WCVA, we'd have asked to have that as part of our brief anyway. When the programme was reconfigured from partnerships to clusters in 2012–13, we did something similar. And, in a couple of cases there, some organisations had decided that that was it—they'd given it a good go, and they wanted to wind down—and others were reducing the scale of their operations, so we were helping with some of the HR support, et cetera, et cetera.

[311] I suppose the point is—and I've had about a dozen or so either referred on to me or who've got in touch directly with me in the last six, eight weeks, saying, 'We really are worried that we cannot see out this transitional year, that we won't be around for some empowerment agenda, whatever that might comprise.' And I think it's a real worry on my part that we could be going to communities, notionally speaking as part of some empowerment programme or an agenda, setting up community anchor or hub organisations—most people will tend to recognise the value of them—in areas that had them, had them when Communities First started, but they haven't lasted through Communities First, and we lost some when the programme was reconfigured. That created a whole host of uncertainty, at that point, but at least at that time there was something that was coming, and we might not have known the full detail of that, but some of these organisations I'm sitting down with now have got very high percentage turnovers reliant on CF sources of income. And then, when you add in the Flying Start income that they get, or Families First, or whatever—and I understand that there's a contract, a kind of recommissioning process due at some point this year in a lot of cases—they're looking at the bottom line, and they're worried whether they can sustain themselves. And I think—it comes back to a point that Victoria made—if we recognise the value of these, the intrinsic value of these, because they are local, because they are trusted,

because they are there to help other service providers and agencies with their presence locally, well then, actually, for them to always be following the money and following the contracts and just delivering all of the time, actually is taking them away from performing that anchor role.

[312] And I think we'd all agree at WCVA, and it's a massive amount of people in the Communities First workforce and communities that would probably agree with this as well, to say that, actually, some form of core funding needs to go into these organisations to allow them to continue to exist, because their existence, in and of itself, is of benefit to these communities, and the other apparatus and the programmes that Government, local government and colleges, et cetera, want to develop. And I think we've got a real concern. I can't help all of them, and I will signpost as much as I can to more appropriate, more expert sources of help, but there's a lot of worried anchor community hub organisations—those third sector providers delivering the programme.

[313] On that point, though, Swansea, for instance—and we've shared some of the learning around Swansea's approach this year; not the only one, I'm sure—they've committed 100 per cent for continuation funding through this transition year—. That just means the cuts are happening elsewhere, but that's in return for an exit strategy. So, I think there is some sympathy—I think there's a lot of sympathy towards the problems and the dilemmas that some of these are facing, and there's ways in which they can be mitigated, but there's a lot of uncertainty out there.

[314] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. And Joyce.

[315] **Joyce Watson:** Well, it's again talking a lot about transition, I just heard you say that some of the legacy fund is being used towards the employability. So, having heard that, I suppose my question is whether the legacy fund and the employability grant criteria are clear.

[316] **Mr Todd:** I don't think the employability grant guidance is out. I was off over half term, so I stand corrected if it's come out recently. And I think the legacy fund, as I'm aware, is more discussions, basically, between officials and lead delivery bodies about what their intentions are, in order for any guidance to actually be informed by what people think is needed. So, I think it's a bit of an iterative kind of process, I understand. I'm not aware of any documentation for those two. The only guidance I'm aware of is the transition guidance, and that went out in a draft format for LDBs to have

some comments on, it was knocked into a bit of shape after that, and that's gone out. It covers a lot of operational stuff. It is what it is. It doesn't really set up a huge amount for the vision after this financial year and more broadly, beyond winding down Communities First offices and premises, et cetera, and advice on some of the things around where to get support, et cetera. It's very operation focused, which is not to say it's not necessary; it is what it is.

[317] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. So, it would be also useful to hear from you whether you think—. You talked about clusters, and you've talked about projects, but is there enough information for both those groups, moving forward, let's say, for the next four years?

[318] **Mr Todd:** It's difficult to say. I think, in terms of the employability grant and its focus on getting people closer to the labour market, into work, via a coaching and mentoring methodology, LDBs will no doubt have people in mind who have got the skill sets and the competencies to do that—maybe have a background and have qualifications in it, et cetera. And it's a specific skill set that's required. So that might be something that they're able to prepare for now, in terms of retention of staff, et cetera. And we've had that direction of travel, as I said earlier, in terms of Lift and Communities for Work, et cetera. I don't think there's enough information yet, and clarity, about the broader approaches to 'building resilient communities'; I think that is still required. Certainly, from my point of view on the support service, I find it difficult to answer that sort of question that people are asking me, and sometimes people think I might have some knowledge that they don't, and that's very rarely the case. So, I think there's probably a need for that.

[319] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Could I move on and ask about the legacy period, and how you think measurement should take place throughout that legacy period, how performance should be monitored and measured? Any ideas?

[320] **Mr Todd:** I could go again. I understand the LDBs have got quite a degree of flexibility around how they choose to monitor the performance of whatever activities have been sustained. I think we need to be clear that, with a declining workforce, with projects being parked, because that is the right time for them to be parked—you know, funding rounds, et cetera, with organisations as well, where some of these projects are being mainstreamed by some organisations—that is happening at its own pace, and doesn't necessarily need to be informed by guidance. Some of those things are being parked, and there's little point in necessarily monitoring some of those, or

there aren't the people around to monitor those things. And in some cases, the people, if they're in third sector organisations, need to get on with providing that service, delivering that intervention, and so on.

[321] So, I think the flexibility is probably broadly welcome. I think it reflects the fact that anything that was imposed that was very robust and rigorous would be unsympathetic to the situation on the ground. The availability of previous performance outcomes, frameworks, is helpful. So, if people choose to continue with certain activities, for as long as they possibly can through the financial year, with a view to maybe nominating it for some legacy fund, et cetera, then they've got the means to be able to demonstrate that it is still delivering. Because, clearly, if something is delivering, you need to evidence that, and I think that flexibility is probably welcome. And I've heard—only anecdotally, though—a handful of people saying that they welcome that. But I think anything too robust and too rigorous, I don't think there's necessarily the resource out there to be able to put forward not just the data, but quality data that are actually meaningful as well.

[322] **Ms Nicholl:** Just to pick up, I suppose, not specifically on the legacy period so much, but, in a sense, the need to be really clear about what the goals of the programme are, I suppose, including the legacy period—we need to get clear on that—but also the resilient communities programme, going forward, and to be really clear about that framework of outcomes at the higher level that Government and others are trying to achieve, so that we can understand impact a lot better, going forward. It feels like that's been a real weakness to date.

[323] And, for the WCVA, we've been doing a lot of work on looking at impact measurement for the third sector and shared impact frameworks, to try and get, where it might be third sector, Government and others, looking at where we've got shared outcomes, how we can measure impact against those. That's work that we are going to be doing much more of over the coming year, including with Inspiring Impact. So, that's something that's sort of picking up, I suppose, on where our smaller groups are and making it a contribution towards these overall goals. That's something on which we've got some thinking to share.

[324] **John Griffiths:** Okay. And Jenny.

[325] **Jenny Rathbone:** Wales seems to have a challenge in ensuring that best practice is shared and embedded—that we learn from excellence elsewhere.

You make an argument that there needs to be a learning element within the legacy fund, to ensure that we capture the learning, so that it can be spread around and so that we can understand what was successful about it, why it was successful, and how we could then implement it elsewhere. So, how confident are you that that is going to be listened to, in the context of what Victoria was saying earlier about the importance of having anchor community organisations that have worked well core funded?

[326] **Mr Todd:** I've got a vested interest—I run the bit that's around support, learning and stuff like that. I think we've always—

[327] **Jenny Rathbone:** You're evaluating yourselves, in some sense. If we haven't had any independent evaluation since 2010 or 2011, then, clearly, that is needed. But how are we going to get to where we need to be, quickly, before all these programmes unravel?

[328] **Ms Nicholl:** I think that's the difficulty—sharing that learning, and especially—I mean, it just feels like it hasn't been in place to date as well as it could be, although the work through the Communities First support service has been trying to do some of that sharing learning, but it's not been a systematic process. So, I think, again, for the new programme, I'd like to be really, really clear about what it's trying to achieve. It's important for us to then be clear on what it is that is working or not working, and to build in a proper system, so that we can share that learning, so, if we know something's worked in one community, can it work in another? We can be much better at sharing that good practice. It's not impossible to do, I don't think, so it's building it in right from the beginning.

[329] **Jenny Rathbone:** So what role do PSBs have in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in ensuring that good practice is not lost and embedded?

[330] **Ms Nicholl:** They should be right at the heart of it, with the PSBs in—. I'm not a great expert on PSBs, but my understanding is that—you probably know more than me—but if that is their role, to be promoting the well-being of the area, again being clear what outcomes we're trying to achieve. I think the well-being of future generations Act should support that. And then we need to find better mechanisms of understanding, 'Okay, where is that working, or not', including across sectors, and kind of spreading that learning across Wales as well. I'm not being very clear on that—

[331] **Jenny Rathbone:** Well, PSBs have one voluntary sector representative on them. So, is that sufficient clout to ensure that we are, in fact, reshaping services to meet people's needs?

12:00

[332] **Dr Winckler:** Can I chip in there? I think your question actually points to one of the real dilemmas and challenges. I would argue that the difficulties in most Communities First—in all Communities First areas are the responsibility of all statutory bodies. They're not the responsibility of the poor third sector body that was somehow brought in to put it right. So, the local authority, the health board et cetera, et cetera, et cetera—they bear some responsibility, significant responsibility, for solving those problems. If there is a third sector organisation there, it is the one that makes it happen on the ground in that community and adds the value in terms of the sort of soft stuff, the engagement, empowerment stuff, and knowing and being trusted by the community. But, fundamentally, it's those public sector boards that have the responsibility.

[333] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[334] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Briefly, Rhianon.

[335] **Rhianon Passmore:** Very, very briefly to just pick up on that: in terms of the legacy and the transitional projects moving forward, it was mentioned very early on in the sessions today about the importance of health boards to be able to pick up some of the more varied projects that are being successfully carried out on the ground. So, is there any quick comment in terms of how the health boards need to now engage and work with public service boards, local authorities and other cluster Communities First organisation delivery bodies?

[336] **Dr Winckler:** Can I—while you think, Russell? I think all statutory bodies have a duty to pick up some of the elements of Communities First. For example, we've just finished a piece of work in a community in Torfaen where one of the most valued elements of the Communities First activity was work around mental health. That's great, except it's not clear to me why it needed Communities First to do that. Why wasn't the health board doing it anyway? Or why wasn't the health board doing it in partnership with the third sector organisation in order to be that friendly face? Similarly, while Communities First has done some excellent work in schools—absolutely

superb—why do we need Communities First to do that activity? Why aren't the schools or the local authorities doing it themselves? It may well be that there are some good reasons, but I don't think Communities First should let statutory bodies off the hook. I'm not sure if that answers your question.

[337] **Rhianon Passmore**: No, that's fine.

[338] **John Griffiths**: Okay, that's fine. A couple of questions from me and then I think we'll move on to some questions from Bethan to conclude. Would you have a view on how well-managed by Welsh Government and local authorities the phasing-out process has been and is—so the initial announcement, consultation, the decision, the current transition phase? Do you have any views as to whether the management has been all it should be or not?

[339] **Dr Winckler**: I'll chip in—I'm not contracted to Welsh Government. There has been policy blight over Communities First for a period before the Cabinet Secretary's announcement last autumn. There have been lots of rumours and speculation, and the unwillingness of, I think, the First Minister and other Ministers to confirm that there was a future. So, that has generated a climate of uncertainty, and that uncertainty continued with the Cabinet Secretary's announcement in October because, actually, we didn't have clarity. I think that has been immensely difficult for Communities First, because they've known the axe is there but they haven't quite known when and where it was going to fall. I think, probably, with the benefit of hindsight, in an ideal world you, perhaps, wouldn't do it quite like that. I think the other difficulty is that the Cabinet Secretary's talked about resilient communities, which is an interesting idea, but it's not at all clear what it means and how that will be then delivered on the ground, if at all. So, there's, if you like, a double uncertainty, which I think has just made it immensely difficult for everybody.

[340] **John Griffiths**: Okay, thanks for that. The other question I have is around the reconfiguration in 2012. I know you've touched on it already, but what were the major positives and negatives of that reconfiguration?

[341] **Mr Todd**: Well, it gives a geographical economy of scale. A criticism of the programme from the statutory sector for a long, long time was that it found it difficult to engage at small neighbourhood levels, small units. I remember working with one: there were 700 households, and certainly not all of those households were in poverty. That change, I think, has been an

improvement, and I think the recognition that the boundaries shouldn't—indeed, mustn't—be rigid and fixed and set in stone, and so to have some fuzziness there, which creates tensions on the ground, don't get me wrong, from day to day, week to week, but that helps. I can remember work that people like Dave Adamson were doing, around growth corridors and proximity to town centres. I know of clusters that are named after their proximate town. They're not made up of some sort of string of the composite villages and so on, and it recognises that, actually, it's about working with those transport hubs, town centres, locations of opportunity of jobs, et cetera, and I think that's a benefit.

[342] I think one of the issues has been this increasing focus—Victoria touches on it in her written evidence, and I think we did as well—around the increased focus on the individual, and we've lost the broader community canvas. And there's a paradox there. We worked across a broader community—potentially a broader canvas was available for us to work on, but actually we ended up just focusing more and more on the individual and looking at them, their issues, their problems, what we can do to support them. And there's a time and a place for that. Some of the work that Victoria alludes to in Torfaen would bear that out, but at some point you need to work a little bit more broadly, and I think we lost a little bit of that.

[343] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. And moving on, Bethan.

[344] **Bethan Jenkins**: I just wanted to make a comment on what I'm hearing, first, before I talk about other projects, and I feel, having been here for 10 years, that buzzwords are created such as 'empowerment' and 'resilient communities'—previously it was 'programme bending'—and that we follow a narrative of being lost in these words, as opposed to focusing on what we really need to do, and I would just like to, perhaps—. I don't know whether it's an advice, or have your own—. I sometimes feel that organisations lose what their own agenda is by trying to respond to what the Welsh Government are doing, so if you did have a blank page—. Victoria started off earlier saying, 'Well, we need to pick the best projects.' If you did have a blank page, what would you like to see from the future? Because I struggle, I think, to hear from all of the evidence sessions today, what actually you think would be the answer. I know it won't be the one poverty programme in and of itself, because it hasn't proved to be successful in terms of eradicating poverty so far, as you've said in your evidence. What do you think would be an answer to fitting into, as Sian Gwenllian said earlier, the economic agenda and such, which would lead to us not being here in 10 years' time having this

discussion again?

[345] **Ms Nicholl:** It's perhaps not a very satisfactory answer, but that's something that we are concerned about as well: that we want to get our members' voices and thoughts about this, rather than be completely, 'Wait and see what the Government says should be the next buzzword or whatever.' So, it's not a straight answer now, but in a sense that we're working jointly with another network of voluntary groups, Talwrn, to sort of, initially, bring together some of the evidence that we've got and what we think resilient communities should mean, what we think empowerment should mean and what that might look like in practice. So, we'll be trying to engage with as many of our members and networks over the summer as possible, so that by September we should have something more to share with you—trying to frame those questions from the third sector perspective, basically.

[346] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, will that be like a manifesto to give to the Cabinet Secretary to say, 'Look, this is what we think works, therefore this should be part of the answer for the future for any new anti-poverty programme'?

[347] **Ms Nicholl:** Yes, exactly, that's what we're working to, to develop a clear position with recommendations, and a 'This is what we think, collectively from the third sector, this should look like', although I'm building it up now, so I'm nervous of what it's going to look like. [*Laughter.*] But, in a sense, because if we're not doing that and we're not giving groups, including—we work closely with our colleagues the county voluntary councils, through something called Third Sector Support, who work with—. It's got an overall membership of 14,000 groups, including the very small community groups. If they're not trying to listen to what they're saying, then it's not a very empowering process. So, we want to be on the front foot like that.

[348] **Dr Winckler:** I think we come at it from a slightly different angle. We've been working with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation looking at the evidence of what works, and it's very clear, it's published in this report that came out last November, what we need in terms of the economy is more jobs and better jobs closer to people's homes and help for people to get into work. In terms of the education system, we need to close the attainment gap, better routes into work through apprenticeships and better provision for adult learning etcetera, etcetera. It is not rocket science. I think we make life, in the public policy community, not just Welsh Government—but we make life

difficult for ourselves by getting hung up on words like 'resilience' and 'empowerment'. It's actually quite simple. We need to—. On the key measures of things that make a difference to people's lives, which is about income, housing, health and learning, we need to up the quality and make sure that that applies to everybody and that we close the gaps. And yet, somehow, we seem to invent these things that then make life really hard for ourselves and I don't know why.

[349] **Bethan Jenkins:** I would second that. I was supposed to be asking about the other programmes and I just wanted to ask because I don't think I got it out of the other people who came in: why should it be an assumption that Communities for Work should continue if we're looking at obviously Communities First not carrying on? For other organisations I've been working with it's very hard for them to get data on the success of Communities for Work. I've looked at figures and it helps quite a small number of people in, obviously, Communities First areas currently. If we're going to be scrapping Communities First, do you not think that other anti-poverty programmes should be looked at? You've said 'reframed'; I don't know what that means. How, therefore, should other programmes be responsive or changed? Some of the lessons from Communities First—. If we're not having evaluations of Communities First, then why are other programmes not being evaluated either and why do we not have data on them, too? If they're going to be an answer in the future then we need to know that they are significantly robust also to help those people in those communities.

[350] **Dr Winckler:** Shall I go?

[351] **Mr Todd:** Well, there's an evaluation of Lift and I think if you look at the way Communities for Work is constructed, it's very much informed by the experience of the initial Lift pilot areas—the 10 or 12 of them. But it's heavily predicated on this coaching and mentoring model. What a lot of the people on those programmes—certainly, Lift—would say is that actually doing the community engagement, and finding me those people who I can then coach and mentor, is what Communities First does really, really well. So, I think there probably is an anxiety on the part of people working in Communities for Work because Lift is more or less coming to an end as well about who is going to do that engagement stuff. I think whatever comes next, whatever we dress it up as—

[352] **Bethan Jenkins:** To get them on Communities for Work you mean in the first instance?

[353] **Mr Todd:** Yes, for those interventions, then, if you like. Well, literally, that individual who's to be coached by that mentor, to be trusted and to be recognised as a potential source of support, needs to be brokered locally and Communities First does that. And I think the wealth of evidence—whatever else it's been criticised for—tends to be trusted and it tends to be local and people tend to go, 'Oh, it's that lot up there', sort of thing.

[354] So, I think the danger—and I think it probably is happening within the transition because of the reduction in the workforce—is that maybe some of that engagement is being lost sight of, or isn't, perhaps—what's the word—happening enough and there isn't a big enough effort and concerted effort because of the uncertainty and the churn and the flux. So, some of those programmes are going to struggle to hit targets, perhaps—I don't know. But, actually, it's not their fault that they're not. It's because the critical element that they're built on, and all those programmes were—. Communities First was that fundamental apparatus for them to be attached to and it's disappearing. I think it's key to recognise that Communities First adds value to some of those. We've done some work in Blaenau Gwent going up to the PSB there around the value added that isn't within data, that isn't within results-based accountability and all that sort of stuff. It's around relationships and people in Flying Start saying, for instance, or mental health services saying, 'Without Communities First these people wouldn't come to the support that's available, that's specialist and niche around parenting support, that's around managing alcohol, that's around mental health, etcetera.' I think there is a wealth of experience and evidence out there from those sorts of organisations that will say, 'Communities First: without them, we may not be seeing the people that we can potentially help.' That is a concern.

12:15

[355] **Dr Winckler:** I would say that, if the rationale for winding down Communities First is that this type of place-based intervention doesn't work, then there have to be questions asked about the rationale for the other place-based interventions. The risk is that you actually have a framework in place and that by taking out the one in the middle, as Russell said—by taking out Communities First—you leave the others even more hanging in limbo, I suppose. The problem is knowing what the rationale—what is the future for place-based funding? As I said earlier, I think there is a very important role, but what we have is a kind of measles outbreak of different types of areas

across Wales, with Communities First here and Flying Start not quite fitting the map, and enterprise zones not fitting that map. Aligning all of our place-based efforts seems to me to be very sensible. So, for slightly different reasons to Russell, I think there are potential problems with leaving the other place-based initiatives in place while Communities First winds down.

[356] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Well, thank you very much for your evidence today. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much.

12:16

Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note

[357] **John Griffiths:** Our next item today—item 5—is papers to note. Papers 5 and 5a are notes of visits in relation to Communities First and lessons learnt. Papers 6 and 6a: correspondence with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in relation to Communities First and lessons learnt. Paper 7 is notes of group discussions with tenants in relation to the right-to-buy legislation. Paper 8 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, again in relation to the right-to-buy legislation. Paper 9 is a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in relation, again, to the right-to-buy legislation. Paper 10 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government in relation to human rights in Wales. Paper 11 is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government in relation to reforming local government. Finally, paper 12 is a letter from the Chair of the Petitions Committee in relation to current petitions. Are you happy to note all those papers? Bethan.

[358] **Bethan Jenkins:** On the Petitions Committee, I think it is quite telling that one of the petitions is 'Stop Forsythia Closing'. Is there any way that, if there are ones relating to Communities First, we could potentially link them up in some way, or even take written evidence from them to shape our future inquiries? I think that we can't really miss some of those key themes coming out from that.

[359] **John Griffiths:** There's no reason why we shouldn't. The purpose of the Chair of the Petitions Committee in writing to us is obviously to bring the petitions to our attention, so that those that are relevant to work that we are doing or might want to do can be considered as part of that. So, we can

certainly factor those petitions and the issues around them into this inquiry, where they're relevant, if that is the wish of the committee. Jenny.

[360] **Jenny Rathbone:** I endorse what Bethan is saying. That is the one that stands out. I don't think the others are related to this. Given that we've already heard evidence that it seems to be working well, I'd need to know what the petition actually says. Perhaps we can get the clerks to find out.

[361] **John Griffiths:** So, we will liaise with the clerks of the Petitions Committee for further information on that petition. Everybody happy with that? Okay.

12:19

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(vi) i Wahardd y Cyhoedd o Weddill y Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42(vi) to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Remainder of the Meeting

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(vi).

that the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.

[362] **John Griffiths:** In that case, we move on to item 6, which is a motion to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting. Is everybody content? Okay, we will move into private session.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 12:19
The public part of the meeting ended at 12:19.