



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a
Chymunedau](#)

[The Equality, Local Government and
Communities Committee](#)

29/06/2017

[Agenda'r Cyfarfod](#)
[Meeting Agenda](#)

[Trawsgrifiadau'r Pwyllgor](#)
[Committee Transcripts](#)

Cynnwys Contents

- 5 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 6 Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i
Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Asset-based Approaches to Poverty
Reduction—Evidence Session 1
- 23 Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i
Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Asset-based Approaches to Poverty
Reduction—Evidence Session 2
- 36 Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i
Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Asset-based Approaches to Poverty
Reduction—Evidence Session 3
- 52 Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i
Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Asset-based Approaches to Poverty
Reduction—Evidence Session 4
- 66 Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru: Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i
Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Asset-Based Approaches to Poverty
Reduction—Evidence Session 5
- 82 Papur i’w Nodi
Paper to Note
- 82 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

Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi 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

John Griffiths Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Sian Gwenllian Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Bethan Jenkins Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Jenny Rathbone Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour
Joyce Watson Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Yr Athro / Professor Akwugo Emejulu Victoria Goodban	Athro Cymdeithaseg, Prifysgol Warwick Professor of Sociology, Warwick University Rheolwr Rhaglen y DU (Cymru), Oxfam Cymru UK Programme Manager (Wales), Oxfam Cymru
Trevor Hopkins	Ymgynghorydd Llawrydd, Asset Based Consulting Freelance Consultant, Asset Based Consulting
Jules Horton	Cydlynnydd Rhaglenni Addysg i Gleifion Cymru, Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Aneurin Bevan Education Programmes for Patients Wales Co- ordinator, Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board
Jane Lewis	Rheolwr Clwstwr, Clwstwr Gorllewin Casnewydd Cymunedau yn Gyntaf, Adfywio, Buddsoddi a Thai, Cyngor Dinas Casnewydd Cluster Manager, Communities First Newport West Cluster, Regeneration, Investment and Housing, Newport City Council
Su Mably	Meddyg Ymgynghorol ym Maes Iechyd Cyhoeddus, Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Wales
Anna McVicker	Gweithiwr Bywoliaethau, Canolfan Datblygu Cymunedol De Glan yr Afon Livelihoods Worker, South Riverside Community Development Centre

Andy Milne	Prif Weithredwr, SURF—Rhwydwaith Adfywio yr Alban Chief Executive, SURF—Scotland’s Regeneration Network
Dr Gill Richardson	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Polisi, Ymchwil a Datblygu Rhyngwladol, Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Deputy Director of Policy Research asssssnd International Development, Public Health Wales
Elaine Scale	Cydlynnydd Sir Benfro y Cynllun Cenedlaethol i Atgyfeirio Cleifion i Wneud Ymarfer Corff, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Pembrokeshire National Exercise Referral Scheme Co-ordinator, Welsh Local Government Association
Jeannie Wyatt-Williams	Rheolwr y Cynllun Cenedlaethol i Atgyfeirio Cleifion i Wneud Ymarfer Corff Cymru, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru National Exercise Referral Scheme Manager for Wales, Welsh Local Government Association

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

Chloe Davies	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Megan Jones	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:16.

The meeting began at 09:16.

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

[1] **John Griffiths:** May I welcome everyone to this meeting of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee? The first item on our agenda today, item 1, is introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest. We’ve received apologies from Gareth Bennett, Rhianon Passmore and Janet Finch-Saunders. Are there any declarations of interest? No.

09:17

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru:
Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 1
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales:
Asset-based Approaches to Poverty Reduction—Evidence Session 1**

[2] **John Griffiths:** We'll move straight in, then, to item 2 on our agenda today, which is our one-day inquiry into poverty in Wales in terms of asset-based approaches to poverty reduction. For our first evidence session today, we welcome Victoria Goodban, UK programme manager for Wales for Oxfam Cymru; Anna McVicker, livelihoods worker for the South Riverside Community Development Centre; and Jane Lewis, cluster manager for Communities First Newport West Cluster, regeneration, investment and housing, Newport City Council. So, thank you very much for coming along this morning. I would invite you, then, to make an opening statement of five to 10 minutes, just setting out your experience and approach to these matters.

[3] **Ms Goodban:** Good morning. Hi, everyone. So, from an Oxfam perspective, asset-based approaches are something that we've had a long-running interest in, and, in terms of what we would call the sustainable livelihoods approach, this is something that has grown from our work in international development. So, from the late 1980s and 1990s, a lot of work has gone on to focus on how we can build upon the assets and capabilities of people to provide sustainable and lasting solutions for issues affecting their livelihoods so that we can build on the strengths that are there, and effectively build resilience both in individuals and in communities so that there's a kind of holistic view of the livelihoods of individuals, but also communities, and different things impacting on that. So, yes, basically, it's taking the approach of looking at what people have, rather than what they don't have. So, traditional deficits models, which often look at the gaps, whether that's the lack of a job or mental health issue, or whatever it might be, and instead, looking at the capabilities and assets at people's disposal. So, that approach, giving attention to people's agency in that situation, whilst not ignoring, as well, some of the structural deficits and barriers that exist. So, it's an opportunity to really look, at an individual level, at the holistic experience of people in terms of their personal situation, but also then to link that with the macro level in terms of services or structural economic issues and things so that it can influence the way that policy is

made.

[4] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thank you very much, Victoria. And, Anna.

[5] **Ms McVicker:** My experience of the approach is, obviously, working using it directly, so I'm employed in South Riverside Community Development Centre, down the road, and was part of a three-year Oxfam and south Riverside partnership programme, working using this approach with local people. So, my experience comes from using it in the local area with people, and the focus was on supporting people to make progress towards having a more sustainable livelihood. So, it wasn't necessarily about getting people into employment, although that was obviously an aim and many did actually gain employment, but it was about working with people who are maybe quite far away from services, quite far away from statutory support and maybe quite far away from the job market for various reasons, and working with them in a holistic way. So, looking at what was going on in their life around their housing, around their health, around their childcare issues, and this approach really recognises that all of those things impact together and affect and influence how somebody can then move forward. I think it was a great way of working with people. We worked with lots of different people in the area, we had lots of great outcomes. As I said, they were not all employment outcomes, but people making steps towards training, education and moving closer to the job market. So, that's my experience of using it.

[6] **John Griffiths:** Thank you very much, Anna. And, Jane.

[7] **Ms Lewis:** Again, like Anna, I worked originally for Duffryn Community Link, who were a pilot with Oxfam—one of the nine communities across Wales that piloted this approach—and it was really successful. As a consequence of that, as the Big Lottery Funding was coming to an end, we saw the benefit of that within the Communities First programme and we took that on and have since replicated that approach across Newport within the Communities First clusters. So, for us, again, we've really seen the value of that because it is a person-centred approach—we're dealing with the whole person, or the whole family even. So, you're looking at what a person actually has as a starting point and then building from there to try and progress them in whatever way that might be. For us, we were a little bit constrained because we were operating within the Communities First outcomes framework, so we were looking at what outcomes we could achieve with that, but it goes much wider than that for us.

[8] So, as Anna said, ultimately people have gone into work, but we've seen so much greater improvement and access to other services. So, for me, I think it's very much been bridging the gap between the community and accessing statutory services where people are most marginalised and don't engage with other services. So, a lot of the work we've done has been around schools engaging families to get their children into education, because that has been a priority for us, and building the gap then so that we're getting children into school, we're getting families to access Families First provision and to access social services as well, whereas in the past they've just seen them as, 'They're going to take my children away. We don't want anything to do with them.' It's through that hand-holding approach—. So, it is an intensive approach; it can be both: it can be intensive and non-intensive. It's whatever the needs that individual or family require, really. And the great thing about this approach is that it's flexible, so we're not time bound like some services are. We can be there as long as the person needs, or for just a short, sharp intervention, if you like, to help people just to get them on their way. So, it has that flexibility to be person centred and, to my mind, has worked really, really well.

[9] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thank you very much, Jane, and thank you all for those brief introductory remarks. Okay, Jenny Rathbone has some questions for you.

[10] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you. Good morning. I can see that this sustainable livelihoods approach works well in developing countries where the state is almost absent, or very weak, and not even supplying the basic services that we take for granted in this country. So, I wondered how much this is a reflection on the shrinking of the state in this country—across the UK—that we can no longer rely on public services, and, therefore, we're having to get people to do it for themselves.

[11] **Ms Goodban:** From an Oxfam perspective, again, I would say that our role in this sort of work is certainly to be about evidencing the impact of working in a certain way with people, and then, the idea being that statutory services take that on and see the benefit of it and the impact. I think, obviously, we have austerity and all the rest of it, which means there is a reduction in the other services that people can turn to. But, equally, just the way that those services have been administered up until now, arguably, hasn't been in this person-centred way and hasn't, therefore, had the impact that it maybe could have had. So, that would be our kind of takeaway, I think, from the experience of, particularly in the last four years, the substantial

livelihoods project that we co-ordinated across nine areas in Wales. That was about looking at working with a range of different demographics in different locations, from Caernarfon to Duffryn to south Riverside.

[12] We found the impact of working in this way with people was consistently effective, irrespective of their background or the situations they were facing, from asylum seekers to families with children in the nurture class, for instance, in Duffryn, or people with severe mental and physical ill-health problems up in the Wrexham area—a real range. I think, across the board, as well, obviously, services are limited in what they can offer people, and it often can be a little siloed as well. So, you go to your GP for your physical ill-health or maybe getting mental health stuff, but what the livelihoods workers could do was to think across the piece and think about the different services that actually could be supporting that person when that person was often not in a position to represent themselves or to self-represent to those services. Because there was no competition, in any way—it's all about that working across different sectors and different organisations to really make the links.

[13] Maybe Jane could say a bit more about that, because I know, in Duffryn, that was a key thing. When you've got individuals who are already attached to a number of different services, it's hard to bring them all together and to actually get the outcomes that you need for people when they're particularly complex.

[14] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, that's having a more integrated approach to problem solving. I was taken by what you said, Jane, that you were basically working with people who weren't accessing public services, either because they thought it wasn't going to be a happy outcome if they did, or because they were so far away from either realising themselves or being able to navigate their way through those services. So, I can see that—it's not dissimilar to countries where services are absolutely absent—some individuals don't know how to navigate their way through services.

[15] **Ms Lewis:** For us, that has been a key outcome—getting people to engage with other services. So, we've had to build a stronger relationship and get other services to understand what we're trying to achieve as well, because, very often, it has been, 'Well, you're treading on our toes. Why are you trying to do that? We're here to do that.' But the fact is that people won't engage with those services. They're not going to go knocking on their doors and ask for help. So, we've sort of bridged the gap.

[16] As I said, we work very closely through the schools within the west of Newport, specifically, and so they would come to us. We had the relationship, and we built up a process so that they would come to us and say, 'We've got these children, these families, who we know need help, but they won't answer the door to anybody else.' But the approach that we took, by looking at the whole family, was that we were just a friendly face going to knock the door. We didn't go in flashing badges and saying, 'Oh, we're here from—you know, we're representing this service or that service,' but, 'We're here to help.' And then, it was unpicking their—we call it 'unpicking their backpack', really, just to find out what it is that they need. What have they got so far and what do they actually need? What services can we try and link them in with to give them the support that they need to move on? That has resulted, for us, in people accessing school services, accessing the social services, and we've built that relationship with other agencies as well.

[17] They're all suffering from austerity as well, and, in some areas, their services are being cut and they're really stretched, particularly social services. So, we do feel as though we are sometimes filling the gap there as well, in helping people within the community to access services, but we're holding their hand until they can do that, until there is—. Social services and Families First have got case loads that they work to, and so we are there, holding their hands, until a spot becomes available for them to access those services as well. So, we're keeping people afloat in the communities very much as well.

09:30

[18] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, how would you say this service differs from the traditional model of the temple, the mosque and the church to provide a helping hand to their communities?

[19] **Ms Lewis:** I guess we're there in the community, so it's developing that level of trust. So, I suppose, in some ways, it is similar. It's a face or an organisation that people actually trust and will go to for help, because it's seen as non-threatening. You can go there and, yes, we are very clear that, if there is a need, we will refer to social services, but we'll do that holding your hand. So, we're not just going to say, 'Oh, there's an issue here. We need to refer you on to social services, and there you go.' It will be, 'We're going to do this. We need to do this for this reason. We want to take you with us and we'll go with you to help you and support you through that process as well,

and hopefully come out the other end.’ So, in some ways, I suppose it is similar to that and it’s also about what we have done throughout the Oxfam project, which was train local people to become peer mentors so that they then self-refer as well. So, they also are a recognised person within their community that other people will go to and say, ‘Oh, I’ve got an issue. Where do I go for help?’ So we’ve left that behind as well, to a certain degree, to enable people to know where to signpost to, and other people recognise that they are a point of contact within the community for help.

[20] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. How would you say this differs from what’s labelled a ‘place-based approach’ to tackling poverty, which some people argue was the approach taken by Communities First?

[21] **Ms McVicker:** I think there’s certainly something about working with an individual or a family and spending that time and getting to know that person, and building up that relationship. There’s no doubt about that, and I think some of the outcomes from the three-year project showed that the most change happened and the most progress happened where people had intensive support, meaning that hand-holding stuff, that time spent with them, that ability to do things that maybe other services didn’t. Certainly in Riverside, differently to Newport, I found myself working with lots of people who wouldn’t have maybe met the criteria for statutory services, so, lots of people with quite debilitating mental health problems, but they’re not going to receive support from a community mental health team because the eligibility isn’t right for that service. They were still struggling and that was having a massive effect on their ability to move on in their life. Similarly with housing, I had people with lots of housing and obviously they were accessing statutory services, but they needed something else a bit more—somebody who could do a bit of everything. I think the difference is that most services deliver against one—you know, it’s either employment, or you go here for your mental health and here for your housing. We were able to say, not that we would do all of that—we would obviously signpost, as you said—but we wouldn’t ignore that part. We wouldn’t say, ‘Oh, we don’t do that.’

[22] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, there’s not that much difference, then, between what’s called a place-based approach and sustainable livelihoods.

[23] **Ms Goodban:** There’s no tension between the two. I think the issue is that, obviously, with Communities First, you have that postcode lottery sometimes. You have someone on one side of the street who is eligible and someone on the other who isn’t. That’s something that, luckily, with the

funding we had, we didn't have any of those issues, because it could be open. I think that's something that we would advocate for that, as much as possible, services are open to people who need them, and that the support is open-ended as well, so that it can meet the needs of people when the crises happen, or when the ebbs and flows of life's shocks hit.

[24] **Jenny Rathbone:** Obviously that poses lots of questions about sustainability, but I'll pass on to my colleague Joyce on that one.

[25] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Joyce Watson.

[26] **Joyce Watson:** I want to look at the practical application. You've given us some insight already into the practical application. I suppose the starting question for me is: you said time and time again that you were dealing with people that were far removed from any type of service whatsoever, so the obvious question in my mind is, how did you know who they were if they were so far removed?

[27] **Ms McVicker:** I think for my part, working in South Riverside Community Development Centre, I think the key thing is that when Oxfam are working with partners, they're working with partners who are part of that community. We've been there for a long time. I didn't take referrals in any traditional sense, I got to know people through using the centre. So, they were women who might be coming to the English classes there; they were local people using the centre in other ways; there were lots of word of mouth-type referrals. I did have some referrals from statutory services, but the majority of them came through being in the community, working in the community and knowing people.

[28] Quite often, it would start with somebody wanting some specific support with something—it might be a phone call, it might be a letter or it might be a—and then there would be a sort of opening up of other stuff that was going for that person, 'Oh, you can help me with that. Okay, I didn't know. There's nobody else who could do that with me.' So, that's how it worked in Riverside. It's quite different, maybe, in Newport, is it?

[29] **Ms Lewis:** Yes, in Newport—Duffryn specifically—we worked with the nurture class in the infant school. So, these were children with social, emotional, behavioural issues. We engaged with the parents there very much through the school. I guess it goes back to the adverse childhood experiences that are being talked about at the moment. So, it was about

engaging those parents, and if they weren't engaging with the school, the children had to go to school, or if they weren't engaging with the school, then it was about going to knock on their doors. We had that flexibility. It wasn't just sitting in an office and waiting for people to come to us, it was actually proactively going out, knocking doors and saying, 'This is who we are. Your children aren't in school. Can we help in any way? Is there something going on?' Or, if the children had been in school, perhaps we were having coffee mornings or activity days within the school to engage parents in a very informal way, so it was just saying, 'Come in, see what's going on.' It would be on the school yard, as they were dropping their children off at school in the morning. It would be making that connection with those parents and then building the rapport from there.

[30] That grew, so we were having a weekly group every Monday morning for a while, for example, so that, after a busy weekend, parents could come in, drop their children at school and let off steam, 'This is what's happened on the weekend.' It would just again be full-on. From there, we were able to work with them and build that trust. We ran courses, they went through training—anything, really, that was required, whether that be taking them to a family court or handholding them to the GP for a mental health referral. It could have been anything. It was just working with those parents to access services, initially to make sure that the children were accessing their education and that their welfare was being catered for, but then looking at the family as a bigger picture and working with the whole family to identify what was going on and where we could then help them progress as well.

[31] So, for us, the 'in' has been through the schools, and the schools have bought into it in Newport big time now—across the whole of Newport. I think we've done that through Communities First. With the changes now in Communities First, the schools are crying out to us and saying, because we're withdrawing and we're not working necessarily in schools with anybody under the age of 16 going forward, 'What's going to happen now? Where do we go? Who can we support?' So, we're trying to put measures in place through the transitional period now, in the phasing out of Communities First, to enable that to go on. But, in the longer term, I think that's a critical point that needs to be addressed.

[32] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. You've given us a number of practical results using the approach. Anna, you talked about a legacy, about building peer groups. I think it was you.

[33] **Ms McVicker:** Jane mentioned it, but yes.

[34] **Joyce Watson:** It was Jane. Yet, you've just said now that they're concerned about that perhaps not going forward in your school setting, as an example. So, I suppose the question has to be: if that's not the case, why isn't it the case? Why hasn't that worked?

[35] **Ms Lewis:** I think because there's a lot more work to be done. We've got so many people who are out there who perhaps aren't even accessing support at the moment. I think, through the original programme with Oxfam, we allowed for peer support and peer mentoring training. Going forward, that hasn't been such a strong element, certainly not within our remit, because we've been focusing on trying to access people to be able to help them to move forward. Not everybody is going to be ready to take on that role, so you've got to have the individuals who are ready and willing to be able to take on that role, I think, as well.

[36] **Ms Goodban:** But I'd say—. Sorry, just to add: it's the resource behind that, to enable that to happen, because obviously, as Communities First, you've got a certain set of objectives you're working to, and with the funded projects, the peer mentors were a key element of that, about the sustainability of the work, but it was very localised to the nine areas we were working in, because that was where the resource was. I think it can't be underestimated as well, the time and the investment that that requires. It's not just training people and then leaving them to do things. It's then about mentoring them in their peer support roles, so that you're not just leaving people to do the job of the state, in effect, often, or potentially falling into that gap of being the link with services, which arguably isn't necessarily what they should be doing, but we want to make sure, as much as possible, that people do feel empowered and understand their rights and where they can then support other people to access those services.

[37] **Ms Lewis:** We've actually seen that the people that we trained with the Oxfam project as peer mentors are actually pretty much all now in work. They've moved on that step, so they're in work and are engaged in other activities. So, they've moved on again, and perhaps aren't as accessible now to the community as they once were.

[38] **Joyce Watson:** So, the success in one area leaves exposure in another area, I suppose.

[39] **Ms Lewis:** Yes, that needs to be continued.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** So, obviously we're talking about poverty reduction here. That's really what our inquiry is all about. Have you got examples where this approach, the asset-based approach, has really affected positively the state of poverty that people were in at the start and at the end?

[41] **Ms Lewis:** Yes, I think. We've got lots of practical examples of where that's happened. People have accessed various services; they've been able to access food banks; they've been able to access benefits advice and advice for lots of other different services as well, be they mental health, financial support, and ultimately into employment as well. So, we've got lots of examples and I think that was recorded through the evaluation of the lottery-funded project as well, wasn't it, on the social return?

[42] **Ms McVicker:** Quite often, I think, when people got into employment in Riverside, it was about the quality of that employment, and the—. I worked with quite a few people who had been in employment, and they'd had jobs on and off, but nothing sustainable, if you like, or things hadn't lasted, and that was what we were able to explore, and giving people the time and the support to move towards something that they wanted to do and that they had skills for, and developing those. I guess, in the long term, that's more sustainable. People end up in jobs where they're satisfied and there's progression—decent work, isn't it, I guess?

[43] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Joyce. I think we maybe need to move on, at this stage, to some further questions from Sian Gwenllian.

[44] **Sian Gwenllian:** Nid ydw i'n dal ddim cweit yn deall y gwahaniaeth rhwng y dull rydych chi'n sôn amdano fo a'r dulliau eraill sydd yn cael eu defnyddio o fewn Cymunedau yn Gyntaf ac o fewn Teuluoedd yn Gyntaf. Yn fy ardal i, mae yna broject, Gyda'n Gilydd, sydd yn broject Teuluoedd yn Gyntaf, sydd yn gweithio'n debyg iawn i beth rydych chi'n ei ddweud—hynny yw, nid yw o'n wasanaeth statudol; mae o'n wasanaeth lle mae pobl yn cyfeirio

Sian Gwenllian: I still don't quite understand the difference between the method you're talking about and the other methods that are used within Communities First and Families First. In my area, there is a project called Gyda'n Gilydd, 'Together', which is a Families First project that works in a very similar way to what you're talking about—that is, it's not a statutory service; it's a service where people refer people on, maybe, but they work with

pobl ymlaen, efallai, ond yn gweithio efo'r teulu yn y canol. Beth yw'r gwahaniaeth, felly, rhwng y dull yma—yr *asset based*—a'r dulliau rheini, a'r dulliau, yn wir, mae llawer o weithwyr Cymunedau yn Gyntaf yn eu defnyddio? Hynny yw, maen nhw'n gweithio efo teuluoedd yn y ffordd rydych chi yn sôn, felly beth yw'r gwahaniaeth sylfaenol?

09:45

[45] **Ms Goodban:** I think that the only difference—. I don't know that there is a difference. I think, in some areas, a number of the partners that we've worked with were, or happened to be, Communities First areas too. So, South Riverside Community Development Centre is the cluster manager for BRG in Cardiff—Butetown, Riverside and Grangetown. Up in Sylfaen, Sylfaen were working in the Peblig ward and, again, they were working very closely with the Communities First team and Families First and all the rest of it. So, I think there are elements, certainly in the way that particularly Families First has been devised and is working, that are very much person centred, holistic, looking at the whole family, the whole life course and trying to effectively link people to the services that they need and are most adequate. I think it's just that practice varies quite considerably. So, you'll find pockets of it that are really, really strong, just like with any service, I guess. I'm not in a position to make a judgment about that because I don't know about how Communities First or Families First have been run across the whole of Wales, personally, but I do know that there are some really great examples of where asset-based approaches have been really integrated into where they've worked. So, Glyncoch was another area where we were partnering with—it was Glyncoch Community Regeneration. They very much used this asset-based approach in the way they work with people at community level as well, around organising support for people and engaging with other services.

[46] So, I think there are elements of it that kind of bleed into the way that other things have been working, but it's just about having a more—. I think, from an Oxfam perspective, we'd really like to see it much more a kind of—. You know, there's a real intention there, across the board, that this is something that all services try to take on. So, working in this way with people, that it's not just left to some pockets of good practice here and

there, but that there's that leadership from the top, I suppose, about giving workers and services often the freedom to work in this more specific and tailored way so that you can really meet the needs of people who often have very complex lives and issues and challenges, which might be precluding their progress in other ways.

[47] **Ms Lewis:** Certainly from my experience in Newport, we do work really closely with Families First and social services. So, we attend weekly allocations meetings with the Families First teams to work out who is best placed to work with the families, because, again, we have limited numbers of staff, as do they, and yet there are more people out there than probably we can all cope with as well in terms of referrals that we're getting in. So, it's looking at who is best placed, and very often we will support them together. My experience is that Families First tends to be more time bound, so that they will put in an intervention for a specific period, and we will go beyond that so we can support people for however long they need to have that support. That may be that they—. With Families First, my understanding is they will only be able to work with people who aren't engaging with social services, where we will carry on. So, if they are referred to Families First and are supported by the Families First team but then need to go and be referred on to social services, we will continue that support. So, there is that consistency and that person—. We're not just passing them on to another agency. There is somebody there who is consistent throughout that process as well. I think what Vicky was saying is absolutely right; we need to be looking at a holistic approach across everybody.

[48] **Sian Gwenllian:** Wouldn't it be better, then, to extend the remit of Families First teams, which are establishing, and using best practice from the Families First teams, rather than having a number of different teams of people doing similar work?

[49] **Ms Goodban:** Potentially, although I guess you're excluding people who don't fall into the bracket of having a family, for instance. So, we're often working with individuals—single people—who, because they don't have that dependant or that child in school, they are that bit harder to access or support and know exactly where they fit, and depending on age and all the rest of it. I suppose that would be the only issue with some of the established programmes—that they're already targeting a certain demographic, and so it could then be exclusive.

[50] Just to add as well, I guess the other thing that was different with the

livelihoods project that we ran was that we were able to have this livelihoods budget attached to it. That was a deliberately flexible pot of money, which could be used to address whatever barrier a participant has to progressing. So, it wasn't curtailed to just childcare or training, like a lot of general services might be, but it was really for anything, from a DNA test for somebody who didn't know if a child was theirs, to some work boots for somebody who could then get a job on a building site—so, a real range. But we found that that's really critical, actually, because often it's not very much money, but it's the flexibility of it that enables people to really move on and to get over that hurdle that is actually stopping their progress at that point.

[51] **Ms Lewis:** I think, as well, now that the livelihoods approach is contained within the Communities First programme within Newport City Council, we have less flexibility, because we have to go through the council's procurement process for anything that we want to spend. Whereas with the pilot programmes, because they were through community-based organisations in the main, there was more flexibility, so you could be more reactive in terms of if somebody needed something. We had one family come in and the children weren't accessing school because they were absolutely filled with head lice. So, we were able to just literally get some petty cash, go to the chemist, buy the stuff and treat them that day. I can't do that now—

[52] **Jenny Rathbone:** What stuff?

[53] **Ms Lewis:** The head lice treatment to treat the children.

[54] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, I appreciate that—

[55] **Ms Lewis:** Sorry—

[56] **Jenny Rathbone:** But there's a huge amount of controversy about that. Maybe we'll—[*Inaudible.*]

[57] **Ms Lewis:** Okay, yes, but it was in order to get the children into school. That was stopping the children going to school. So, it was just a quick example of how we could access some funding quickly to be able to get those children back into school, and then work with the parents very quickly.

[58] **Sian Gwenllian:** What would be the disadvantages that you've seen from the assets-based approach? You've talked a lot about how good it is, but what were the disadvantages?

[59] **Ms Goodban:** I guess from the position of procuring services and all the rest of it, maybe it's the open-endedness of the support, and also the individualised nature of it. Because that makes it unpredictable, and so it makes it difficult to plan for, sometimes. But, arguably, we would say that, actually, we created value through this project. So, for every £1 we spent, we were able to demonstrate a social return on investment of £4.43, I think it was. So, that's a mixture of fiscal, economic and social value. So, it's about looking at the wider impacts, not just about saving money right here, right now, but the longer term over-the-life-course stuff. Because if those children aren't then in school for a number of weeks or months or whatever it might be, how's that then going to impact on their ability to succeed later on? So, it's kind of looking at the longer-term impacts of things and thinking of it as a more preventative measure, really.

[60] **Ms McVicker:** Yes, and, quite often, people knowing that they can come back to you at any point in the future. I mean, this was a three-year programme we ran, which felt like a long time. I was meeting people at the start and thinking that, in theory, I could still be working with them in three years' time. But, it didn't often happen like that. People did move on and progress, and often I felt that it was just them knowing that they could come back. I mean, people might come back with small issues and things they wanted a bit of support with, but it was rare to work intensively for that amount of time with somebody. Often, people did move on of their own accord and became more self-sufficient, obviously.

[61] **Ms Goodban:** Often, as well, the sort of people that were accessing the support were people who effectively are costing the state quite a bit of money, whether that's through probation, or through social services, or through going to the GP on a regular basis because they, you know—. So, there's no quick, cheap fix for these issues, but we feel that if you can frontload that and say, actually, if you can really get to the bottom of what the issue is for somebody, then you can effectively then change their life course, and you can really build that resilience in. Whereas if we're constantly kind of reacting, and at crisis point and sticking plasters, then it's really doing them a disservice and not really helping the long-term alleviation of poverty, particularly in certain communities.

[62] **John Griffiths:** If I could just come in at this stage, Sian. You said, I think, Victoria, that it might be advisable and it might be fruitful to extend this approach across Wales, perhaps in a more systematic way. Obviously,

Welsh Government has leadership responsibilities, local government has leadership responsibilities, their individual services, the health boards and others—are you looking to those sorts of players, as it were, to take that leadership role, to look at the experience of an asset-based approach and evaluate whether it perhaps might be used more systematically across Wales? Is that what you would have in mind or—?

[63] **Ms Goodban:** Yes, I think that would be an ambition, and I think, with the advent of the well-being of future generations Act and that kind of more holistic sense of how do we bring everybody in society up and provide a kind of secure social floor for everybody in Welsh society, the onus now is heavily on local authorities and things to think about how they're going to do that. So, there's a real opportunity there, I guess, for the public service boards to lead on some of that stuff, potentially.

[64] **John Griffiths:** Are you aware of any of the public service boards showing an interest in asset-based approaches in taking work forward, or not?

[65] **Ms Goodban:** Not personally. I don't know, Jane, if you've had any—.

[66] **Ms Lewis:** No. Through the Communities First programme, we've been trying to push this approach through across Newport, and we're getting there with that. I wouldn't say we're wholly there yet. We've got more training to do with staff on the ground, and, obviously, with the changes that have been going on, as well, that has been difficult. But I think that's something that we need to look at. The next step is: how does that transpire then into this new well-being of future generations—and through the public service boards?

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

[68] **Jenny Rathbone:** In the context of the well-being of future generations Act, which we all have to be working with, how much do you think your approach and your methodology have changed the way that public services operate in the way you've rubbed up against them? Because, obviously, you mentioned that you meet with Families First. So, have public services changed either their attitude or their approach in any way? Is there anything that you can pinpoint?

[69] **Ms Lewis:** I think some have, certainly, and I've been working closely

in the local area with GP surgeries, because we were looking at social prescribing as another way forward and using the livelihoods approach again for those patients who, perhaps, GPs feel they can't give enough time to. They can deal with their medical, clinical conditions, but there's something else they need—they're referring directly to us. So, going back to your question earlier, that's another source of referral, really, for people, and the people who we see through GP surgeries are people who we wouldn't normally engage with, but, because they've gone to their GP for an issue, they're then referring them on to us, as well. Now, that's just in its infancy, and it's something that we're exploring more, again, with the well-being of future generations and how we could then potentially roll that out across Newport, as well. So, that's something that we'd like to explore in more detail, and I think that that's something that GPs do—. Certainly, I think the health Minister came down to the local surgery in January, and was quite keen to hear about that, as well. But the livelihoods approach is core to that whole ethos, anyway.

[70] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, because I think—just turning to Victoria—in the evaluation that was done by an independent organisation, one of their recommendations is that you've got to strive to continue getting funding because, without it, vulnerable people are left without support. So, that would rather indicate that public services haven't changed, because if the rug is withdrawn from the way in which you're working, are we back to square one, or has there been an impact?

[71] **Ms Goodban:** We would hope not. So, to update on another area that has developed out of it, part of the evaluation of participants was around their experiences of public services. So, that was assessing how they experience things like social services, health or the jobcentre, over the course of the project. A number of issues had arisen around jobcentres and the way that they felt they were treated by the Department for Work and Pensions. That gave us the opportunity, then, to go to the DWP and to say, 'Okay, we're seeing some issues on the ground. Would you be interested in hearing a bit more about this?' Actually, we've had a really open door and that's resulted in a kind of 18-month training project, which we're co-delivering with partners—Anna and Jane. So, we're using some of the case studies and some of the examples from this work to train front-line and managerial staff in DWP across Wales in understanding some of these structural causes of poverty and how that impacts on people over their life course, and then also introducing them to this sustainable livelihoods approach toolkit, and the tools, to see if they're useful for them in the way

that they're working with benefit claimants. We've had the University of Salford do an independent evaluation of that, so we've had an interim report, which is showing really positive signs around staff finding it has helped them to offer more effective customer support and helped to feel more satisfied with their work as well, so, to feel like they're actually having more of an impact on the people that they're seeing. So, it's not just a quick dash—'Have you done your 10 applications this week?' I'm not saying that's what every Jobcentre Plus work coach will do at all, but it's about giving them some practical tools as well to use with people, and they're really seeing the benefits of that. So, that is a way that we are trying to impact on a wider—

10:00

[72] **John Griffiths:** I'm afraid we haven't really got time for much else, Jenny, unless it's a very short, sharp point.

[73] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, can you envisage statutory services actually commissioning work off you to continue this sort of work?

[74] **Ms Goodban:** We're not interested in, I think, becoming a kind of—

[75] **Jenny Rathbone:** Well, I don't mean you, but organisations on the ground. Because prudent healthcare demands that we do what we're qualified to do and no more. So, if the health centre thinks it's helpful to refer people to you, can you envisage the time where they will say, 'Well, we'll give part of our budget to enable you to do that'?

[76] **Ms Lewis:** To be honest, the local health centre that I've been working with have already said, 'We'd like to buy in a service'. So, that is something that we are going to be exploring, but that's only on a very small scale at the moment, obviously, because they've got to put in—it will be a pilot with them, just to see how it goes, but, obviously, within their cluster there are another six GP surgeries as well, potentially 40,000 patients, so it could grow. But it's just building that up.

[77] **Jenny Rathbone:** And in Riverside? Any sign of that?

[78] **Ms McVicker:** I think we worked with—. Like I said earlier, we worked with people maybe who weren't accessing—. A lot of people access their GPs. We didn't go down that route, but we worked with a lot of people who weren't fitting into other statutory services anyway, so we probably had less

impact with statutory services. We engaged quite closely with local community organisations in Riverside.

[79] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay.

[80] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you all very much for coming along and giving evidence today. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thanks very much indeed.

[81] **Ms Goodban:** Thank you.

[82] **Ms Lewis:** Thanks a lot.

[83] **John Griffiths:** We're having a very short two-minute break to establish our video link with the next witness. Okay. Two minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:03 a 10:07.
The meeting adjourned between 10:03 and 10:07.*

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru:
Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 2
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales:
Asset-based Approaches to Poverty Reduction—Evidence Session 2**

[84] **John Griffiths:** Okay, welcome, everybody, back for our second evidence session today looking at our inquiry into poverty in Wales and asset-based approaches. May I welcome Andy Milne, chief executive of SURF, Scotland's regeneration network? Welcome to committee this morning, Andy, and I wonder if I might ask you—

[85] **Mr Milne:** Good morning.

[86] **John Griffiths:** Thank you. And I wonder if I might ask you to make a short opening statement setting out the approach that's been used in Scotland.

[87] **Mr Milne:** Thank you for this opportunity. It's always really useful to discuss poverty and regeneration challenges across different parts of the UK. For those of you who don't know, SURF is Scotland's regeneration forum. We're an independent organisation. We've got about 280 members across all

the different sectors involved in the regeneration of Scotland. Our work is focused on, firstly, networking across those sectors so that people understand more about what each other is doing, and can co-operate better together. And then, on top of that, we can begin to learn what's working well—what kind of connections and collaborations are working well—and then our task is to try and influence national policy and practice.

[88] We work very closely with the Scottish Government and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in Scotland, but it's worth pointing out, I think, that we're independent of them—we're not a part of the Government. Our money comes from our membership fees, from the events that we run, and also from contracts that we run with various partners, including the Scottish Government and others.

[89] So, in Scotland, as with the rest of the UK, there are substantial challenges of poverty and increasing challenges around inequalities, and it's those inequalities that we're mostly concerned with in terms of the disconnection of communities—as individuals, neighbourhoods, places, towns—from where the market centres are already operating relatively well in what is, after all, still a very rich country in the UK. Scotland and Wales are part of the UK, the sixth or the eighth richest country on the planet, depending on whether you believe the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

[90] Post the crash in 2008, the Scottish Government could see that there would be problems coming down the line in terms of economic policy as a result of that banking and property-led crash. And, in 2011, they produced a regeneration statement that put a much greater emphasis on community-led regeneration than had been the case before. Before that point, as with much of the rest of the UK, we were depending on rising land and property values to cull off resources in order to make sporadic investment in regeneration in places that were being left behind by disconnection, by national policy, local circumstances, and deteriorations in infrastructure. So, SURF very much agreed with the wisdom of putting a greater emphasis on community-led regeneration. Indeed, we feel that that has been underestimated in terms of a valuable resource for supporting genuine sustainable regeneration over many decades. We were, however, concerned that perhaps too much responsibility and expectation was going to be placed on already disadvantaged communities to somehow regenerate themselves in the middle of the worst recession anybody had ever lived through. We still have that concern. The Scottish Government has followed through on its commitment to supporting

community-led regeneration, as you probably know, through legislation around right to buy, land legislation, and then followed through with a community empowerment Bill, now an Act, which brings in substantially greater powers for communities who take ownership of assets and resources in their local area to begin to develop them in a way that will help regenerate the place from within. So, we are very supportive of that. We're very involved in promoting that work, in identifying the market links in that work, so that people can learn from what's happening elsewhere.

[91] I think what we're most concerned with is how that locally based, asset-based, regeneration—*[Inaudible.]*—with respect to the culture of places, the history of places, the civic structure of places, the knowledge initiatives in those communities, how those things interact and work at that horizontal, local level, can be most intelligently and effectively connected to where the big resources are, where the big decisions are on economic policy, on public service improvement. So, it's that connection from the local to the national that is important. So, for us, asset-based regeneration in Scotland is a really useful tool for communities to develop greater cohesion, participation, to develop local initiatives, social enterprises, development trusts, a whole range of locally managed organisations. Historical and cultural assets play a very important part at the start of the process. The process can grow into quite significant levels of ownership and participation from communities, and can make quite significant economic impacts. However—however—our view is that that will not, and will never be, enough on its own unless it's connected into a broader framework of policies that are genuinely connected, ensuring that opportunities are available for all the different parts of the community, geographically and demographically.

[92] So, that's the main body of our work, but I'll just put on the table that I think there are some very well-meant, but I think potentially naïve, views about what the possibilities are for asset-based regeneration in overcoming poverty. As I say, I think it's an important tool, but it's not the whole answer. The much bigger powers that are affecting international and national economic frameworks are the ones that are having the greatest impact on the poorest communities.

[93] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Andy. Well, thanks very much for that opening statement. I will now invite committee members to ask some questions, starting with Jenny Rathbone.

[94] **Jenny Rathbone:** Hello. Good morning. I wondered if you could just—

[95] **Mr Milne:** Morning, Jenny.

[96] **Jenny Rathbone:** —clarify how an asset-based approach is different to community-led regeneration. Is there some sort of methodology that your member organisations identify as being distinct from the general need to rely on communities to help their own regeneration?

[97] **Mr Milne:** Thank you. I think that community-led regeneration seems to me to be a broader term, and an aspirational term. I could not point to many instances in Scotland where there is genuinely community-led regeneration. I can point to a lot where communities are involved in discussions around regeneration. I can point to individual projects that are genuinely community owned, which operate within a broader framework of efforts to regenerate a place or a town or village or a city indeed—whatever. Asset-based regeneration seems to me to be, in most people's mind, Jenny, about the ownership of physical assets—it's about communities taking over parks, disused buildings and about taking over service structures in places as well, based on the distinctive needs and culture and history of that particular place so that that's about the community taking ownership of processes. Whereas community-led regeneration is an aspirational position of the Scottish Government, and my own view is that we have communities involved in regeneration. Sometimes we have communities inspiring regeneration by their particular knowledge and existing initiatives. But I think there are relatively few examples of genuinely community-led regeneration.

10:15

[98] **Jenny Rathbone:** That's a useful clarification. So, how do you think that an asset-based approach differs from the charitable approach to tackling poverty and misery that's been with us for hundreds of years?

[99] **Mr Milne:** Perhaps it would have been useful for me to say earlier on that I think that asset-based regeneration came out, as I understand it, of some work in Chicago in the USA initially, where people were beginning to become fatigued with being described as basically 'hopeless cases' in terms of communities that are constantly absorbing resources and who are becoming seen more and more as a drag on the rest of society. Asset-based regeneration was an effort to say, 'Well, actually, there are good things in our communities: there are social bonds, there are networks. This used to be a steel-making town and we still have the history of that and we still have

some of the physical legacy of that. There are things here: there are rivers here and a physical environment here, which we think are valuable, environmental assets and physical assets that we value that makes this a good place to be.'

[100] That's a way of turning around the way in which the people in that particular area look at the situation that they are in and look again at the possibilities that exist for them to build on what they have themselves and to make those connections to the wider framework. It also allows people in those areas to become more genuine partners in regeneration so that they are seen by politicians and by decision makers to be bringing something to the table. So, they are not simply recipients of well-meant largesse, such as it is, from central points of power. So, they become that—. I think, as a psychological shift, that's quite significant. I think people can then, and communities can then gather strength and confidence and build networks and feel a sense of genuine participation in the decision-making process rather than simply lobbying for more resources or different kinds of decisions.

[101] **Jenny Rathbone:** In order to be successful, how essential is it that other services, public and private, are themselves changing and responding in a more respectful way to people who've been dealt the bad cards in life?

[102] **Mr Milne:** Yes, and that is my main point here—that unless an effort at supporting asset-based regeneration, within what are perceived to be disadvantaged communities, is intelligently connected into a climate or a structured climate of supportive, broader policies and supportive broader interaction of other agencies, then asset-based regeneration, particularly in disadvantaged communities, will not be successful on its own and will risk looking like a dumping of liabilities and an abdication of responsibility. I think, within this debate, Jenny, there's a real opportunity to shift the perception of what we call 'disadvantaged communities' and what they actually are. They are functional parts—even in their disadvantage—of a larger whole. The larger whole—the successful parts of our cities and countries—can only exist because we have these other disadvantaged places; they are part of the same economic framework. So, if we can shift the thinking to see them as part of the whole, rather than some kind of unhelpful appendage that we have to look after and invest in from time to time, then we get closer towards a whole-system approach that raises the level of participation, understanding and empathy across the whole system. If we don't have that, then we have accelerating levels of disconnection and

inequality, and that breeds, as we know, misunderstanding, suspicion and antagonism, and we end up talking about shirkers and skivers, instead of fellow citizens.

[103] **John Griffiths:** Thank you very much. Just before we go on, I think Sian Gwenllian has a question on these points. Sian.

[104] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yes, I'm just interested in what you said at the end there now, really, about the systematic need for working in a systematic way. I'm interested in the 280 organisations—

[105] **Mr Milne:** Members, yes.

[106] **Sian Gwenllian:** The members of your group—do they all use similar methods? Are they all asset-based approaches that they use? Is there a systematic approach through Scotland?

[107] **Mr Milne:** No, no there's not, Sian. That would be wonderful and we'd be doing great work if that was the case. Most of my work—and it's a very small team I have; we have five members of staff. We're a relatively small organisation, but our independence, both politically and financially, allows us to raise some issues that some of our members find difficult. As I said, the first piece of our work is in networking and in raising debate.

[108] Not all of our members would agree with my articulation and my analysis of the situation. But they're prepared to be involved in the debate. We have people from the private sector—various forms of private sector—involved, and different local authorities. In Scotland, as I'm sure it is in Wales—through political leadership, through philosophy, through personalities—we have different views of what the best way ahead is. I gave up a long time ago on imagining that we could line all of the ducks up in a row and we could all move forward at the same time. What I think we can do is we can point to where things seem to be connecting best, where the examples seem to be working, and we can foster those examples and then show, by example, that other people can run their business more effectively, they can have better returns, they can have more productive staff, they can have better outcomes, based on higher levels of co-operation. I think we're finding some good evidence for that. But I do respect that other individuals, other organisations, have different perspectives and they have different experiences. In the first place, we are interested in understanding those perspectives and experiences and bringing them in for further debate.

[109] **Sian Gwenllian:** Is there much duplication in Scotland amongst the agencies? Have you got different teams doing similar work with the same families?

[110] **Mr Milne:** Yes, I think you would find that anywhere, wouldn't you? Colleagues from England recently came to Scotland and said, 'It's great for you up here—you've only got five or six million people, and you can get all the important people you want in one room and you can all move together.' But it's a bit like a family wedding, isn't it? You get all your guests together and there are always those who squabble with each other, and there are always those who disagree with each other, as well as those who get on well.

[111] We have some examples of duplication, as we'd expect. We have examples of people protecting their particular turf, protecting their budgets. We have people who are antagonistic towards each other. But what we're trying to do is to try and open some of that up to try and look at that in a constructive way and to try and persuade, where we can, that there are better ways of doing things and that—to keep a focus, Sian, on what it is we're all trying to achieve here, and what are the bottom lines for individual partners and what is it that we can share in terms of shared outcomes?

[112] **John Griffiths:** Bethan—a related point?

[113] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, just on this, do you think that's why, potentially, some organisations are reluctant to, perhaps, be a critical friend of Government—because they rely quite a lot on grants from the Government, and so, if a practice did need to change approach because of the fact that it wasn't working, they would be reluctant to say so because that may mean that in future they may not get the finances that they currently have?

[114] **Mr Milne:** Yes, I think there's no doubt about that. That's largely how the world works. But I think that's where an asset-based approach for communities definitely helps. We can point to significant examples where communities now have very substantial resources ongoing—*[Interruption.]*

[115] **Bethan Jenkins:** I hope he's not carrying on oblivious.

[116] **Jenny Rathbone:** Perhaps we could just have sound. It is helpful to see him but the sound may be better if we lose the vision—*[Inaudible.]*

[117] **Bethan Jenkins:** Do you want to go private until we sort it?

[118] **John Griffiths:** I think we better had, hadn't we? We'd better pause for a hopefully short interval.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:25 a 10:26.
The meeting adjourned between 10:25 and 10:26.*

[119] **Mr Milne:** I'm sorry about that—my daughter phoned me there. It's very unhelpful of her, I apologise.

[120] **John Griffiths:** Okay—

[121] **Mr Milne:** We were talking, just remind me, about duplication and we were then talking about the impact of the relationship between individual projects from the Government and people having to say that things are going well. Yes, I think that's a significant challenge. I was going on to say that, however, in asset-based regeneration, there are examples of communities that have been successful in getting hold of assets and processes that bring them independent income streams. It's very interesting, the way in which that shifts the relationship. In quite remote parts of Scotland, up around Orkney and elsewhere, there are very small communities there now that have got such significant income—they're building their own houses, they are building their own community facilities. We haven't quite touched on that. I think there's a difference in the setting between—certainly for us in Scotland—that more remote, rural setting, where people (a) feel further from the centre of power and so they have to do things for themselves anyway, and (b) have a historically different relationship to the land and their role in it. In the very dense central belt of Scotland, which, historically, has been de-industrialised and in which local authorities have played a very powerful role for the last 60 years or so, communities are having to rediscover the possibilities of independent action. Asset-based regeneration—thinking about what assets they have and developing them—is a route towards then rediscovering that independence and recalibrating the relationship with the local authorities and with national Government. I don't know if that answered the question, but it's the best I can do after being disconnected.

[122] **Bethan Jenkins:** It's fine. I just wanted to go on and say: it's interesting you say that they're building their own communities and effectively they don't need the Government support. Do you see that there's a—?

[123] **Mr Milne:** No, I don't.

[124] **Bethan Jenkins:** Because what I was going to ask was: because they're building these communities, do you think that even though the community in that remote area could be strong, they would then feel even more isolated from the central Government because they've built this for themselves in this sort of bubble, but then the connections with, say, the central power play is something that is not there anymore, or do they still need that central support?

[125] **Mr Milne:** I think that's a very good point. I shouldn't have misled you in that way. I think for any asset-based approach to work successfully for communities, it has to be within a framework of good-quality public services, decent infrastructure in terms of transport, sensible legislation in terms of land ownership, et cetera. I think what we're talking about with asset-based ownership, as I was trying to say earlier, is just a recalibrating of the power balance between individual communities, the local authority and the national Government. In some cases—in many cases, in Scotland as I'm sure elsewhere, communities have come to rely completely on external support when their own way of sustaining themselves, whether it's through coal production, fishing or cloth making, historically—whatever it was—has gone. When that has gone, when that sense of cohesion, as well as economic well-being, has gone from a place, then they become dependent on welfare systems and on other kinds of support from national Government. In Scotland, historically, local authorities played an absolutely vital role in keeping people's heads above water and providing a range of services that enabled people to sustain themselves, their families and communities. However, it's much, much more difficult for those local authorities to keep doing that now as demands rise and as the international economic picture changes in a way that makes it more difficult.

10:30

[126] We know that most—two thirds, or more than two thirds—of children now living in poverty live in households where somebody works. So, there's something wrong with the economic system that we're operating in. Asset-based regeneration is a way of helping communities to rediscover and relook at what the possibilities are for their places, and how those places might then reconnect to other towns, other cities and other economic frameworks across the country. Some of that will work and some of that won't work, but I think it's a very interesting and useful tool for helping communities to reconsider

their own independence and reconsider their own future in that broader context. But, as you say, the broader context in the provision of good-quality services within a relatively benign economic framework is a prerequisite for any of this working.

[127] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Joyce Watson.

[128] **Joyce Watson:** I'm interested to know how you look at a community. All communities are not homogenous groups, are they?

[129] **Mr Milne:** No.

[130] **Joyce Watson:** So, first of all, you have to resolve the conflict that will inevitably exist within those communities that are somehow disconnected from others, and work out the equality that must come through that process so that you don't leave a disconnected group within that community behind. So, how do you approach that in this way?

[131] **Mr Milne:** That's another very important point. I referred to some benign naivety by policy makers earlier on, and there's a significant danger of talking about communities as if communities themselves are somehow naturally harmonious and naturally mutually supportive—this is, of course, not the case. There are different parts of communities that fall out with each other and there are tensions that can be exacerbated by external circumstances. So, you're absolutely right.

[132] We support the work of others attempting to do asset-based regeneration generally, but for the last three or four years, we've been doing some more hands-on work in some specific places in Scotland, which we're calling Alliance for Action places, in which we at SURF are making interventions in particular places and are trying to, first of all, go in and from our own existing knowledge connect up different parts of the communities. Your point is correct: a lot of that initial work is, frankly, diplomatic work—it's getting people to start speaking to each other again through us as an external body. And it's—I almost said 'exhausting'—it's very hard work, sometimes, with individuals who are set in adversarial positions.

[133] So, what we do is we say that there is an opportunity here. There are national organisations that tell us at SURF that they have significant resources to invest in disadvantaged areas. And if there is a specific area that we're talking about and we're involved in, if they can get their act together in

some way, then we will take some responsibility for ensuring that additional resource will flow into that area. So, what we do is we try to get broad agreement across an alliance of organisations. We use the word 'alliance' because it's not a fixed framework; it has to be willing partners. We get them to agree three areas of thematic priority—no more than three—and we settle on those as the main areas of activity that we're going to look at. We then seek to promote higher co-operation at a local level and, crucially, then, connect that up to where some of the bigger resources are, through the Big Lottery Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, NHS Health Scotland, Creative Scotland—those and other organisations. If we can get some small victories and, in some places, if we can get some small investments in, we can then use that as a basis for building higher-level collaboration. But your fundamental point is correct. There will always be the danger of broad majorities across communities, excluding particular minorities.

[134] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask you, Andy, whether there are any elements of an asset-based approach in Scotland that haven't worked particularly well that you would highlight?

[135] **Mr Milne:** Yes. There have been attempts by communities to take on assets that they have, in some cases, essentially found to be too big and onerous a responsibility. The Scottish Government invests in building community capacity and there are other organisations—charitable organisations—who make similar investments in order to try and build skills and networks in what are called disadvantaged communities. But that goes back to my original worry about this process—that we end up relying on really quite a small number of individuals who have got other things going on in their lives, other pressures in their lives. So, yes, there are examples where communities have become overstretched and they've had to relinquish the asset that they've been working on, and the result of that has been quite damaging for those individuals and damaging for the model of asset-based regeneration over the piece. But, I suppose, to some degree that kind of community enterprise is likely to have the same kind of difficulties as any kind of private sector enterprise. Some will work, some will not work. That does not mean that the model itself is a whole failure. What we need to ensure, though, is that enough support goes in to those individuals who are willing to participate. Again, my worry around that is that what we do see in Scotland—and I assume this happens elsewhere—is that communities that are already quite well resourced, quite confident, quite well networked, are the ones who can take best advantage of asset-based regeneration. The communities that are poorest, which are under greatest strain, where people

are mostly concerned with paying their rent and, frankly, feeding their children—it's much, much more difficult for them to take on large-scale responsibilities, and I do worry about the model being pushed towards them, sometimes by local authorities who are frankly more interested in dumping liabilities than transferring assets. That does happen.

[136] **John Griffiths:** Do you think, Andy, that there's anything distinctive about Scotland or particular geographical areas of Scotland that lend themselves to this asset-based approach, or is it an approach that can be rolled out across the UK with equal effect?

[137] **Mr Milne:** I think the root of this policy in Scotland is largely in the highlands and islands of Scotland. I think that goes back to an earlier point about both the distance from a centre of legislation—the remoteness—and the cultural mindset of 'nobody else is going to do this for us, so we're just going to do it for ourselves.' There's also the historic element: that, I think, coincided with the historical legacy of the appalling structure of land ownership in the north of Scotland, which communities—. You will remember, perhaps, the case around the island of Eigg with the absentee landlord Schellenberg there. The community in Eigg campaigned long to take ownership of their island, and eventually, with some support from the then Scottish Government, they became successful. That became the root of a right to buy land in rural areas in Scotland. That model was seen to be interesting and successful and so, recently, what we're really trying to do is to transfer that model into the urban centre, the more politicised urban centre of Scotland, around Glasgow and Edinburgh. That's where we see some of the bigger challenges in making the model work in a different political climate, a different cultural climate and a different climate in which communities see themselves and their relationship to power and to the land. So, a shorter answer to your question is: yes, the highlands and islands provided a nursery for this idea, which is now being sincerely attempted to be transferred into the urban context, and we are currently dealing with the challenges and the opportunities in that urban context, with some successes and some very, very big challenges still ongoing.

[138] **John Griffiths:** Would you say, Andy, that where Scotland is at the moment with an asset-based approach to reducing poverty is systematic? Is it something that Scottish Government and that the main service providers in Scotland have taken on board to the extent that you would describe it as a systematic approach throughout Scotland?

[139] **Mr Milne:** I would say that it is now. It's very much to the fore in any Government document that talks about regeneration, poverty and inequality. There will definitely be a reference to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. There will definitely be a reference to asset-based regeneration and community-led regeneration. More recently, the Government have, I think, helpfully rebalanced that impetus with a broader one on the Scottish Government's responsibility for supporting a more inclusive economy—more inclusive economic growth. So, it's those two things together that look to me like a better model.

[140] **John Griffiths:** Okay—

[141] **Mr Milne:** Sorry, I should also just—. A better answer to your question is that, yes, being a small place and with the political structures that we have in Scotland, and have had for the last 10 years or so, there's a broad level of consensus that this is a good way to go. There are disagreements about how fast to go, with what emphasis and how to get there.

[142] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Andy. Finally, is there anything you would say, if it's possible to do so, to encapsulate the key lessons from your experience in Scotland around this approach? If you had to put that in a sentence, what would be the key lessons that should be drawn that we might draw here in Wales from your experience so far?

[143] **Mr Milne:** Okay. As you've heard, I'm a little bit verbose, so I'll try and do a sentence. I think the key lessons are that this is a genuinely interesting and useful model. It can only work within a broader framework that supports that model and that provides a good-quality climate and infrastructure within which the model can connect and thrive to where the bigger resources are. I think the biggest problem with the model is getting it to work in the areas that need it most: the poorest urban areas where communities are too busy just trying to survive to take on significant responsibilities like this, and who are still looking to the state to provide better public services and better opportunities in terms of employment.

[144] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks, Andy. And there's a final, final question from Bethan Jenkins.

[145] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to ask—because you said, obviously, that the economic structures would need to change for people to have a fairer chance at reaching their potential. I was just wondering, with these asset-

based approaches in Scotland, are they working to the extent of actually tackling poverty and lowering poverty levels, or is it just about empowering people and the softer levels of self-improvement and confidence? Because, the Welsh Government is now bringing Communities First to an end, so I'm trying to understand whether this could potentially be a solution to some of the issues that we have here in Wales also.

[146] **Mr Milne:** Yes and no. I think that this is—. There are significant examples, and I could provide you with detail of significant examples where this kind of approach has resulted in not just greater levels of confidence and networks and cohesion, but actual jobs—actual economic change in particular places. I have to go back to my point that this is just one tool that can help communities participate in broader economic regeneration. It will be completely insufficient on its own. If you try to use just this tool to shift the whole machine, which is creating higher levels of poverty, then the tool will break. If you use this tool in concert with other larger instruments, at different levels, to the same end, then I think it's an important element that enables communities to participate with dignity and with purpose on their own terms. If that can be replicated broadly enough, then that could make quite a significant difference in the whole picture.

10:45

[147] **John Griffiths:** Andy, thank you very much for joining the committee this morning. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much indeed.

[148] **Mr Milne:** It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

[149] **John Griffiths:** Okay. The committee, then, will break until 11 o'clock.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:45 a 11:04.
The meeting adjourned between 10:45 and 11:04.*

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru:
Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 3
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales:
Asset-based Approaches to Poverty Reduction—Evidence Session 3**

[150] **John Griffiths:** Welcome, everyone, to committee and our third evidence session this morning in taking evidence on our inquiry into poverty

in Wales and asset-based approaches to poverty reduction. We are now dealing with health issues for this evidence session, and I wonder if I could ask our witnesses to introduce themselves, please, starting with Gill Richardson.

[151] **Dr Richardson:** Hello, good morning. Dr Gill Richardson. I'm Public Health Wales's assistant director of policy research and international development, previously a director of public health in Gwent.

[152] **Ms Mably:** Hello there. I'm Su Mably, I'm a consultant in public health with Public Health Wales, and I have a particular remit for mental well-being and healthy communities work.

[153] **Ms Scale:** Hello, I'm Elaine Scale, exercise referral co-ordinator for Pembrokeshire.

[154] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** Hello. My name is Jeannie Wyatt-Williams, I'm the national exercise referral manager for Wales.

[155] **John Griffiths:** Thank you all very much. I wonder if you might wish to make a short opening statement, perhaps for five minutes or so, just setting out your approach to this area of asset-based approaches to tackling poverty, perhaps starting with public health.

[156] **Ms Mably:** If I can start, thank you for the opportunity to come and speak with you. I find it interesting that we're talking about asset-based approaches, because, actually, I think, for quite some time, here in Wales, we have been taking an asset-based approach in much of our policy and in much of our practice, and to try and capture that in a few minutes is very difficult. But, obviously, if there are examples that we can send to the committee after our discussion today, we'd be more than happy to do that.

[157] I want to very briefly tell you about some work that Public Health Wales has been developing in terms of establishing some principles for community engagement for empowerment, and, hopefully, we'll see that that's quite fundamental to what you're trying to achieve through your discussions today. We have realised that, building on much of what's happening both locally and internationally, it's quite important for us to make a very public statement of how we intend to recognise and work with our communities. In doing so, we recognise that, actually, the experience that people have in their lives is vital to how we deliver our services and how

we provide our own evidence and support. We spoke with a number of community development workers, a number of people with lived experience, but also some academics about how we might do this, and we have developed these principles, recognising that, actually, we all prefer to have control over the aspects of our lives, every one of us, and, obviously, individuals whom we provide services to are no different. So, how can we work in a way that listens to the community in a very real, true and valid way?

[158] So, we've invested time in developing the principles. I'm happy to share them with you, but I will summarise them today, because there are a number of them. As I said, we've developed them with people, and it's very much about—we can't give power to people, we have to just create the conditions in which people can gain that power. We feel that it's very fundamental to the well-being agenda, to the mental well-being of people, that they can have that sense of control. And we also recognise what the evidence shows us is that, done well, community engagement can really empower a community. But if we do it wrong, if we don't follow through on the commitments that we make and the promises that we make, it can actually be quite damaging to a community. They lose faith in professionals, they lose faith in the system, and I think we've probably seen many examples of that in our daily lives.

[159] So, in brief, really, what we've said is that there are some things in the way that Public Health Wales will work that we will share with the system, and we've been working very closely with our third sector colleagues as well. The principles, in essence, are very much about building on what's already in communities: the people in communities, the assets that you'll be hearing about a lot today, I'm sure. How we build on what's there: we take time to build those trusting relationships. Our relationships with the community, when we work with them, have got to be sustained over time. We've got to create space and time to have discussions, not just present options to the community and expect them to respond very quickly back to us. How we establish an equal relationship that recognises that lived experience as equally important as some of the more technical evidence that we might cover ourselves in and protect ourselves with quite often. How we give that language that we use: simple things like the language we use to describe communities can be very disempowering. We often talk about deprived communities, and it can't feel very motivating to live in a 'deprived community'. It puts you in a backward, stigmatised position from the start. So, one of the things we're looking at is how do we work with communities on simple things like describing their situation and their experience.

[160] So, we have those principles. We're working on an action plan and some guidance on how we spread them throughout our organisation in all of our interactions and in all of our service delivery. That's just sort of telling you something about how we're seeking to change the way we work. There are many examples of where we're working that way already—I wouldn't like you to think that we're not working in that way. There are many examples where we are, but we're making it very explicit—that's how we want to go forward. If I can pass to Dr Richardson, she'll have some more examples.

[161] **Dr Richardson:** Thank you. So, really, the essential thing about asset-based community development for health is that it's all to do with participation and connectedness. We find that, in many communities where perhaps there are lots of pressures on people's lives—there may be debt, there may be family pressures, employment pressures—we do find that people are coming from quite a low base of what we call self-efficacy. So, the ability that they believe they can change their circumstances is very limited. So, the foundation for any work that we are doing with communities would very much be along the mental health, connectedness, well-being lines, and participation in itself, you know, volunteering, is all very important. So, we would see that health and health boards would be working together with local government, together with other partners, to engage with the community and ask them what their needs were, but also what their contributions, if you like, were—whether there are skills in the community that are not being used, whether there are perhaps retirees in the community who have a role that they're not currently able to do.

[162] There are some examples from around Wales of where these health assets and community assets have come together. So, the model in England of primary care at Bromley-by-Bow has been very much applauded, where community learning, community arts, health, connectedness, social gatherings are all happening in the same area, the same place, as health services are being delivered. That has been transferred in an embryonic way, I think, to some places in Wales. So, the Llanhilleth community is a good example, the Valley Steps community, an engagement mental health programme in Cwm Taf—community health champions are beginning in Wales now. In Yorkshire, there have been 17,000 community health champions trained, and they've engaged with hundreds of thousands of community members.

[163] So, basically, a lot of what we're doing is combating loneliness as well,

and you'll have heard about the Ffrind i Mi initiative in Gwent, and there are others throughout Wales. Basically, for every £1 spent on health volunteering programmes, the returns are between £4 and £10, and an evaluation of 15 community health champion projects found that the return on investment is up to £112 for every £1 invested. So, these things do need a little investment, but, actually, it's only a little compared to letting it go without.

[164] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you both very much for that. The WLGA, in terms of the national exercise referral scheme, please.

[165] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** The national exercise referral scheme has been in operation for quite some time now, and its main aim is to offer referred clients the opportunity to take up physical activity in an appropriate way. But the difference, perhaps, to normal physical activity is we undertake consultations with them. Our aim is to improve health and well-being over a period of time, with the outcome being they can be independent and active long term, and also be able to better manage their health conditions. It's a Public Health Wales-funded scheme. It's operated with the 22 local authorities of Wales. It's managed and co-ordinated by myself at the Welsh Local Government Association, and works in partnership with a huge range of stakeholders. We've got Public Health Wales, we've got Welsh Government, and we've got local health boards, the third sector, and a number of partner projects, which I assist on their advisory groups.

[166] NERS pathways, as you may or may not know, were developed by Welsh Government request in 2009 to incorporate not only those at risk of developing disease, but those at a higher risk with a chronic condition. So, it was a follow-on from their clinical intervention of rehabilitation to offer something in the community to enable them to become long-term independent, which has been a massive success. We're building greater partnerships with health to see this greater cohesive approach between health and leisure. So, for me, we hear a lot about 'exercise is medicine', but I think it's more 'movement is medicine' initially, for a lot of the people whom we are trying to target, and, for me, this quote:

11:15

[167] 'Physical fitness cannot be achieved by wishful thinking, nor outright purchase'—

[168] it has to be the person's choice. So, although we get a huge number

referred in to us, there is quite a proportion of people who do not want to come. They're not in that right behavioural change to take up the opportunity.

[169] But NERS can, from feedback from health professionals, reduce the burden on the NHS. We are the bridge from a health intervention into long-term independent activity, supporting people to live well for longer. Reducing loneliness is quite a big theme. We get a lot of feedback on that, and one of the comments that we've had, which I think is really—. It was one of our cancer patients—'looking forward to a future and not dreading it', actually recognising they have something. And, again, we promote and maintain people's independence.

[170] So, we all know the huge benefits of being physically active. It's not rocket science. We know, by being active, we can make a huge impact on quite a number of conditions. But our approach is that we need to make people consider what makes them feel healthy, rather than what's making them ill, listening to what they actually want and need, and then make a positive impact, that the programmes we offer make a positive impact by, in partnership, the person, the client and the NERS professional discussing what the needs are, what the issues are, and coming up with an approved pathway.

[171] I am not going to go through all of the case studies for the case of time, but I know you have them. But, for me, the main themes that come back from all of the case studies I receive are this improved social inclusion, this connectedness with their community. Improved management of their own long-term health conditions is a big thing. A lot of them comment that they've reduced their medications, and they're no longer having to go back and forth to clinics as often. Resilience and independence—actually maintaining that independence, and not, from a fall, particularly, having to go into care is one of the big things that they comment on. Confidence in themselves, improving their own confidence about how they perceive themselves and others looking at them, and volunteering—we've got a huge amount of volunteering programmes going on across the whole of Wales.

[172] As I say, the case—. Maybe the last case study is the one that I will highlight because, for me, this is quite a young person—only 37—referred for depression, anxiety, and weight management issues. She really enjoyed the scheme. She reduced her waistline dramatically; I don't want to go into great detail, but I know that she did lose quite a considerable amount of

weight. And, on the benefits for her, she's now got a qualification and a job. She went to Zumba classes as part of her programme. Actually, the leisure centre development team funded her to attend a course, and she's now running sessions for the leisure centre that she was referred to in the first place. For me, that's a wonderful outcome.

[173] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you very much indeed, and may I welcome Julia Horton to committee? Julia is the education programmes for patients Cymru co-ordinator for the Aneurin Bevan university health board. Julia, would you like to say a few remarks just setting out the involvement that you've had with an assets-based approach in the work that you are doing?

[174] **Ms Horton:** Yes, certainly. I'd like to open about what was the expert patients programme, which is the way a lot of people still know our programme, now known as the education programme for patients. I'll give you a perfect example, and that's the person you're looking at here. I went on the expert patient programme, as it was called then, six years ago. I've had cancer all my life. I've got osteoporosis and auto-immune issues because of all the chemotherapy. When I was approached to ask if I wanted to go on to the course, I kind of went because I felt that there wasn't really anything else out there for me. Because I was ill, I couldn't get any work, and I was depressed, lonely, and isolated. I figured that I knew everything there was to know about my condition, so how they could they teach me? But I was very wrong. I went on the course. I learnt all sorts of tools about how to—not to get—. They weren't there to tell me how to get better. They were there to teach me tools that I could use to take away to help my own self.

[175] And I got so much out of doing that that I asked if I could train to become a tutor. So, instantly, that asset was incredible. I was tutoring for five years. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have increased in my confidence, as you might guess, because I'm sat here. I now believe in myself that everything that I've been through, and still will always go through, is for this reason, because I can give something back, because all the tutors who work for EPP are voluntary. We have 121 tutors across the whole of Wales. We don't pay them anything bar travelling expenses. In August last year, a co-ordinator position came up to run Newport and Caerphilly, and I went for the job because I am so passionate about the programme. If somebody had said to me before I did this course that I would not only be working for Public Health Wales, as a public speaker for EPP, running the whole of Newport and Caerphilly, and making a difference to so many people's lives, I would never have believed them. For me, that's why I know that EPP works.

[176] And it's not just about that side of that asset, it's—within that group, we have people from all backgrounds, all health, all ethnic minorities, every condition under the sun, and they come together, and what happens there is somebody says, 'I'm struggling to do something, I just don't know how I'm going to manage,' and someone says, 'Well, I know how to do that.' Suddenly, people are helping each other, and we're building communities back out of the programmes, which wasn't something that the programme set out to do. So, it's just a huge—.

[177] When we talk about the assets, the assets from EPP are massive because people are making them themselves. They're coming to get their health better, but they're forming walking groups. We have a huge intake of people with fibromyalgia, and somebody said, 'There's no support'. I said, 'Well, why don't you form a support group?' And this is what's happening. We're getting support groups coming out of the programme, and these people are supporting each other so much. We get feedback of, 'I hardly every go to the doctor's anymore, I just speak to the members of the group, because things that we are having wrong with us, they've experienced, and they're able to help get better.'

[178] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Julia. Well, thank you very much for that. That's very interesting. Thank you. Okay. We'll turn to committee members for questions, beginning with Jenny Rathbone.

[179] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you very much, Jules. That was a really excellent explanation of how expert patients, or what you now call it, education programmes for patients, operate. It's fantastic to have public health and local authorities in the same room, so I have a burning question, which is how, collectively, are you working on persuading parents to walk or cycle to school with their children, rather than taking them in a metal box, which exposes them to much more pollution than if they're walking?

[180] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** We have a youth policy officer within WLGA, and I know this is part of his portfolio, to encourage this.

[181] **Jenny Rathbone:** How do we use the expert, the asset-based approach, to get this change of behaviour?

[182] **Dr Richardson:** I think all the public services boards will have—. The local authorities will have a duty to have an active travel transport policy, as

do the health boards, and so, through the public services boards, they can work together. The agencies coming together—

[183] **Jenny Rathbone:** How are we using an asset-based approach?

[184] **Dr Richardson:** Ideally, if you're really talking about the asset-based approach, you'd be working with a group of parents who actually want to develop this, so that they will ask for some support, maybe some high-visibility jackets, to actually do their own walking crocodile to school or walking bus. But—

[185] **Jenny Rathbone:** But are we doing that?

[186] **Dr Richardson:** I think some areas are, but I think there's probably a lot more to be done, you're right, and sometimes it is do with parents themselves, parents' groups in schools asking the council to put in traffic-calming measures, or to put in hatched areas outside the schools, or to put in cycle racks, so that there's somewhere for children to cycle and store their bicycles. So, I think there are local partnerships everywhere, but I don't think that there's a national approach, if you like. There are probably local authorities—

[187] **Jenny Rathbones:** As it's a public health emergency, should there not be?

[188] **Ms Mably:** I think there is an active travel working group that are looking at a whole range of bringing different influences to bear. I heard a colleague present earlier this week, in fact, about some work that we're doing nationally about campaigning on this very issue about getting kids active and walking to school and the fact that it's counter to what parents—. Parents are thinking that they're keeping their children safe by driving them to school and they're actually, as you suggest, creating the health impacts that they're trying to avoid. But we are working—. There are simple things like, when anyone goes to a school at the drop-off times or pick-up times, parents are parked all over the roads. So, there are—. We already have many things—

[189] **Jenny Rathbone:** You are describing what we all know. What I'm saying is: how are we using this asset-based approach? Are you saying that there are limitations to this asset-based approach or that this particular issue hasn't been a priority in the way that you apply it?

[190] **Dr Richardson:** This particular issue has to do with a lot of the planning, which is to do with each local government area, so it's difficult to—. You can encourage and can give guidance, but—

[191] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, encouraging and guidance aren't sufficient, then? I appreciate that you've got to change the street furniture too, but—

[192] **Dr Richardson:** I think it's also dependent upon what does that community want, because the whole thing about asset-based development is that it's not us, as bodies, deciding what people want—it's the communities deciding at local level, 'Well, here, we need this', and then liaising with their local authority and their public services board, who will perhaps try and do tailored solutions, because the solutions for Gwynedd will be very different—

[193] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, I appreciate that.

[194] **Dr Richardson:** —from the solutions for inner-city Newport.

[195] **Jenny Rathbone:** Sure, sure. I suppose I'm trying to tease out the limitations of an asset-based approach, because if it's—. We can agree that it's a public health issue, but if people are not recognising it as such then we're not able to do anything about it, or we're not—.

[196] **Dr Richardson:** We can encourage. We can encourage that asset-based approach, but, actually, you need community ownership to properly develop it. So, that is the challenge of engagement and the principles of community engagement that we talked about. Perhaps, at local level, you are seeing some of the people who will be the effectors of change, but you do need a local champion for that asset-based approach—often there are, but they just need a little bit of support or help or encouragement to step forward, as you did.

[197] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** Yes—

[198] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, how does—? Sorry, I'm just pursuing this; I'm sure you'll want to come in. So, how does an asset-based approach differ from a prudent healthcare approach?

[199] **Dr Richardson:** They're very similar.

[200] **Ms Mably:** I think so, yes.

[201] **Dr Richardson:** Co-production, it's one of the—

[202] **Jenny Rathbone:** They're just different ways of describing—

[203] **Ms Mably:** I think they're different ways of describing it and I think perhaps, traditionally, we have tended to focus on the deficits approach of describing what the problem is. I think what the assets-based approach takes us towards is describing what's there to help us address those problems. I think it's completely compatible with a prudent health approach. As I suggested at the very beginning, I think we've actually been working in many respects with the intention of an assets-based approach. I think, for us, it is very much how we work much closer with our communities so that they are actually driving, asking the very questions that you're asking. How do we make the services respond in different ways?

[204] **John Griffiths:** Could I just ask then: we've got the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the public services boards, health and well-being assessments—do you see signs, then, that this approach of understanding the assets that communities have and how they need to be involved and feeding up into these processes, do you see any evidence on the ground that that's happening now through the public services boards?

[205] **Ms Mably:** I believe so.

[206] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** Just at the recent chief leisure officers of Wales meetings, a lot of this was brought up at that level, so I do feel that it's feeding up and down at the same time within local authorities. But it is really about what people want. From a personal perspective, my husband is a school caretaker and we've recently started to try and implement cycling to school. There's been a huge amount of resistance from a lot of parents about having cones to stop the parking. It's a drip-feed and it's taken a good two months to actually get it set up. It seems to be settling down. I know that's just one school, but I think it's a similar aspect for a whole range of local authorities. There will be initial resistance from mums rushing, wanting to get perhaps back off to work, and it's just easier to drop them off in a car. I think it's something that is recognised as needing to change, but, as I say, it is about guidance, at the moment, and recommendation, but it is being looked at a little bit more seriously.

11:30

[207] **Dr Richardson:** Some public services boards have got areas where, in essence, the public services board team of partners have chosen perhaps one area to try to give a little bit more support to develop that community asset-based approach. So, there might be areas such as, say, Lansbury Park in Caerphilly that have been the subject of intense work, really, over years, to try and develop that.

[208] **John Griffiths:** Okay, and Jules, did you want to come in at this stage?

[209] **Ms Horton:** I just wanted to say that we recently did a course—or I actually ran the course—in Bettws in Newport. Each week on our courses we set action plans and we teach people about action planning to be able to achieve more. Because we cover so many subjects and one of those is exercise, we actually got a group together of parents—or mothers—and they wanted to do more exercise, but it came up that it was too expensive to go to the gym and they couldn't get to the exercise referral programmes at the times that were necessary.

[210] One lady said, 'Well, why don't we form together and then we'll all take the kids to school and then we can have a coffee'. Then, what's developed from that has been that, when some parents have to go to work, this other group of people, they'll take the children. So, somebody's going with the children all the time, but not necessarily their own parents. From that, when I liaised with them not long ago, I found out that they've incorporated it into more of the estate.

[211] I thought that was a really worthwhile exercise that they were doing, and it's simply down to, 'We want to exercise, but we can't afford to do it. How can we do it?' It was just a simple suggestion and that's now kind of spread out over the whole of that Bettws estate where people are doing that.

[212] **John Griffiths:** Okay.

[213] **Jenny Rathbone:** I can see the wow factor in what you're doing, but isn't there a danger that those with the least assets, you know, get nothing out of this approach? Because you're saying, unless we've got community champions, we can't do anything, or—.

[214] **Dr Richardson:** I think that's where you totally need to make sure that

if you're going to go down the approach of encouraging a community assets-based approach, as we would want to do, because it's co-production, not being done to but doing with, then you have to make absolutely sure that the inequality impact assessments are also done. You actually may need to, if you had a certain amount of funding, put more into pump-priming the areas that are more disadvantaged. But, if you do do that, you will find that—certainly using volunteering, time banking, and qualification gaining at the same time as people are volunteering—you do help with mental health, mainly, and employability and education.

[215] **John Griffiths:** Okay. We're rapidly running out of time, but Bethan.

[216] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to come back on—. Thank you for what you said, Jules, it was really powerful. I just wanted to come back on what you said. You're a paid position, yes?

[217] **Ms Horton:** I am, yes.

[218] **Bethan Jenkins:** But all the other people who are working with you are volunteers.

[219] **Ms Horton:** That's correct.

[220] **Bethan Jenkins:** So, my question is: I agree that this concept is a good thing, and I'm all for empowering people, but I'm just trying to understand—do you think sometimes though that this would be plugging gaps that should be done by those statutory services? So, you're saying that all these exercise co-ordinators are volunteers. Is that something, with the problem of obesity in Wales being so high, that should be something—you know, more of you, you know, duplication of your role across Wales, as opposed to you having that one co-ordinating role for such a big area? Because part of the discussion for community assets, therefore, could be yourself then saying, 'We need to be expanding this in a more strategic way across Wales'.

[221] **Ms Horton:** Okay. If there were more of me, there would be fewer courses, because we wouldn't be able to have enough funding to be able to run them, firstly. The tutors who are volunteers—and I was for six years, and I still do some of my work voluntary now, because I don't have enough hours to be able to achieve what I want to achieve. The reason why it works so well is the people who become tutors are people that were on the courses. They were participants. They are people with long-term health conditions. Now,

when people come on to a course, especially when we have people come through Remploi and such agencies, they come on and I say, 'Why are you here?' and they say, 'I have to, because you're going to stop my benefits'—it's the first thing that we get said—and 'You don't understand', and then I say, 'Actually, I do understand, because I have done this for many years. As a volunteer, I'm not paid to be here. I'm here because I want to for you', and, instantly, you get a different reaction. For many people, not just myself—you know, within Aneurin Bevan there are three co-ordinators, and in Cardiff and Vale there are two co-ordinators. So, each sector of the health boards across Wales has co-ordinators working for them. But those 121 tutors do that because the programme changed them. The reason why it works—like I said, it's because they're not paid. So, you go into a mental health organisation and they say, 'Yeah. I just do as I'm told because you're paid to tell me'. No, we're not. That's why it works better, because they suddenly realise that somebody's there for them that's not being told to go there, that they are not being paid to deliver this, but they're simply doing this because they believe in what they're doing. I think that having volunteers do that is really important for that reason.

[222] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for that. Joyce, did you want to come in at this point?

[223] **Joyce Watson:** It's sort of following on from the idea of asset-based, which is communities knowing what they want and it being delivered with and for them. Because we're talking about health, I met—and others probably have today—yesterday a group of young people with a particular health need. One of the big things that I got—one was in Carmarthenshire and one was in Pembrokeshire, with the same condition—were all the things you've just said. Because these were children. It was the isolation, the management and, in particular, social isolation, because they were young people and they didn't know where to go to help with that. So, I bring that to the table, because I think the conversation lends itself to that. It's the signposting isn't it? How then is it that I met people yesterday—only yesterday—who didn't know where to go and didn't know about this programme? I just thought I would put that on the table. What is it that's not working in an asset-based approach?

[224] **Ms Horton:** We were just saying now, unfortunately, at the moment, we only work with people that are over 18. It's something that we're really passionate about, because we see with, especially, mental health that children as young as seven are struggling and suffering, and we've got a role

there that we could use to go and help people as they travel through adulthood journeys—or through their childhood journeys and into their adulthood. It's quite frustrating for us when we're at conferences to see people coming up from organisations that are working with children and knowing that we have something that could make a difference and not being able to be involved. So, my answer to you is: I don't know where you go. We do struggle to get our word out there. GPs are not always 100 per cent supportive, because they want the full hands-on effect, rather than the other effect. We're very strong within the third sector and, generally, I will be able to ask somebody within my work in Gwent Associations of Voluntary Organisations, but I don't know where to send children.

[225] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. So, if I follow that through, because this is about empowering people, it's about taking an asset-based approach to improve people's lives, and we're looking particularly at poverty, so that could be health poverty or whatever it is: how then do you think that this particular approach is working differently and better towards that aim than all the other approaches that went before?

[226] **Ms Mably:** It's difficult to know, obviously, the situation that you describe, because one of the things that we usually go back to is the fact that most of our children—the vast majority of our children—are in schools. So, our opportunity to influence through schools is our main theme. So, we would rather hope that, through the work that we're doing, and the Welsh Government are doing, looking at the curriculum, that emotional well-being and the mental well-being part of the new curriculum is really vital to looking at what the issues are affecting our young people who are in school, and how we work differently with those young people so that their voices are heard. I'm sure we all know that there are already structures within schools, but the important thing is that those structures don't exclude the children who perhaps most need them, so that you've got school councils and you've got places where young people can make their voice heard and make their needs heard, but we've got to make sure that all young people and all children have the opportunity to use those mechanisms or find alternative mechanisms. Hopefully, the review of the new curriculum will start to make that far more mainstream and far more evident and visible. So, a lot of it—we do place a lot of reliance, I think, on what the professionals who deal with the vast majority of our children—how they work. Hopefully, they are working in an asset-based approach, recognising what the children bring and what the children need.

[227] **Dr Richardson:** And there are some excellent examples of mental health charities, such as Mind, having a Young Minds branch and then also the British diabetic association having a youth arm. There are organisations that are there to support young stroke survivors. So, there are a multitude of—they're not quite self-help groups because they come from the third sector—but they very often become a peer-support group. There are difficulties in rural areas, so we do need to perhaps think about the use of social media in a safe way, and people having support groups at a distance that they can access safely without any interference from people without the condition, or adults.

[228] **Joyce Watson:** If I can, Chair—. The example I gave were children who had a physically debilitating illness that's not going away. That was the example I gave. One was in Pembrokeshire and one was in Carmarthenshire. The one in Pembrokeshire would perhaps have been, you could say, geographically isolated, because they're outside the town. The one in Carmarthenshire was right bang in the middle of Carmarthen town. Both are in school, although it's sporadic. And that's why I brought it to the table. I'm clearly not going to identify the individuals, but the families were struggling in terms of their personal social isolation, as adults, but more importantly, the children's isolation as disabled young people and the ability to meet up with others in the same situation so that they had a social life. So, whilst I understand using social media will connect them, it won't answer the questions I was raising. The real question I was raising is: if this model's working, is it working for everybody?

[229] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** The national exercise referral scheme's criteria is aged 16 and over—we're not allowed to take anyone below that.

[230] **Joyce Watson:** So, there's a problem there.

[231] **Ms Wyatt-Williams:** But I do have a number of requests from parents and GPs contacting me directly because they are concerned about a particular individual. It's really a discussion with mainstream leisure: can they support them in some way, with the support of maybe a disability sports person and the advice of Sport Wales? So, we try our best where we can to offer something, but it doesn't come under the NERS umbrella. I take on your frustration with that. We want to help everyone, we just haven't got capacity.

[232] **Joyce Watson:** That's fine, I understand.

[233] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jules.

[234] **Ms Horton:** Just from a personal point of view, as well as my role in what I do I'm actually a para-dressage rider. I ride for Wales and I've ridden for GB. When I first became disabled, I was an adult but I had no support. I didn't know where to go and I then got in touch with Disability Sport Wales and they were able to give me a huge amount of advice on organisations that were within the area of my living. That really made a big difference to me, but I had to get up and go and find that for myself. Once I found the connection and where to go for that—I mean, they might not necessarily be involved in sport, but within that organisation, they have an awful lot of information on organisations that are there to support certain conditions and in those areas. So, that may be an avenue.

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

[236] **John Griffiths:** We've got very little time left, I'm afraid. [*Interruption.*] Yes, okay. Thank you all very much for coming along to give evidence this morning. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thank you all very much indeed.

11:45

[237] We've got two minutes while we set up the next video link.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:45 ac 11:49.
The meeting adjourned between 11:45 and 11:49.*

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru:
Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 4
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales:
Asset-based Approaches to Poverty Reduction—Evidence Session 4**

[238] **John Griffiths:** We now turn to item 5 on our agenda this morning, and that is evidence session 4 in our inquiry into poverty in Wales and asset-based approaches to poverty reduction. I'm very pleased to welcome, by video link, Trevor Hopkins, who's a freelance consultant with Asset Based Consulting. Trevor, welcome to committee this morning. I wonder whether you might say a few words by way of introduction, in terms of your approach to asset-based poverty reduction and your experience.

[239] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes, okay, thanks very much. Hi there from a very wet Sunderland in Tyne and Wear—I don't know what it's like in Cardiff this morning, but we've had torrential rain. While I'm a freelance consultant now, I worked in local government for most of my career and then latterly, from 2006 to 2012, I worked for the Local Government Association in England. To an extent, a lot of my work had been on challenging inequalities. Primarily my work was on challenging inequalities in health, although there is an absolutely provable connection between poverty in lots of forms and poor health. So, I got interested in really in what Sir Michael Marmot would've called the social or the structural causes of inequalities, particularly in health.

[240] After about 35 years of working challenging inequalities, what I realised was that during the time I'd been working on it, the inequalities had actually got worse and the gap had got wider. So, I suppose if anything suggests you should review your professional practice, it's possibly contributing to something getting worse, not getting better. It was at that point I started to investigate alternative approaches to thinking about, particularly, individuals, families and communities, and what might be some of the approaches we could take that would, as a minimum, stop the gap from widening in inequalities, but actually try and narrow the gap. That's where I came to my thinking about asset-based working.

[241] I suppose as an overriding definition I'd go back to the first publication that I was involved with when I worked at the LGA, which was called 'A glass half-full'. It's internationally acknowledged now as a very good piece of work on this, for which I'm very, very flattered. In that we said—and Jane Foot and I co-authored 'A glass half-full'—and what we said right at the start in the introduction was that an asset approach valued the capacity, skills, knowledge and connections, and also the potential that exists in individuals, families and communities:

[242] 'It doesn't only see the problems that need fixing and the gaps that need filling. In an asset approach, the glass is half-full rather than half empty.'

[243] To be honest, while that was written in 2010, I think it's as valid today as it was then.

[244] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thank you very much, Trevor. We'll turn, then, to questions from committee members, beginning with Jenny Rathbone.

[245] **Jenny Rathbone:** We've heard from other witnesses this morning and one is tempted to think that the asset-based approach might be a 'needs must' approach by the public sector, given that they've a lot less money and can do a lot less and therefore they want the community to do a bit more. How do you think the asset-based approach is in itself innately a good idea, as opposed to something that replaces services that are being withdrawn?

[246] **Mr Hopkins:** That's a really interesting question and, in fact, a very live debate within asset-based practitioners as well. We may want to touch later on some criticisms of asset-based working. Certainly, one of the popular criticisms is that it's a naive approach, that it may be politically highly naive, and it doesn't understand or accept the structural inequalities that can cause poverty and cause poor health and well-being. So, it's a very live debate. My view about the asset-based approach is it's not a way of doing things. I think if you think it's a way of doing things, you haven't really got the asset-based approach. Lots of people seem to think that asset-based working is about community development. Well, some of the most divisive community work I've ever seen done has been done in the name of community development. So, I think what sustains asset-based working, for me and for many, many other practitioners, is that it's based on a set of principles and values. If you'd like, I'll share those principles with you.

[247] The first principle is that until we can recognise that resources, skills and knowledge exist and enhance the ability of individuals, families and communities to create and sustain well-being, we're not working in an asset-based way. Lots of interpretations of poverty tend to stigmatise or, at worst, demonise communities, and see that poverty as their own fault. An asset-based approach doesn't say that. It says everyone has potential. Secondly, if we always start with the problems, we're only seeing half the picture. And every community—. There isn't a single community—. I mean, I come from a very similar area to bits of Wales—Durham—an ex-mining area: a massive run-down of the major industries that sustained this place, and yet the communities around here are active and vibrant and have strong traditions and strong social activities that connect them. So, we need to see communities, individuals and families as—. We need to look at what they've got. We need to look at their assets rather than just focus on the problems.

[248] And secondly—and there's been a huge amount of research on this over the last 20 years—what's good for people is friendship, is self-esteem, is feeling effective, both personally and collectively, and also being connected into strong networks, whether they are family networks, social

networks or work networks. And we know the research is pretty unequivocal on the fact that this is very good for us. So, they're the principles. I think if you see those principles, if you sign up to those principles, you're starting to think in an asset-based way.

[249] The values that asset-based practitioners tend to suggest is that what we need to do is rather than tell and do, we need to give support to individuals, families and communities, to start to be able to what we would call 'mobilise' the use of their assets. We need to see citizens and communities as co-producers of outcomes, not as just recipients of services, and I think that addresses when the money starts to become limited and we withdraw services. Some people would suggest that the asset-based approach can replace that withdrawal. I don't personally think that's the case, but I think part of the process is to understand what communities do well for themselves and what they can do better for themselves if we support them to do that. And actually, that has other benefits in terms of communities then starting to own those activities as well.

[250] We need to promote the things that make people resilient, so we need to promote networks, relationships and friendships. The worst thing, which we shouldn't do, is to throw out what's working already. So, asset-based working is very much about valuing the stuff that's already working in communities. Lots of communities have history, structure and activity that are very valuable to them, and they should be continued. We need to think about what has the potential to improve the situation rather than just how do we address the problems that we've found. And finally, unless we allow communities to control their futures and create tangible resources that they can utilise, it's always going to be our solution to their problems, and the asset-based approach takes a very different viewpoint on that one.

[251] **Jenny Rathbone:** I don't think any of us would disagree with the principles you've outlined, even if many public services are working their way towards applying it. How is it an effective tool at tackling poverty, given that the report that's come out this week from Alan Milburn, and lots of other evidence, is that, actually, poverty's getting worse and the rich are getting richer—[*Inaudible.*—]—in a way of actually delivering social justice?

[252] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes, okay. I'll refer you to another quote, which comes from 'A glass half-full', but also just a little bit of interpretation on that. I think, in the times of diminishing resources and the times of cuts to services, what, particularly, central and local government need to do is do the stuff

that has the biggest impact. Alongside that, an asset-based approach, if properly and correctly implemented, allows communities to do some things for themselves that, actually, I would say they're probably better at anyway. I think we got into a paradigm 20 or 30 years ago when local authorities sort of did everything, and actually did many things that communities could do just as well, and in fact better, for themselves. But the quote I have from 'A glass half-full' says that

[253] 'The asset approach does not replace investment in improving services or tackling the structural causes of health inequality.'

[254] What an asset-based approach does is attempt to

[255] 'achieve a better balance between service delivery and community building'.

[256] So, I suppose what it could do in terms of resourcing is: if communities are supported to do things well for themselves and to take ownership for those things—and we have loads of case studies and examples of where that happens, and it's very vibrant and exciting when it does happen—it does allow statutory and public services to, perhaps, maximise their input into some of the bigger structural causes that an asset-based approach is never going to address. An asset-based approach is never going to address poverty in housing; it's never going to address fuel poverty; it's never going to address low educational attainment that drives successive generations not to achieve well. So, to me, we keep the focus on that and that's where public spending goes, but alongside that, we need to work in a more positive way with communities to identify what they want to do, how they can do it and support them to do those things.

12:00

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

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

[259] **Joyce Watson:** You've outlined the theory and you've started to move towards the practical, but what I would like to focus on is the practical application. So, how would you see practical application actually enhancing the lot of the people who are trying to be helped? [*Inaudible.*]

[260] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely. I think it's a combination of both. You know, there are people who will always require support; there are people who will always require some help. I think the asset approach acknowledges that. One of the criticisms of asset-based working—and particularly the very Americanised ABC—is that it's politically often referred to as being quite a neoliberal approach. In other words: 'You're on your own; public services are going to do the minimum, and you better do the rest for yourselves.' I've never seen asset working as being that. I mean, to me, I think asset working's just a better way of doing some stuff that we've tried to do for years and not been particularly successful.

[261] I suppose the two fundamental positions that we often approach asset-based working from are—. The first is a technique called asset mapping, which is: if you don't know where the assets are, you don't know what the assets are, and you don't know who the assets are, then you're never going to be able to get the approach started. So, it's very common, particularly in areas where no asset-based activity has taken place, to do community development work that is based on a model called asset mapping. Asset mapping looks at the assets of individuals, organisations and associations, which are the loose ties in existing communities. It looks at head, hands and heart. Some of you might have come across this idea of head, hands and heart. In other words, what do people care about, what can they do and what do they know about? An asset mapping exercise is something that would happen in and with communities, often in local venues and facilities where we engage in very open conversations with people and get them to think about the individuals, the organisations and the associations that are already functioning well in their communities, which they already regard as assets. So, that's one way of doing it. It can be very, very powerful; a very powerful way of collecting a lot of data. But, equally, the mere activity of asking, 'What's good around here?' already starts to have quite a positive effect on how people do things and think about things.

[262] The second approach is actually very commonly used in Wales. I think even the Welsh Assembly has been involved in some this work, which is an approach called appreciative inquiry. Again, some of you might have heard of it. It was originally an organisational development method, and it basically takes individuals, families and communities through five key stages. The first stage is, 'What do we want to talk about?'—that's the definition. The second is discovery. So, asset mapping could be part of the discovery phase: 'Who knows stuff around here, who does stuff around here, who cares about stuff and who's passionate about these kinds of things?' And there are other

approaches you can use—appreciative conversations.

[263] The third stage of appreciative inquiry is absolutely the critical stage, and that's what we call the 'dream stage'. That's when we ask people to tell us what things could be like around here: how could things be better? All of these approaches are based on appreciative questions. We never ask the negative questions in the asset-based approach. We don't say, 'What's wrong?' What we say is, 'What would it look like?', 'What would it feel like?', 'What would it be like to live here if your dreams about this place came true?'

[264] Then, the last stage, normally, we would move on to at the second part of the process, which is called 'design and deliver'. That's much more practical; much more grounded. Often, during your asset mapping and your appreciative inquiry process, local leaders and activists will come forward. Sometimes, that's locally elected members, sometimes that's community activists. We often find churches and places of religious worship get very involved in these kinds of activities. So, this way of both finding out and then starting to mobilise the assets in individuals, families and communities can be a very powerful way to start this. Once we get this going there are loads of other things that we can do: community conversations; often peer support and mentoring is a powerful way of developing people in terms of using their assets. We can do specific community development work. One of the things that have become quite popular in rural areas is village agents and sometimes in urban areas community connectors. These are people who have a passion for, and a skill in, developing the assets in communities.

[265] **Joyce Watson:** And have any of those approaches resulted, in your experience or knowledge, in reducing poverty?

[266] **Mr Hopkins:** I would say quite frankly it's far too early to actually make a conclusion like that. A lot of the work we've done in asset-based approaches has been around well-being, community well-being in particular, and community resilience. Interestingly, I did some work in Somerset a few years ago after the major floods, because the local authority there had seen that some communities fared quite well after the floods, and some communities needed very high levels of public service support. They really wanted to know what was the difference between those two communities. The communities that fared well were already communities that had assets and connected assets: places, say, where the National Farmers' Union was strong. The farmers already knew each other, they had a relationship. You've heard the stories of them getting animals out of each other's fields and

putting them in safe places. Places where the church was strong or women's organisations were strong were places that fared better.

[267] So, I think there is lots of evidence that using asset-based approaches leads to more vibrant, more connected and more active communities, and that also involves individuals and families. My frank view would be that it may take a generation, and it possibly might take two generations, or even three generations, till we actually see the overall effects of this kind of activity taking place. So, I would be very wary about—at this stage—saying that there is a direct link between asset-based working and a reduction in poverty. What I think you can see is there's an increase in the kind of activity that is likely to make communities stronger and more resilient, and therefore one of the outcomes of that could be action, externally but also internally, on reducing poverty in those communities.

[268] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thank you very much, Joyce. Sian Gwenllian.

[269] **Sian Gwenllian:** I just wanted to explore some of the disadvantages of an asset-based approach. Do you see any disadvantages, from your perspective?

[270] **Mr Hopkins:** Well, to be frank with you—do I see disadvantages from my perspective? No, I don't. I love it and I've been doing it since 2010. In my spare time I'm a voluntary athletics coach and whenever anybody comes to me in athletics I don't want to find out what they can't do. What I want to know is, 'What can you do, and what do you want to get good at?' So, personally, I don't see that, but are there criticisms, are there disadvantages to asset-based working? Yes, there are. I think one of the primary disadvantages at this stage is it's tended, because of the nature of it, and because of the fact that it really hasn't had access to what I would say is mainstream public service funding—it's tended to be piecemeal, it's tended to be episodic, it's tended to happen in isolated areas. Where it has happened in isolated ideas, it's always been successful. But I think that my criticism of asset-based working—. And it's really interesting that you're interested in this today. I've been working with East Sussex County Council. My wife and I—she is my partner in work—we've been working with East Sussex County Council for the last 18 months, and they're probably one of the first big local authorities in England to actually try to do this systematically, to do it right across services. My view is: as long as it continues to be an add-on, as long as it continues not to be the day job but part of the day job, as long as it continues to be externally funded and

opportunistic, I don't think it's going to have the kind of impact it has the potential to have, if it became embedded in the DNA of big public services and local organisations. So, that's my personal view, I don't know that it's being used well enough.

[271] Some people would criticise—. I believe you were trying to interview Lynne Friedli, who's probably one of my very good friends, but also one of my sternest colleagues, and Lynne is quite keen to make sure that asset-based working is not—I think you've mentioned it already, and one of the previous questioners actually referred to this—used as a smokescreen for reducing public spending, and I think it does have that risk. I think communities are acutely aware of that, and often when we work in communities, people will say to our faces, 'You're just here to do the council's dirty work, aren't you? You're just here because they're closing the libraries.' And I think there is a perception that this very optimistic community-led approach is just paying lip service to the fact that what's really having an impact on communities is reduction in public services and reduction in spending. So, I think that's another risk. I don't think some people get it—. Sorry, go ahead—

[272] **Sian Gwenllian:** I was just going to ask about, the whole idea is based on this concept of a community and I guess a lot of it is a concept of a geographic community, whereas maybe we're moving on from there as a society, that this whole concept of a resilient community just is not going to be existing as we move forward.

[273] Then, another problem I see with this is that it does depend very much on finding community activists, community leaders who can, once the professionals have been in, who can take projects forward in the community. What if communities aren't interested, and what if there aren't those leaders around? I'm sure there are communities that are geographic areas where that just is not going to be possible. So, doesn't it depend on finding the people in the right places?

[274] **Mr Hopkins:** Yes. Absolutely, and to go with your first comment, I've never, ever—. And I think one of the problems is, as this approach in the UK has grown out of the experience in north-western USA, and particularly the Northwestern University in Chicago and the work of John McKnight and John Kretzmann, who you may have heard of during today's evidence, their work was entirely in geographic communities. And one of the challenges that we've brought to asset-based working in the UK is exactly what you said: the

UK doesn't work like that anymore. While I live in a strong ex-mining community in north Durham, my son lives in Edinburgh and doesn't even know the names of his next-door neighbours, but is highly networked through other means. So, the view of many asset-based practitioners is that what makes a community is when people connect with each other over a particular purpose. That could be a health condition—my ex-wife was a type 1 diabetic; type 1 diabetics mainly treat themselves. The treat themselves because they're surrounded by strong organisations and networks that support them in doing things like injecting themselves with insulin. So it could be a community around a condition; it could be a community that's come together around a particular topic; it could be a religious community. I don't see that this could ever be limited just to a geographic community. So, that would be my first answer to that, and I think if you only ever see this approach being used geographically, I don't think you're using the asset-based approach as well as you could be. I think it needs to be used across everything. It's a whole systems way. As it's based on principles and values, you can have these principles and values; they're highly transferrable.

[275] I think the second thing is, I don't know if it's your finding, but certainly my experience is that within any network or community, there are always activists, there are always leaders. I've never, ever in the 10 years I've been doing this work, ever worked with any group or any place where there haven't been people who are passionate about doing something.

12:15

[276] So, my view is that communities where nobody wants to do anything and nobody cares, I don't think those communities exist. But I agree with you entirely. If we just limit this to geographical communities, I don't think it's going to have any impact whatsoever.

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

[278] **Jenny Rathbone:** I completely accept what you're saying, that there is no community where nobody wants to do anything. But how do we prevent it being used as a way of not dealing with some of the really chunky public health problems we have, like tackling childhood obesity, which is absolutely endemic; like getting people to make that modal shift to walk or cycle to school rather than going in a motor? Because the response was, 'Well, if we haven't got the community champions, we can't really do anything.' It seems to me that that is an excuse for not doing anything about something that

ought to be top of their list.

[279] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely. I agree entirely. You know, I'm going to pass this one back to you, because I think this is a political challenge. I think embedding this, championing this, leading this, being willing to be visible within organisations, whether it's the Welsh Assembly, whether it's a local authority, is an absolutely key job for people who've been democratically elected to represent those communities. What's interesting is—and I sense this round the table here today—that when I talk about the values and principles and the way asset-based work could be used, you all agree with me. In fact, agreement exists across all political divides as well. East Sussex, where I've been working, is a classic, south-eastern, Tory-led authority. They really get this stuff. I've also used it in various other places right across the UK. What I like about it is it seems to transcend political dogma. In fact, at a local level, as you all know, there's very little party political dogma. Most local councillors are community activists, and in that, they get an asset-based approach. When I worked in local government, people used to say to me, 'Oh, those councillors, all they do is want things for their own community', and I used to say to them, 'Well, that's their job.'

[280] So, to me, this is about leadership. Doing it is about the operational stuff, and there are lots of people who will do this and, in fact, the number of people who are practising, practitioners of asset-based approaches—there are more now than there have ever been. But making sure it happens, and making sure that it's not used as an excuse, and making sure that funding continues to be delivered to tackle those big, structural inequalities that exist, is, I think, a job for political leaders. So, I'm sensing a little bit of a positive feedback from the room.

[281] **Sian Gwenllian:** Sorry, I was being devil's advocate.

[282] **Mr Hopkins:** That's your job.

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

[284] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask, Trevor? Taking on that challenge, or at least thinking about how it can be taken on, obviously we've got Welsh Government in place here in Wales, the local authorities and big public sector organisations. In your experience, have you seen an assets-based approach used in a systematic way, so, not just individual organisations taking forward particular projects and approaches, but systematically across quite a wide

geographical area, whether it's a local authority area or anywhere else?

[285] **Mr Hopkins:** I would refer you again, I suppose, to the most recent work we've done on a big scale, which is the work in East Sussex. If the committee would find it useful, I'll send you a publication called 'Building Stronger Communities in East Sussex from Street Corner to County Hall', which is a description of the opening year in starting to develop what we would call a whole-systems asset-based approach. Now, they're in the very early stages. They're 18 months into this. But what I can say is that the local authority have allocated £3.2 million over three years to develop this as a genuinely whole-systems approach, and they didn't even write their strategy until Jayne and I went down and actually developed a whole series of community conversations, consultations. We used timelines, we used appreciative inquiry, we used asset mapping. They actually developed their strategic objectives for this programme from what communities had told them, and not the bad things communities had told them, but the things that communities had said were their dreams—the dreams that emerged in appreciative inquiry.

[286] Now, there are other places starting to move in that direction. Northumberland County Council, we've been doing a little bit of work with them in recent years. Regarding Manchester as a whole, Greater Manchester has been toying with this stuff for quite a while. I think they've got bigger fish to fry at the moment, but, certainly, there's a lot of asset-based working taking place. In some of the London boroughs, I think it's really quite interesting that part of what's come out of the tragic fire in London is that, for the first time, the media has actually allowed some ordinary people to speak, and what ordinary people have said is, 'Nobody listened to us. We had ideas. We knew what was going on. We knew what would make things better, but nobody listened to us.' And I'm just hoping that that's sown a little seed somewhere that says, 'You can't just view this thing as a project. Unless you're willing to do this change in perspective, it's always going to be more of the same.'

[287] **John Griffiths:** A further question from Bethan Jenkins.

[288] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don't know if it's going to sow a seed, because I've just seen via the news now that the council in Kensington are barring the public from their cabinet meeting this evening in relation to the flats issue. If that's not listening then I don't know what it is.

[289] My question comes from this, though, really. When we're talking about listening and things changing from a more governmental way, I can understand that it would help in a very localised area, where you'd identify community champions and you can make these changes in terms of well-being. But does an asset-based approach extend to things like participatory budgeting, to different ways of engaging politically in processes, such as potentially, for example, in some countries across Europe now where they're introducing citizen panels, and the fact that they can introduce legislation themselves—that type of thing—so that it extends just from that initial community development thing to something much more—I don't know—in depth and, you know, that it permeates through all the political structures? That is what I'm trying to get at.

[290] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely, and if it doesn't it should do, and if it isn't, then it's not, so—

[291] **Bethan Jenkins:** This is what I need to ask as well. Are you doing things that would extend beyond those smaller-scale—?

[292] **Mr Hopkins:** At the moment, I would say, apart from the early work we're doing in Northumberland, apart from the work we've done in East Sussex and apart from some work that we did in Staffordshire a couple of years ago, no, we're not doing that yet. And I don't think it's for lack of suggesting that it would be a good thing to do. If you want to go somewhere that I think is embracing this more than ever, then probably the equivalent of Wales in Spain is Catalonia. Interestingly, about a year and a half ago, I was invited to Girona in Catalonia, about 50 miles from Barcelona. They get this big time, but for them it also forms part of this view that Catalonia is different and should be more independent. So, they've very much taken this on as a way of working and, interestingly, even the university there now is starting to run the university in a way that sees itself as much, much broader and much more inclusive, and actually values its strong connections with communities, with the local authority and, certainly, the Girona local authority. I went to a three-day conference there. They had Bengt Lindström there who is one of the gurus of this way of working. It was an absolute pleasure to meet him and work with him.

[293] It's happening in Australia. There's an organisation called the Jeder Institute in Australia and, certainly, Australian politics are very different to our politics; it's much less party driven and much more issue and community driven. So, in Australia, certainly, it's caught on. As regards bits of Canada,

there is quite a lot of work happening in Canada, so—

[294] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, I know—[*Inaudible.*]

[295] **Mr Hopkins:** Absolutely, and New Zealand as well. Interestingly, what you might want to say—and, certainly, I think the authors of ‘A glass half-full’ and Sir Michael Marmot would say—‘Isn’t it interesting that, apart from the USA, countries that have less inequality seem to have embraced asset-based working more.’ Now, whether it’s chicken-and-egg, I don’t know, or whether the countries are more equitable to start with and easily embraced asset-based working, or has asset-based working and asset-based thinking allowed them to think about how they can increase equity in their communities? I don’t know the answer to that, but it’s really interesting how it’s happening in other places.

[296] **Jenny Rathbone:** Or, alternatively, asset-based working works better in better-off communities, and those who have least are heard least, and that they get passed over, that public bodies go overboard on saying, ‘It’s marvellous. Asset-based working is the way we’re going to deliver more partnership-based services’, but the poor get left behind, as ever.

[297] **Mr Hopkins:** I would suggest that—. I wouldn’t want you to hold asset-based working responsible for that effect. I think that’s a far greater and more structural issue, as we probably all would agree. But what’s interesting is, in East Sussex, while we did some work in some relatively affluent communities—we did some work in Eastbourne, we did some work in Lewes, which is their county town, and we did work in Hastings. And Hastings—I was quite shocked when I arrived in Hastings, thinking it was going to be one of those gentrified southern coastal resorts, and the number of street sleepers, and the number of people obviously having real issues with mental health, with alcohol and drug addiction, was quite startling. For me, it works equally well. It’s probably more about your political leadership and where your organisational priorities lie, how or where it gets used.

[298] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Trevor, thank you very much for joining us by video link and giving evidence to the committee today. You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much indeed.

[299] **Mr Hopkins:** Thank you for your time. And can I say thanks for the interesting questions and conversation, as well? I hope I’ve managed to—. You’ve guessed I’ve got a passion for this stuff, but I hope I’ve managed to

answer some of your questions. I do hope the rest of your inquiry goes well, and I would also appreciate a copy of any final report as well, because it's quite interesting to see what direction you're moving in.

[300] **John Griffiths:** Absolutely. And the publication you mentioned, Trevor, the committee would be very grateful to receive that.

[301] **Mr Hopkins:** Okay. Can I also just, for the committee, as well, thank Chloe, who organised a lot of this? And I think she's worked tirelessly at this, and also, James, who set up all the IT, which we had glitches with last week. So, I'll send the publication to Chloe, and if there's any other information that you would like, please don't hesitate.

[302] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Trevor, thank you very much.

[303] **Mr Hopkins:** Thank you.

[304] **John Griffiths:** Okay. The committee will now break for lunch until 1.05 p.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 12:27 ac 13:07.
The meeting adjourned between 12:27 and 13:07.*

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi yng Nghymru:
Dulliau yn Seiliedig ar Asedau i Leihau Tlodi—Sesiwn Dystiolaeth 5
Inquiry into Poverty in Wales:
Asset-Based Approaches to Poverty Reduction—Evidence Session 5**

[305] **John Griffiths:** Okay, welcome back, everyone, to our final evidence-taking session today in our inquiry into poverty in Wales and asset-based approaches to poverty reduction. I'm very pleased to welcome Professor Emejulu to committee today to give evidence. Professor, would you like to take five minutes to just set out your critique, as it were, of these asset-based approaches?

[306] **Professor Emejulu:** Yes, happy to. Thank you. It might be a little longer than five minutes, so, hopefully, that's okay. So, first of all, thank you so much for the invitation. I'm delighted to be giving evidence today. So, before entering academia, I worked as a community development worker, a community organiser, and a participatory action researcher, in both the

United States, in Washington DC and in Dallas, Texas, and in Scotland, in Edinburgh and in Glasgow, where asset-based community development was practised. After moving into academia, I've undertaken several studies in both the US and the UK, exploring how asset-based approaches have been put into practice. By working at the grass roots and then taking a more strategic role in research, this has allowed me to assess the claims and effectiveness of ABCD in both the US and in the UK.

[307] So, before I discuss my assessment of ABCD with regard to poverty reduction in Scotland and what this might mean for Wales, let me first begin with a definition. ABCD is typically defined as an insurgent movement within the broader field of community development that attempts to refocus analysis and action from supposed community deficits, dependency, and problems to a given community's skills, strength, and resilience. What's important to note about this definition is that it is not all that different from a definition of generic community development. The most effective community-based work has as its foundation the belief that local people are active agents and authors of their lives, and seeks to work in participatory and democratic ways with communities as actors and not as victims.

[308] I call attention to the issue of definition because there exists a straw man at the heart of many discussions about ABCD, which positions ABCD as the only approach that focuses on community skills and strength, and all the other ways of doing community development treat people as hapless and ineffectual. This is not the case, and there is good and bad practice present in all the different models of community development.

[309] Turning now to the issue of ABCD and poverty reduction in Scotland, from my assessment of the evidence, it is my view that few definitive conclusions can be drawn about ABCD's impact on tackling poverty. This is for a number of reasons that have very little to do with ABCD. Firstly, community development has always struggled to make empirical claims as to its impact on poverty and inequality because much of the work is based on issues that are difficult to measure and those practitioners undertaking this important work are not necessarily in a position to gather and analyse data consistently over time. For example, how do we measure 'success' in community development? Is it about raising confidence—but what does raising confidence mean in empirical terms? Is it about the number of people moving from benefits into work, or about how long they stay in work, or about the quality of the work and wages on offer?

[310] Of course, these outcomes are crucial, but, in funding cycles for community development projects that last typically between 12 and 36 months, it's hard to make justifiable claims that a particular intervention led directly to poverty reduction since so many elements are in play with regard to housing, income, feelings of security and the involvement of several other third sector organisations and local authority agencies that are typically involved in any good process. A good community development effort is by its very nature a collective one. Indeed, the Scottish Public Health Observatory, in seeking to assess the effectiveness of ABCD in relation to public health, states, quote, it is,

[311] 'very difficult to measure the concepts discussed in the assets literature which makes any single source of data insufficient.'

[312] So, adequately evidencing the claims and outcomes of community development, asset-based or otherwise, with regard to poverty reduction remains elusive.

[313] So, what I want to do, because I know time is running out, is just skip to the second part of my critique. So, whatever fragile claims may have been made to poverty reduction using an ABCD model have been and will continue to be wiped out by austerity measures. The Scottish Government opposes austerity, but because of the current devolution settlement, which you, of course, will be well aware of in the Welsh context, is obliged to implement these dramatic cuts to social welfare services. So, just to give you a sense of what austerity looks like and what it means in Scotland and the implications this has for asset-based approaches, real-terms reductions of the Scottish Government, from 2010-11—when the coalition Government at Westminster implemented austerity for the first time—to 2016-17, according to Audit Scotland, are 8.4 per cent. The commission itself calls this challenging because, quote:

[314] 'Councils' budgets are under increasing pressure from a long-term decline in funding, rising demand for services and increasing costs, such as pensions',

[315] and also, I would add, social care. This amounts to £1 billion of cuts to social welfare in Scotland.

[316] This reduction in income has translated into huge cuts for councils. For example, in fiscal year 2017-18, Glasgow, the largest council in Scotland,

will be implementing cuts for about £50 million alongside a reported rise in council tax. As my colleague Leah Bassel and I found in our study about austerity in Scotland, these spending reductions are devastating because funding for community development projects is oftentimes the first thing that is cut, or they are privatised or eliminated altogether.

[317] Austerity matters in any discussion about poverty reduction. The benefits cap, the introduction of universal credit, cuts to housing benefit, alongside the closure or reduced provision of other community services, mean that we're seeing, unsurprisingly, an increase in the poverty rate. So, just to give you a sense of what that looks like in a Scottish context and what that might mean for Wales, since the introduction of austerity measures in 2010, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, we're seeing an increase in the number of children in poverty, and they estimate that the poverty rate for children will increase from 3.6 million to 4.3 million. In Scottish terms, according to the Child Poverty Action Group, based on figures from the Scottish Government—they say, quote,

[318] 'more than one in four of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty',

[319] compared to 22 per cent in 2014–15.

13:15

[320] Thus, to speak about ABCD in this context of devastating cuts does not adequately capture the crisis facing communities, local government and the third sector. Can ABCD play a role in helping communities advocate for better funding of public services to reduce poverty? Absolutely. Can, in some cases, communities take control of local assets to provide a limited selection of services for some of the community? Yes. Can ABCD support participatory planning and delivery of public services that are more responsive to community needs and interests? Yes. Can ABCD replace local government services? No. Can ABCD effectively scale up to provide universal provision and coverage? No. Will ABCD be less effective in the context of austerity? Absolutely. And, if nothing else, that is the key message from my evidence today.

[321] So, to conclude, very briefly, asset-based community development asks some of the right questions about power, representation, and democracy with regard to local and national government. It also asks some of

the right questions about how we view local people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. However, what ABCD gets wrong, in my view, is that it positions itself as the best or only solution to these problems. It is also unnecessarily hostile to state-based social welfare provision and traffics in poorly evidenced assumptions that the welfare state generates dependency.

[322] I conclude with an example, of the terrible tragedy of the Grenfell Tower fire in London. The deaths in this fire appear to have been completely avoidable had the local council listened and taken seriously the views of residents, the majority of whom are poor and working-class black and brown people. In the aftermath of the fire, the council still does not seem to be able to organise a sufficient emergency relief and rehousing effort. The residents, through their grit and determination, have had to save themselves, at least in the short term.

[323] There are many lessons to draw from Grenfell, but the key one is this: local people are asking the Government to do more, not less. They are asking for their social, economic and political rights to be recognised and respected. They have been organised and active for years seeking better housing conditions—they are in no way dependent. The issue for Kensington, for Scotland, and for Wales, is how to make local and national government truly responsive and representative to the people it purports to serve. Thank you.

[324] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thank you, Professor, for that very comprehensive set of opening remarks. Jenny.

[325] **Jenny Rathbone:** I wanted to pick up on—. You say that an asset-based approach is being promoted by people who are hostile to state-based solutions. We hadn't picked that up, until now, in the witnesses we've had, so I wondered if you could tell us where that is being articulated.

[326] **Professor Emejulu:** Sure. So, this is part—and, I don't know, you can tell me how much you want me to get into some of the history and theory of asset-based community development, but what's important to note is, particularly the American context, because ABCD is essentially a policy transfer from the US to the United Kingdom—. In the US context in particular, some of the proponents of ABCD, in particular people like John McKnight, John Kretzmann, and, of course, one of their key representatives here, Cormac Russell, take a very sceptical view of the welfare state, which they term 'systems'—I think that's the term that they use. Part of the hostility is the assumption that the welfare state—in some ways, they're completely

correct—is bureaucratic, it's self-serving, it's slow, it's unresponsive, but also there's this assumption that, by the very nature of the provision of state-based social welfare services, somehow that creates dependency within, in particular, poor and working-class communities. I'm not quite sure that there's the evidence to support that claim.

[327] **Jenny Rathbone:** It certainly does create dependency. There are certainly some people who manage to survive on the benefits that are provided, but don't necessarily feel able to seek out any alternatives.

[328] **Professor Emejulu:** That is as much about the changing nature of work and the structure of work in a context of, of course, de-industrialisation. So, in the US, and, as we've seen in the UK, when you have good paying jobs leave from these countries to overseas, we have to put that in the context—we have to always understand ABCD in a much broader context of the changing nature of work, and the changing nature of, and these dramatic cuts to, the social welfare state. So, these are in some ways a philosophical difference, but there's also good empirical work that says, generally speaking, people don't languish on benefits. People cycle in and out of work, and the issue is about the lack of availability of good-quality work and decently paid work.

[329] **Jenny Rathbone:** But you nevertheless would accept that an asset-based approach is a positive contribution to helping to reshape public services to make them more accepting of partnership arrangements.

[330] **Professor Emejulu:** It depends. It depends on how asset-based approaches are considered and how they seek to put into practice. I guess for me the issue is that there's nothing particularly new about this analysis that the welfare state is bureaucratic and unresponsive. That exists within community development already. That exists across a range of different areas. There's nothing unique to asset-based community development in that regard.

[331] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Leaving aside what's gone on in the United States, which is quite a different discourse to what goes on in the UK, where we still think it's a good idea to have health services free at the point of need, just looking at the way in which Oxfam has interpreted an asset-based approach to some of the solutions—I'm just trying to remember what they call it—but the approach that they are advocating for, I think, nine different communities, I just wondered if that is any different to what you are aware is

what is termed ABCD in other parts of the world.

[332] **Professor Emejulu:** No. This is probably what is ABCD's, in some ways, biggest asset, as it were, as well as its biggest problem, that it's such a slippery definition—it's hard to know how it properly distinguishes itself from good old fashioned community development work. What I want to do, because I'm not just speaking the context of the United States, I'm speaking from a context of Scotland as well—. Let me tell you what the Glasgow Centre for Population Health says with regard to studying these kinds of projects that Oxfam has done. If you don't know, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health has been piloting work as well as studying asset-based approaches since at least 2012. They say, quote:

[333] 'Taking an asset based approach is not an alternative to addressing need. In practice, there is not a simple and clear division between deficit based approaches and asset based approaches. Rather, we found that in the projects studied, deficits are being addressed using a different model of working which develops strengths and resources rather than perpetuating need.'

[334] I suppose what's important from what they say in terms of their findings is that it's difficult to tell the difference, and, when you look substantively at the projects, it is not necessarily clear to me that this any substantively different practice than what we've seen in the past. It just simply has a different label.

[335] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, because they provided us with quite a substantive document, called 'Tools for a sustainable livelihood', with their methodology, the way in which they seek to obtain evaluation of outcomes, et cetera. But you still think that that is little different from a deficit-based approach, do you?

[336] **Professor Emejulu:** Well, I suppose part of my concern is even using the term 'deficit-based' versus 'asset-based', because I think, again, as I stated in my opening statement, that that is a bit of a straw man. Starting from the point of identifying needs and problems in a community, such as poor housing or people living in poverties, is—. I would not have thought that that—. I'm not sure why that gets classed as a deficit-based approach when it is an identification of the issues and problems that people want addressed. So, I suppose—

[337] **Jenny Rathbone:** I'm not saying it is defined as a deficit-based approach. What I was understanding you to say was that an asset-based approach was no different from a deficit-based approach.

[338] **Professor Emejulu:** Yes, and I stand by that, because, particularly in the Scottish context, we've seen lots of different ways of measuring work, lots of different ways of evaluating work. There's learning and evaluation in planning—LEAP, as it's called. There's a LEAP 1 and LEAP 2 in the Scottish context. There's 'how good is our community learning and development?', as well as—there's another one as well. And, to be honest, it is not clear how that is all that different from an asset-based approach.

[339] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but how would you say that an asset-based approach differs from more difficult, traditional approaches to poverty reduction, whether they're from charitable organisations or from faith-based organisations, which have been doing work with communities who are struggling for 200 years?

[340] **Professor Emejulu:** Yes. Well, not all the same communities have been struggling, of course.

[341] **Jenny Rathbone:** No, no, indeed, but what I mean is that the concept of working with people who need some support has been around for a long time.

[342] **Professor Emejulu:** Yes. I suppose that's precisely my point. So, just to back up, there's an adage in community development that I actually always thought was very trite, and now it's very interesting to submit this into evidence, but this adage is, 'practitioners should be working themselves out of a job'. So, the assumption is, you should be working—

[343] **Jenny Rathbone:** Who says that?

[344] **Professor Emejulu:** This is one of these kind of hoary old sayings that's circulating in the Scottish context, that you should be working to make yourself unemployed. I've always thought that is very odd, but now the asset-based community development has come along to say, 'Oh, these deficit-based models are something that's terrible; we work with people as objects and victims'. That is, in fact, not the case. The tradition in community development, whether in the US or in the UK—. There are lots of different ways of doing this work and there's always been a very strong tradition of

working in participatory and democratic ways. That's what I keep returning to. I'm not sure what the substantive difference is, besides the assumption that the identification of social problems is somehow a way of stigmatising or problematizing communities, when what we know from the empirical evidence is how you actually undertake collective action is by identifying what we call, quote, 'a shared grievance'. That's how you oftentimes galvanise people to action.

[345] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, but the—. Another way of looking at it is—. We heard earlier from Trevor Hopkins from Durham, who's co-authored a book called 'A glass half-full', looking at the positives that people can contribute to providing their own solution. We've also heard from people with long-term health problems, who—expert patients groups help people work with the problem that isn't going to go away, as such. You presumably don't think that that is a negative.

[346] **Professor Emejulu:** I'm not saying it is a negative. What I'm saying, again, is that it's not substantively different. So, this idea of working with individuals in ways that tap into their energy, that tap into their networks, that tap into their knowledge of the local area, their knowledge of local elected members, everything else—there is nothing particularly new about that approach. That's what I'm saying. Yes, that is very helpful. That's an interesting book and it's oftentimes very inspiring to people, but I guess I would point people to the history of practice in both the US and the UK to demonstrate there is substantive little difference between an asset-based approach and other more generic approaches to community development.

[347] **John Griffiths:** Could I come in at this stage, Jenny, if I may? A couple of other Members wish to ask questions, but, before I bring them in, Professor, I wonder if I could just ask—. Given that you consider that there's little substantive difference between an asset-based approach and other approaches, would you nonetheless accept that, in some ways, it's possible to achieve a psychological shift, a cultural shift, which we heard about in previous evidence, so that you move mindsets within communities, and indeed within those trying to tackle poverty in communities, to take a more can-do, positive approach? Do you accept that there's any strength in that argument?

[348] **Professor Emejulu:** I guess, for me, the issue is about what matters empirically, and so I suppose that's fine rhetorically, to take a can-do approach, but what does that mean substantively, in terms of substantive

differences in practice, and what does that mean in terms of poverty reduction, broadly defined? The assumption, somehow, that identifying a problem is somehow a negative or it somehow undermines people's positive attitudes—I'm not sure that is necessarily the case.

13:30

[349] I'll just give you a short example. I've just concluded this large study exploring minority women's activism against austerity. Now, austerity, as I've demonstrated, is depressing. It's horrible; it's a challenge; it's terrible for the people who are on the sharp end of it. The very nature of those women identifying the closure of their community centre and the benefits cap was in no way what we call—it did not demobilise them. It didn't prevent them from seeking to take action; it didn't prevent them from wanting to join together. It was that very issue of wanting to defend their local school, defend their local community centre and defend the closure of Sure Start centres—that was the way that people were able to build community. So, for me, that's the issue about a positive can-do attitude: that's perfectly fine, but to say that that is somehow superior to the long, long tradition that we've seen in social movements and community activism—I'm not necessarily sure the evidence is there.

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

[351] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Joyce. I think Sian is also on this ground.

[352] **Sian Griffiths:** On this kind of area, yes.

[353] **John Griffiths:** Do you want to come in briefly, Sian? And then Joyce.

[354] **Sian Gwenllian:** I understand your argument about austerity and the need for massive, economic structural change to get rid of inequalities. We're not going to be able to do that overnight. Looking at it pragmatically, therefore, what you're saying is that we should forget the asset-based approach and concentrate more on the more traditional community development. Or are you saying, 'There's no point doing anything'?

[355] **Professor Emejulu:** I'm not saying any of those things at all. I'm sorry if that wasn't clear in my opening statement, but I think I said at the end that ABCD is really good about raising the issue of the power imbalances between local communities and, particularly, local government, and local communities

and large third sector organisations. It's very good at raising those issues. It also can contribute to other processes such as participatory budgeting and all of these types of things—that's very good. But I guess, again—and I'm sorry if this is a bit of a downer—there's nothing substantively different. So, all of these approaches, in terms of participation—all of these approaches in terms of participatory budgeting all predate ABCD.

[356] **Sian Gwenllian:** So, what you're saying is that it's a bit of a distraction for us to be talking about this ABCD.

[357] **Professor Emejulu:** As long as it's not to the detriment of other approaches. That's what I'm particularly concerned about.

[358] **Sian Gwenllian:** What I want to know is: what other approaches should we be looking at as well, then? I mean, should we be scrutinising other community development methods, or should we be looking at Families First and Sure Start and broadening those out? I mean, I know you've looked specifically at this area, but I'd be interested to know what your thoughts are about what we can actually do, taking on board all the massive problems that we have. Is there anything? Is there any point, you know—?

[359] **Bethan Jenkins:** Let's go home.

[360] **Professor Emejulu:** I know, it's like, 'Okay, let's go to the pub!' [*Laughter.*] No—of course there are things that can be done. Oh my goodness—but I like that we're kind of getting down to the brass tacks of things—

[361] **Sian Gwenllian:** Well, this is the crux of it, really. I mean, the problems are so global and structural in the way our society is at the moment with inequality, unless we have a huge, political uproar, revolution, whatever, which we—. What do we do? I mean, how do we help families who are currently in situations—in poverty? What do we actually do? Because what we're doing so far isn't working in Wales, because, you know, the number of families in poverty has risen slightly, and in-work poverty. Yes, there are big answers, but surely there must be—. I'd like to know what your thoughts are about what could work.

[362] **Professor Emejulu:** It's one of those things where we kind of already know what works, but the problem is that this is no longer politically fashionable. So, as I was mentioning before in my opening statement, we

actually saw a substantial increase in child poverty during the 1990s, and that was because we invested in public services. I mean, there is no great big mystery to this: we actually know what to do. It is about doing things like implementing the living wage—not the national living wage, which, as you know, is very different. This is about taking seriously issues of racial and gender discrimination in the labour market; this is about investing in social housing. So, there are very clear things we can do. In the Scottish context—because I know a lot of these issues are about devolved and reserved matters, and I'm not quite sure how different it is in Wales—but in the Scottish context, we know that the Scottish Government has mitigated the bedroom tax. These are very particular—

[363] **Sian Gwenllian:** We haven't done that here.

[364] **Professor Emejulu:** Well, that's something that's actually quite important, and the issue then is, 'So, where are local people in this?' The issue is then about saying, 'How do you bring local people into the process in terms of the planning and provision and the delivery of services?' But as I was saying, in terms of these big issues—. If the focus really is about numbers of people below the poverty line, if it is really about relative poverty, then this is the point of the welfare state.

[365] **John Griffiths:** Joyce, quickly, and then Jenny.

[366] **Joyce Watson:** You mentioned shared grievances and women and minorities, and I want to bring something else into the equation. If we're looking at how we're going to change things, have you looked at—I'm sure you have—the unequal participation in the economy? Because you just started talking about gender budgeting and all of those things. Is that an area where, since we set our economic strategies here, we ought to be looking at if we're saying that going into work is the answer to everything? Is that something that we need to be seriously thinking about restructuring, and then everything that falls underneath it?

[367] **Professor Emejulu:** Well, it's very interesting. We don't talk in these ways anymore. What is the old adage? That the best route out of poverty is a job. Of course, that, at one point, may well have been true, but now we have the spatial mismatch between where the jobs are and where substantial numbers of people who live in poverty are. We also have the problem of the issue of childcare, which prevents many women from re-joining the labour market, and also the issue of the gender wage gap. So, there are a number of

different issues here. If you want to get down to the brass tacks of poverty reduction, these are the issues about the quality of work and wages. That's what we know will make a huge difference. But in terms of the inquiries and that type of thing, this can be a participatory project to do that. So, it's not about asset-based approaches or community development approaches and then what the state does; it's about saying how you combine these approaches to say, 'We're going to do an inquiry in terms of the quality of work that's available in our poorest communities'. That would be something that you could join together with local people to do that would be very interesting. But of course, lots has already been written on that anyway, but it's just in terms of if you're serious about doing something—.

[368] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. If I could take you back to—and I'm sorry I was a few minutes late—the Grenfell Tower acting as a catalyst for voices not being heard and change. I've read, as lots of people have, lots of articles on this, but I was speaking to somebody who lived in the area last week. What they were saying to me was that the disconnect of the community wasn't as great as everybody thinks it was—they lived in the community—and that there were lots of communities within that community where people were pretty well connected. So, if that's the case, we will find the same—. It's a bit like the asset-based approach: how can we use what is there in terms of driving forward what we're trying to do, and that is to reduce poverty? Because there will be people in abject poverty, but they will still have really good connections.

[369] **Professor Emejulu:** Yes. So, the question is how to—

[370] **Joyce Watson:** How to use what is there and build on it and make a difference, quite frankly.

[371] **Professor Emejulu:** Well, what's happened and what we've seen in the Scottish and also the American context is a frustration in terms of this phenomenon of over-consultation: that communities have said, for ages, that they've identified the problem, they know what the problem is, and they simply want it fixed and that isn't happening. So, I think part of the job here is about saying, 'Well, reviewing the evidence, what have communities already told us about what they would like to see changed?' and then, 'What is within the remit of the Assembly to try to implement those things that people want changed?' If that's the lesson of the Scottish independence referendum, that's the message in the rise of membership of various political parties: when there's something truly at stake in politics, people will get

involved. But if it's going to be the same old, 'We'll talk about this, we'll consider this' and then nothing happens, then it's the most logical step for people to take a step back because there's nothing at stake and nothing will change.

[372] As we saw just in the last general election and, as I say, the experience of the independence referendum—wherever you stand on that—it was interesting by the way that it galvanised lots of people to action who had previously never been involved, because there were genuinely real issues at play in terms of the economy, in terms of trade and in terms of all of these things that people really wanted to get involved in and see a difference on both sides. So, that's at least part of the lesson.

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

[374] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to focus on one area—because we can all agree that we need more social housing, better public transport and affordable childcare—which is the issue of health. We spend half our budget on health and a great deal of that budget is spent on prescription medicines. I can't remember the exact statistics, but it's something pretty scary. I think it's one script for every individual per fortnight. So, is an asset-based approach looking afresh at, if you like, more of a partnership approach, rather than a 'doctor knows best' approach, and engaging people in their own health? Isn't that quite a useful way of trying to get out of this vicious circle of people constantly being given pharmaceuticals that, actually, in some ways, make them iller? Because they have side effects that people don't—. They're used sometimes as a way of getting somebody out of the surgery.

[375] **Professor Emejulu:** What we've seen, particularly in the Scottish context, is that those who work in public health have been the most interested in asset-based approaches, precisely because of these issues, because public health is not simply about the absence of disease. If you wanted to take a health-based model, it's about the presence of wellness and all the rest of it, and that's where we've seen ABCD—I wouldn't necessarily say enthusiastically taken up, but certainly people have looked again.

[376] If we think about health in that broader sense of not simply going to the doctor, but asking how do we work with community nurses, how do you work with your local community centre and focus on issues of exercise, of

healthy eating and all of these kind of things, and the provision of community gardens, but also, interestingly, particularly in relating to mental health—because often these things are psychosomatic, right—about lots of intergenerational work and the focus on getting people who are lonely better integrated into their local community—all of these things—this is where we can see some of the promise, I suppose, of asset-based approaches. But again, all of these things existed before asset-based approaches entered into the Scottish vernacular.

[377] I suppose that's what's important: this issue of thinking about health in the broadest sense, not simply about accessing healthcare services; the idea of thinking about the connection between mental and physical health; the idea of being integrated into a community; an idea of feeling safe and secure; that idea of getting people out into the fresh air; intergenerational work between young people and older people. These are all great models that you don't necessarily need to take an asset-based approach to do because this is about how to bring services from centralised spaces back into the community, and having the community have some sort of say in terms of provision and various other things. So, again, this is why I remain a sceptic, because the best work is always participatory, the best grassroots work is always participatory and asset-based approaches don't have a monopoly on participatory approaches.

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

[379] **John Griffiths:** Could I ask you, professor, in terms of Scotland, then, for example, is it your view that where they're at now in Scotland at the moment is a systematic approach to tackling poverty using an asset-based approach? Is it informing the Scottish Executive's strategy and policy and key deliverers of services to that extent that you would describe it as systematic?

13:45

[380] **Professor Emejulu:** Not in any sense, no. But what is interesting has been the number of studies that have looked at and explored what possible difference asset-based approaches could make to poverty reduction. I quoted the Scottish Public Health Observatory saying it's unclear at the moment. What you see in the Scottish context are a number of smaller organisations who are seeking from the outside to change what they perceive as a problem in the Scottish context. But in terms of the Scottish Government taking it up in any kind of systematic way, I don't think that's the case.

[381] What I will say, though, because I kind of feel like I'm being very negative, but I suppose what you have seen—and, again, this is not due to asset-based approaches, this is about participatory approaches, and I'm not sure there's really that much difference—but what you see in the Scottish context, which is very interesting, are the issues about community ownership, land trust and development trust. In terms of where you see the really interesting work about local communities buying a bit of land, building a windfarm, installing solar panels, taking over a local community centre that was threatened for closure, buying it from the local council for £1 and then running it as a social enterprise or a community interest organisation: you see that in no systematic way, because, depending on where the community is located, it may or may not have access to a community centre, and it may or may not have access to land. The example that's always given is the island of Eigg, I believe, where the community bought out the entire island. That is always given as the example, but as you notice, by its very nature it cannot be replicated. That's part of the problem—it cannot be systematic because every community has a different combination. If we're talking in terms of physical assets and in terms of local people's assets—and I find that language problematic in lots of ways, but whatever—you know, it depends. The most effective places we've seen are the issue about development trusts and land trusts, but, again, that is not at all systematic.

[382] **John Griffiths:** No. But where that's happened, you think those projects have worked well and have been very worth while in terms of reducing poverty.

[383] **Professor Emejulu:** Oh, well, I don't know—I think that's too far. Because there is at least some evidence that those communities particularly who are involved in land trusts are not necessarily communities that have large numbers of people living in poverty in them. So, I don't know—I would be very uncomfortable with that statement.

[384] **John Griffiths:** The community centres, perhaps—are there some examples of where it has worked in reducing poverty?

[385] **Professor Emejulu:** Well, I suppose this idea that setting up, or a community taking over a community centre that was slated for closure by the local council—. That you would be able to quantify and measure that taking over that centre somehow led to a reduction in poverty—I don't think you can in any real way make that connection, especially given that we know in the

Scottish context we're actually seeing child poverty on the increase. So, as I was saying, whatever fragile gains might have been made are being wiped out by the benefits cap, the cuts to child benefit—all of that work. That's what's so difficult about the context of austerity. Even if that may well be the case, because I don't know about every community centre in Scotland, we know empirically that any gains that might have been made have been wiped out.

[386] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Well, as there are no further questions from committee members, thank you very much for coming along this afternoon, professor, to give evidence.

[387] **Professor Emejulu:** Thank you.

[388] **John Griffiths:** You will be sent a transcript of your evidence to check for factual accuracy. Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

[389] **Professor Emejulu:** Thank you very much.

13:49

Papur i'w Nodi
Paper to Note

[390] **John Griffiths:** The next item, item 7, then, is papers to note. We have one paper to note, which is a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children in relation to the abolition of the right to buy. Is committee content to note that paper? Okay.

13:50

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 that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the

*cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog remainder of the meeting in
17.42(vi) . accordance with Standing Order
17.42(vi).*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[391] **John Griffiths:** Then we move to item 8, which is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting. Is committee content so to do? Thank you very much. We will move into private session.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 13:50.
The public part of the meeting ended at 13:50.*